

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday 13 November 2024**

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

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

## *Visitors*

### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome to the gallery Annabel and Alice, whom I met earlier. They are guests of the member for Gosford. I am sure they will be recognised later in the day as well.

## *Notices*

### **PRESENTATION**

*[During the giving of notices of motions]*

**The SPEAKER:** Members will not debate the notice of motion given by the member for Oatley. The member for Newcastle will be heard in silence.

*Later,*

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

## *Bills*

### **INSPECTOR OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

#### **First Reading**

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

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (10:20):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am proud to introduce the Inspector of Custodial Services Amendment Bill 2024. The bill amends the Inspector of Custodial Services [ICS] Act 2012 and the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) [CAS] Act 1999 to improve integrity and oversight across Corrective Services NSW. The proposed amendments respond to the findings and recommendations of several recent public reviews and reports that have identified ways to improve transparency and accountability across the Corrective Services NSW system. The Government is acutely aware of the challenges and opportunities for improvement across the system, and this bill plays a crucial role in addressing these challenges and opportunities and instilling public confidence in Corrective Services NSW.

Firstly, the bill responds to the recommendations of the 2021 statutory review of the ICS Act. The bill implements the majority of the recommendations of the statutory review by clarifying and enhancing the role of the Inspector of Custodial Services to improve accountability and oversight of the adult and youth correctional systems. Secondly, the bill responds to findings from the report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Offending by Former Corrections Officer Wayne Astill at Dillwynia Correctional Centre, which I will refer to as the Astill inquiry. The Government established the Astill inquiry in July 2023 to investigate the offending of former Corrections Officer Wayne Astill and the institutional response to his offending. The inquiry, led by the Hon. Justice Peter McClellan, AM, KC, uncovered unacceptable conduct and a lack of accountability at Dillwynia Correctional Centre.

The inquiry's findings also stated that it would be incorrect to assume that the deficiencies identified at Dillwynia Correctional Centre were not present at other correctional facilities across New South Wales. The Government has accepted all 31 recommendations of the inquiry, either in full or in principle, and is committed

to undertaking the reform necessary to lift standards, deliver safer workplaces for staff members and better protect inmates. The bill responds to the Astill inquiry by introducing amendments that clarify the role of Official Visitors and their ability to resolve complaints independently. This acknowledges commentary in the inquiry that the role of Official Visitors could be clarified to enhance inmates' access and understanding. Thirdly, the bill responds to the NSW Ombudsman's report *Investigation into inmate discipline in NSW correctional centres*, which was tabled in August 2024. It does this by amending the CAS Act to introduce a review mechanism as part of the correctional centre discipline regime. This bill is one of several actions the Government is taking to deliver a more accountable and transparent corrections system. These actions are fundamental in restoring and maintaining public confidence in the system and providing a safer environment for staff members and inmates.

I now turn to the specific provisions of the bill. Much of the bill implements the recommendations of the statutory review of the ICS Act, which was tabled in Parliament in 2021 and was not implemented by my colleagues opposite. The ICS Act sets out the authority, functions and powers of the Inspector of Custodial Services. The inspector provides independent scrutiny of the conditions, treatment of people in custodial facilities, and outcomes in adult and youth custodial settings. The statutory review found that the policy objectives of the ICS Act remained valid, particularly to monitor and oversee custodial centres and services, to scrutinise conditions and to promote transparency. However, it also made 12 recommendations to clarify the ICS Act to improve its operation and help it meet its policy objectives. This bill implements 11 of the 12 recommendations for reform. The one recommendation not explicitly addressed in the bill, recommendation 11, requires an amendment to the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014. This change will be made ahead of the bill's commencement by proclamation, alongside any other changes to the regulations that are needed to support the legislative reforms.

Recommendation 1 of the review inserts a new objects clause into the ICS Act to assist with the statutory interpretation of the Act and clarify the Act's purpose. The objects in new section 2A of the ICS Act are to improve the prospects for the rehabilitation of offenders by improving standards in custodial centres and the provision of custodial services; and to promote the improved treatment of, and improved outcomes for, persons in custody on remand. Recommendation 2 amends section 7 of the ICS Act to clarify the power of the inspector to request information in relation to a custodial service. Currently, this power is reserved to information relating to a custodial centre's operations. The bill amends section 7 to clarify that this power also extends to information and documents relating to a custodial service. This aims to ensure there is no gap in the inspector's powers to examine and review custodial services and require information and documents in respect of a custodial service.

Recommendation 3 found that the inspector should have an express power to conduct private interviews to perform their functions under the Act. The bill inserts new section 8A into the ICS Act to provide an express power for the inspector to conduct private interviews with custodial centre staff members and persons in custody, subject to security and safety considerations, and to the person in custody providing consent. Recommendation 4 amends the Act by requiring the inspector to have regard to the legislative framework regulating custodial services and custodial centres when exercising functions under the Act. This reflects the inspector's current practice of considering operational needs of custodial agencies when exercising their functions. For example, when developing and setting inspection standards for custodial services, the inspector's practice is to consult with custodial agencies to ensure that these standards are informed by the legal and operational landscape that they work in.

Recommendation 5 amends the Act to expand the agencies that the inspector can share information with, in the exercise of the inspector's functions. The ICS Act currently enables the inspector to enter into arrangements with Corrective Services NSW, Youth Justice NSW, the Ombudsman and the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The bill expands this so that the inspector can enter into arrangements also with the Health Care Complaints Commission, the Children's Guardian and the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission [LECC], in relation to the exercise of the inspector's functions and certain functions of those bodies. This expansion of information-sharing arrangements is important because the inspector may become aware of matters that could become the basis of an investigation, inquiry or other action by those agencies. Sharing information between the inspector and these agencies would better enable the inspector to monitor inmates' welfare.

As part of this, a new section requiring the inspector to report suspected police misconduct or serious maladministration to the LECC is being introduced. This is important, as the inspector may become aware of conduct that may amount to police misconduct or maladministration during the exercise of functions under the ICS Act. For example, referrals to the LECC may arise out of circumstances where the NSW Police Force provides operational support to a custodial facility during a disturbance. This new provision is consistent with an existing provision in the ICS Act that relates to the inspector being required to make reports about suspected misconduct or maladministration of correctional officers to the ICAC. Recommendation 6 amends section 16 of the ICS Act to enable all reports to Parliament made by the inspector to be tabled, even if the House is not sitting. This is important in facilitating the timely publication of reports. Recommendation 7 inserts a new section 16A into the

ICS Act to give the inspector a discretionary power to require information from a government sector agency or management company about a recommendation made by the inspector, including the reasons that steps have not or are not proposed to be taken.

This is intended to provide greater accountability and transparency in the responses to recommendations. Recommendation 8 highlighted the need to enshrine current practice around public interest considerations against disclosure into legislation. Under section 15 of the Act, the inspector must not disclose information in a report to Parliament if there is an overriding public interest against disclosure. The bill inserts new section 15A into the ICS Act to provide a formal mechanism for the inspector to consult with government sector agencies about public interest considerations. Recommendation 9 inserts a new section 25A into the ICS Act to provide that the inspector is not compellable in certain court and tribunal proceedings to give evidence or produce documents, subject to certain exceptions. These exceptions include, for example, royal commission or special commission of inquiry proceedings.

The ICS Act currently contains various legal protections for information and records received or prepared in the course of the inspector's functions. New section 25A will ensure people in custody, agencies and their staff, and third parties can have confidence that information or documents received or prepared in the course of the inspector's functions remain confidential, and will not be produced or admitted in evidence in court or tribunal proceedings. Recommendations 10 and 11 relate to Official Visitor provisions, which I will turn to shortly. Lastly, recommendation 12 clarifies the role of the Minister responsible for youth detention as it relates to the inspector. The Inspector of Custodial Services exercises functions in both adult correctional centres and youth detention centres; however, the ICS Act is administered by the Minister for Corrections. The bill amends the ICS Act to ensure that the Minister responsible for youth detention centres, currently the Minister for Youth Justice, can exercise certain functions relevant to youth detention centres.

This includes referring matters to the inspector and requesting a report from the inspector. The bill also makes a series of consequential amendments to improve clarity and reflect current arrangements. This includes removing a redundant definition of Corrective Services NSW, as it is now a public service executive agency. I now turn to the amendments in the bill relating to the Official Visitor provisions, in response to both the statutory review and comments made in the Astill inquiry. Official Visitors are independent community members who visit adult and youth custodial centres to take inquiries and complaints from people in custody, work with centre staff to resolve complaints, escalate issues that cannot be resolved to the inspector, and monitor the conditions and treatment of people in custody. The Inspector of Custodial Services administers the Official Visitor scheme for both the adult and youth custodial systems.

Currently, there is no single legislative source for the regulation of Official Visitors. Instead, the legislative provisions governing Official Visitors for adult and youth custodial systems are spread across the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987, Children (Detention Centres) Regulation 2015, as well as the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act and associated regulation. The statutory review of the ICS Act found that having provisions governing Official Visitors spread across several pieces of legislation has at times led to confusion around the role and responsibilities of Official Visitors. Subsequently, recommendation 10 of the statutory review provided that consideration be given to consolidating the Official Visitor provisions. The bill therefore inserts new part 2, division 2A of the ICS Act to consolidate all provisions relating to Official Visitors in one location, making arrangements consistent across the adult and youth systems where possible, whilst accounting for the different nature of the adult and youth systems.

The bill inserts new section 27 (1A) into the ICS Act, which enables regulations to be made about Official Visitors, including their functions. The bill also inserts a transitional provision that ensures Official Visitors who were appointed before the amendments commence can continue in their role. The bill proposes further changes to Official Visitor provisions to address concerns identified by the Astill inquiry. The Astill inquiry observed that there was limited understanding among inmates about the role of Official Visitors. This was inhibiting inmates from making complaints and having confidence that their complaints were being taken seriously, limiting the ability of Official Visitors to resolve these complaints. In response to this observation, the bill introduces amendments to clarify the role of Official Visitors and their ability to resolve complaints independently. The bill introduces new section 8H of the ICS Act, which specifies that the main function of the Official Visitor is to consider inquiries and complaints from persons in custody.

This makes clear that hearing concerns from inmates is an Official Visitor's most important function, over and above other functions. New section 8H responds to a finding from the Astill inquiry that inmates have an incorrect perception that Official Visitors are not independent from correctional staff. It does this by clarifying that an Official Visitor, with the consent of a complainant, can refer a complaint to a person the Official Visitor considers appropriate, and that this specifically includes the Inspector of Custodial Services. This makes clear that Official Visitors can refer complaints to independent agencies outside the correctional system, such as the

inspector. New section 8H also provides that an Official Visitor may, with the consent of the complainant, notify the custodial centre manager of the complaint or inquiry, and try to resolve it with them. This means that the complainant's consent is needed before an Official Visitor can seek to resolve the matter internally with the custodial centre manager.

Further, the ICS Act currently provides that if more than one Official Visitor is assigned to a correctional centre, each Official Visitor is required to inform other Official Visitors assigned to the centre of the persons interviewed at the centre and the nature and substance of any complaints or inquiries received. A recurrent theme in the Astill inquiry's findings was the need to uphold the integrity and confidentiality of Official Visitor processes when reporting misconduct. New section 8H therefore also provides that it is discretionary rather than mandatory for an Official Visitor to share complaint and complainant information with another Official Visitor. Further, given that persons in custody can be transferred between centres, the new section allows information to be shared with other Official Visitors in general, rather than only those assigned to the same centre. The Astill inquiry also highlighted that a fundamental issue in the current system is the perceived lack of trust when reporting concerns to an Official Visitor and a fear of retribution and reprisal when doing so.

Currently, section 20 of the ICS Act makes it an offence for a person to take or threaten detrimental action against another person because that other person makes a complaint or provides information or evidence to the Inspector of Custodial Services or a member of staff of the inspector in the exercise of functions under the Act. Crucially, the bill amends this offence to also capture when a person makes a complaint or provides information to an Official Visitor. The Department of Communities and Justice and Corrective Services NSW will develop an implementation plan for communicating these reforms to inmates and correctional staff. I now turn to the part of the bill that responds to a recommendation from the NSW Ombudsman's report on inmate discipline. The inmate disciplinary system deals with inmates who are alleged to have committed a correctional centre offence while in custody. These offences are prescribed in the regulations, and include assaults, drug offences, theft and other property offences, as well as various discipline and good order offences, such as fight, disobey direction, fail to clean yards, and enter other cells.

Some conduct that would constitute a correctional centre offence may also constitute a criminal offence. However, most correctional centre offences are dealt with within the correctional system either because they do not constitute criminal offences or because the inmate disciplinary system provides a fast, efficient and flexible alternative to the criminal justice system in appropriate circumstances. Such circumstances may include where an inmate's conduct constitutes both a criminal and correctional centre offence but is not sufficiently serious to warrant criminal prosecution. Inmate disciplinary processes are administrative in nature, and do not result in criminal charges, convictions or sentences. While the governor of a correctional centre must be satisfied to the criminal standard of "beyond reasonable doubt" in the determination of guilt, the rules of evidence do not apply, and inmates are not entitled to legal representation.

If found guilty of a correctional centre offence, the penalties that can be imposed include reprimand and caution and depriving the inmate of certain privileges. Findings may also have consequences for an inmate beyond the immediate penalty. For example, they can impact decisions made about an inmate's placement, classification and parole. The Ombudsman's report found that some aspects of the administration of inmate discipline across all New South Wales custodial facilities was contrary to the law. For example, there were cases of correctional centre offences not being proven beyond reasonable doubt, or inmates who did not sufficiently understand the nature of disciplinary inquiries or who did not understand English not being provided with assistance. There were also cases where multiple charges were laid or multiple penalties were imposed for the same misconduct, or compensation for property damage was ordered improperly such as where the damage did not result from a correctional centre offence or where the compensation ordered exceeded the permitted amount.

The Ombudsman also found that the lack of review and appeal rights was unjust. The Ombudsman recommended that a comprehensive review of the inmate discipline framework be undertaken, and that any subsequent reform should aim to include legislated review and appeal rights for both findings of guilt and the penalties imposed for correctional centre offences. Corrective Services NSW has commenced a review of the inmate discipline system and its administration, with the long-term objective of significant reform to address the issues raised in the Ombudsman's report. The bill facilitates this by inserting part 2, division 6A into the CAS Act to provide an internal review mechanism. This includes any compensation that an inmate has been ordered to pay for property damage arising from a correctional centre offence.

The commissioner will also be able to review such a decision on the commissioner's own initiative. This is important because an internal review of inmate discipline decisions conducted by Corrective Services confirmed many of the Ombudsman's findings, but there is no lawful authority under the existing legislation that allows Corrective Services to remedy incorrect disciplinary decisions. If the commissioner undertakes a review, the commissioner will have the option of conducting a hearing into the matter. However, this will not be a

requirement. On review, the commissioner will be able to confirm or vary the initial decision, or set aside the decision and substitute it with a new decision.

The bill also provides the commissioner with the authority to direct that any remedial action that the commissioner considers appropriate be taken to give effect to the decision on the review. The exercise of this authority is discretionary so that there is no obligation to order remedial actions where none are practicable, such as where inmate privileges were withdrawn as a penalty and that penalty has already been served. Part 2, division 6A will provide inmates with the ability to initiate reviews and allow Corrective Services to address any past discipline decisions it has identified as being incorrect, unlawful or otherwise in need of correction without awaiting the completion of the review of the inmate discipline system and the passage of any subsequent reforms.

The bill makes important and immediate changes to the laws that govern Corrective Services NSW. It looks to restore confidence in the operations and integrity of the system, and allows the Government to fulfil its responsibilities in response to the important public reports and reviews that have taken place. I thank the stakeholders who had the opportunity to provide their valuable input on the bill. Stakeholder input ensures that the bill works effectively and achieves its intended goals. I thank the Public Service Association, the Inspector of Custodial Services, the NSW Ombudsman, Legal Aid NSW, the New South Wales Bar Association, the Law Society of New South Wales, Domestic Violence NSW and all stakeholders who contributed to the statutory review of the ICS Act. The Government is absolutely committed to delivering a more accountable and transparent corrections system. The bill provides a crucial element of this change. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 25 September 2024.**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (10:43):** On behalf of the Opposition, I speak in debate on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024. I will be much shorter than the very long second reading speech delivered by the member for Prospect—in fact, the speech which well exceeded the brevity of this legislation. Yesterday we debated the Justice Legislation Amendment (Civil) Bill 2024. Today we are debating this bill and the Justice Legislation Amendment (Children) Bill 2024. Separately, the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No 2) 2024 is also before the House. All of those bills could have been presented as one legislation. This Government has an interesting dichotomy with regard to statistics, because the only statistic it seems to be interested in is the high number of inconsequential minor bills—which could all be wrapped up into one bill—that are being split into multiple bills to make it look like more bills are passing through this Parliament than is warranted by the legislation that is being presented.

When we were in government, we would have wrapped all of those bills up into one legislation. Yet this Government is dividing legislation into a number of small bills to inflate the number of bills presented to the House which does not reflect the business actually being transacted. That is to be contrasted with volume 1 of the budget papers, which provided granular detail about the performance of government policy as part of the budget papers. That report has been completely abolished by this Government because it is not interested in that level of transparency, metrics and measurement; it is solely interested in the amount of legislation that is passed through this House, when it is presenting a single piece of legislation as four or five different bills.

The Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024 contains nine schedules. I indicate that the Opposition supports the bill as those schedules are uncontroversial. Schedule 1 concerns amendments to the Children (Detention Centres) Act. The bill clarifies the regulation-making powers for searches of detainees, rooms and their property, removing confusion about the application of those powers and the powers of the secretary or centre management regarding those searches. Schedule 2, which is slightly over a few pages, makes amendments to the Coptic Orthodox Church (NSW) Property Trust Act 1990. The amendments update the Act to reflect changes in the Coptic Orthodox Church's constitution, replacing the sole trustee model with a board of trustees. The board, known as the Diocesan Trustees, will now manage the property trust.

Schedule 3 to the bill makes amendments to the Defamation Act 2005, extending the defence of absolute privilege to complaints made to the judicial commission under section 15 of the Judicial Officers Act 1986. The change aims to protect complainants from defamation suits, encouraging them to report issues such as sexual harassment, assault, bullying and discrimination without fear of legal repercussions. The bill also extends the defences for the publication of public documents and fair reports of proceedings to documents produced to and in the proceedings of the Modern Slavery Committee. The amendment is intended to bring the committee in line with protections for other committees.

Schedule 4 concerns eight lines of language, including the explanatory note to schedule 4, which makes amendments to the Dormant Funds Act 1942. The duties of the Commissioner of Dormant Funds include identifying dormant funds, requiring financial statements and developing proposals for their use. Clause 5 of the Dormant Funds Regulation specifies a fee of 5 per cent of the fund's value for developing a proposal. Questions have been raised as to whether or not there is legislative power to support that regulation, and the amendment clarifies that regulations may impose such a fee. Schedule 5 to the bill contains eight lines of text, which amends the Firearms Act.

Schedule 6 contains 10 lines of text, including the explanatory note, which amends the Prisoners (Interstate Transfer) Act. Those amendments allow the Secretary of the Department of Communities and Justice to delegate granting of consent for the transfer of a prisoner between States and jurisdictions. Schedule 7 to the bill, which contains 14 lines of text including an explanatory note, makes amendments to the Solicitor General Act 1969. The amendments will allow the Solicitor General to exercise the Attorney General's functions when the Attorney General is on leave but still within the State, ensuring continuity of duties.

Schedule 8 to the bill makes amendments to the Terrorism (High Risk Offenders) Act. The Act requires that an offender must be serving a sentence for a New South Wales indictable offence at the end of their overall prison term to be eligible for post-sentence orders. The amendment ensures that offenders can still be subject to post-sentence orders even if the specific sentence for the New South Wales indictable offence has expired at the end of the overall term. That prevents offenders from avoiding post-sentence orders due to the timing of their sentences and brings the legislation into line with other high-risk offenders, such as those who commit sexual assault.

Schedule 9 to the bill, which contains 15 lines of text, deals with the amendment of the Trees (Dispute Between Neighbours) Act 2006. The member for Willoughby is in the Chamber. He will probably remember from when he was a practising solicitor that boundary disputes involving trees are some of the great litigious matters within our State. The Opposition supports the bill. It would be desirable if the Government could incorporate the five pieces of legislation into one. That would be far more honest to the people of New South Wales as to the true nature of the business being conducted by this House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (10:51):** The Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024 bill represents an important step in updating and refining various Acts that deal with the court systems, crime and justice-related matters in New South Wales. The bill amends several Acts to ensure that our legal frameworks remain robust, adaptable and in line with the needs of our society. The bill, while miscellaneous in nature, is no less significant in its purpose. From the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 to the Terrorism (High Risk Offenders) Act 2017, the amendments outlined in the bill are designed to improve legal processes, increase efficiency in government operations and ensure that various statutes are up to date.

One of the key features of the bill is the amendment to the Coptic Orthodox Church (NSW) Property Trust Act 1990. That is a testament to the ongoing relationship between our Government and the diverse religious communities within our State. The bill sets out specific amendments through its clauses. Clause 1 provides the short title of the proposed Act, while clause 2 addresses its commencement. Clause 3 ensures that explanatory notes in the schedules do not form part of the Act. The amendment to the Coptic Orthodox Church (NSW) Property Trust Act 1990 reflects constitutional reforms made within the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Sydney and Affiliated Regions. The amendments will shift the current sole trustee structure of the property trust to a board of trustees, known as the "diocesan trustees". That change will better reflect the governance structure of the church and ensure legal compliance for actions taken since the constitutional change in September 2022.

Importantly, the amendment was made at the request of the Coptic Church community and is fully compliant with New South Wales policies on church governance. The amendment addresses the unique needs of religious and community organisations, as evidenced by the changes to the Coptic Orthodox Church (NSW) Property Trust Act. The changes are not simply bureaucratic updates; they ensure that the governance of church property aligns with the evolving structures within the religious community, in turn reflecting our State's commitment to respecting and supporting its diverse cultural and religious institutions.

I now speak about the transformation of the Sydney Coptic Orthodox Diocese from its humble beginnings in 1969 to today. I credit the historical information provided from the book entitled *Coptic Orthodox Church of Australia 1969-1994* by Mr Maged Attia, now known as Father Matthew Attia. The Coptic Orthodox Church is one of the oldest apostolic churches in the world. The Copts are the native Christians of Egypt and the direct descendants of the ancient Egyptians. The term "Copt" is derived from the Greek word "Aigýptios", meaning "Egyptian". The history of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Australia is closely associated with the early migration of its people to Australia during the 1950s and 1960s.

Australia's population is particularly urbanised, and it is not surprising that the Copts settled in Sydney and Melbourne, where there were employment opportunities. It should be noted that migrant Copts did not cluster together in certain areas or districts. Rather, they dispersed over a wider area throughout New South Wales due to proximity to places of work, schools and shopping facilities. Being separated from both their land and their church, the first Coptic settlers used to gather informally for prayers and bible studies. Those families, seeking some security and a sense of identity in their new homeland, grouped together in July 1967 and formed the Coptic Orthodox Society. The society was formed at the initiative of the late Mr Amin Salib.

The role of the society was to assist new migrant Coptic families and individuals in finding accommodation, obtaining a job and learning English. Immediately after the establishment of the Coptic Orthodox Society there was a deep desire for a Coptic Church in Australia. On 30 July 1967 a letter was sent to the then Pope, His Holiness Pope Kyrillos VI, 1902 to 1971, requesting that a church be established and a priest be sent to serve the community of Sydney. The Coptic community was pleased to receive a reply to their request from His Grace Bishop Samuel, who lived from 1920 to 1981 and was the bishop for public, ecumenical and social services, by letter in November 1967 advising that His Holiness had approved the establishment of a new church in Australia and had chosen Deacon Edward Labib Nematalla to be ordained as the first priest for Australia.

Deacon Edward was ordained priest and given the name Father Mina. He began his journey on 15 December 1968 by ship, when he and his family boarded the liner *Patris* on the shores of Alexandria heading to Australia. Father Mina and his family arrived in Sydney Harbour at Circular Quay on Friday 24 January 1969. The first Coptic mass was conducted at a Salvation Army hall in Redfern. There was a need to forge relationships with the Australian Government. As such, Father Mina took the opportunity to visit the New South Wales Governor His Excellency Sir Roden Cutler and presented the Governor with a gift of a Coptic cross.

During those formative years, Father Mina obtained an authority from the Department of Immigration to sponsor prospective migrants to Australia. That represented one of the most important services conducted by the church and resulted in an influx of new migrants coming from Egypt. Father Mina ensured that any new arrivals to Australia were made to feel welcome and form part of the community. Father Mina undertook this role not only for those who were Coptic Orthodox but other Christians and non-Christians from Egypt. The Coptic congregation was growing with new arrivals each week, which demanded that the Copts search for a permanent home for their church in Sydney. The Copts purchased the old Methodist church in Sydenham. The church was given the name of St Mary and St Mina, and this was the first Coptic church in Australia and the first owned by Coptic migrants outside of Egypt. The first liturgy celebrated in the newly purchased church was on 29 March 1970.

With the establishment of St Mary and St Mina's church, the first management board was created with 10 serving members. I am honoured to mention that my late father, Mr Mamdouh Atalla, OAM, was appointed the first treasurer of the management board in 1969. Sadly, my father passed away in 2015. I am thankful that, before his passing, my father got to witness my inauguration in this place as the first elected Coptic member of Parliament outside Egypt. I also make a special mention of Dr Farag Gobran, OAM, who is the sole surviving member of the inaugural board. Dr Gobran served on the first board with my late father and later became the secretary of the board.

The Coptic Orthodox Church in New South Wales has grown from its humble beginnings of 20 families to 100,000 members. New South Wales now has a bishop, His Grace Bishop Daniel; 86 priests servicing 35 churches; three schools; a nunnery; a monastery; a consecrated sisters house; a theological college; and a youth association. The Coptic Church also provides community outreach services and has many benevolent societies. With the influx of Egyptian migrants, a consulate was established to assist with consular services for Egyptians living in New South Wales and to strengthen ties between Egypt and Australia. I acknowledge the current Consul General of Egypt in Sydney, His Excellency Mr Mohamed Khalil.

I thank the Attorney General and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General for bringing this important amendment to the property trust Act to the House. I also acknowledge the interim board, appointed by His Holiness Pope Tawadros II in 2020. The interim board was headed by His Eminence Metropolitan Tadros, bishop of the city of Port Said in Egypt, with the two other board members being Dr Medhat Guergis and Mr Nick Kaldas. The interim board was tasked with reforming the New South Wales Constitution and the property trust Act. Much of the work done to reform the property trust Act can be credited to the interim board. I also acknowledge Father Joshua Tadros, who was appointed as Papal Legate and chairperson of the Diocesan Board of Trustees. The amendment in the bill will align the Act with the constitution of the diocese and allow for the administration and financial affairs of this large institution to be managed by a board of trustees. I commend the bill to the House.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** It being 11.00 a.m., pursuant to standing and sessional orders, debate is interrupted for question time. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome everybody who has joined us in the gallery today. We are always happy to see members of the public coming to Australia's first Parliament. Specifically, I acknowledge and welcome school leaders from Granville Boys High School, Muslim Girls Grammar School, Cerdon College and Merrylands High School, guests of the member for Granville. I also welcome to the Chamber guests of the member for Fairfield, who are parents and carers from Fairfield West Public School. They cannot sit any higher up in the gallery. It is a great honour to be in that exalted position.

I welcome constituents from the Bluegum Lifestyle Resort, guests of the member for Wollondilly. I acknowledge and welcome an interesting group of guests of the member for Kiama from Shoalhaven Superheroes. I also acknowledge guests of the member for Riverstone from the Riverstone Youth Forum, students from Wyndham College, Norwest Christian College, The Ponds High School and Riverstone High School. It is a fine-looking gallery so far, topped off by guests of the member for Lake Macquarie, who are members of the Toronto Lions Club. Finally, I welcome students from Marrickville High School. I welcome everyone to the Parliament.

*Rulings***MEMBER CONDUCT**

**The SPEAKER (11:06):** Before we commence formalities, I will reflect on the behaviour of members during question time yesterday. It is not for me to be self-righteous or sanctimonious. I am a member of the House, like any other member, and I am not infallible in my behaviour or in my rulings. However, as the Presiding Officer, my rulings about maintaining order in the House, even when members disagree with me, will not be challenged. There are procedures for that. Only a little while ago, on 19 September, I made a ruling about my expectations regarding member conduct. They are also the expectations of members of the House. The ruling went to the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee, which gave it quite a bit of consideration. My final paragraph stated:

It is my expectation that all members will take personal responsibility to abide by proper standards of debate in this place and that I will not be required to intervene.

I thank members for listening to my ruling. I am sure we can progress in accordance with the intention of that statement. I will consider yesterday to be an aberration. I know most members were surprised at the way in which behaviour in the House descended yesterday. I know members on both sides of the House, particularly our leaders, have espoused very worthy intentions about behaviour during debate. I have heard it said that it is a robust House. It is, but debate can be robust and based on a contest of ideas. It does not have to get personal.

Sometimes it is difficult to understand from the chair whether members' comments are personal or simply an aside. Yesterday I was not aware of the whole context, and I will not review that now. If any members were disappointed by the way things went yesterday, they join me in that sentiment. It was brought to my attention that I perhaps used inappropriate words when I asked the member for Goulburn to resume her seat. I did not mean to be patronising, but I understand the way in which I spoke could have been interpreted in that way. All members have espoused a desire to act better, and that will be my intention too. I cannot change the way I preside, but I will learn little by little, and I hope that all other members do the same.

*Question Time***NURSE WAGES**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:09):** My question is directed to the Premier. With nurses in the gallery watching on, the Premier is now saying that nurses have to choose between staffing ratios and wage increases. Did he tell the nurses that before they were out campaigning for him in the election?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:09):** I am happy to tell nurses or any health workers in New South Wales that the Coalition will reintroduce the wages cap in New South Wales. We say unambiguously that during the midst of COVID the wages cap was not 2½ per cent; it went to zero. That was a catastrophic mistake by the previous Government. I make this point as well: In the election campaign, and since, the Government has committed to removing the wages cap with an interim one-year deal of 4½ per cent—not 2½ or zero; permanent safe staffing levels in New South Wales public hospitals—1:3 in emergency departments and 1:4 on the ward; and the permanent employment of 1,119 COVID nurses who would have been summarily sacked by the then New South Wales Government.



**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The question is very specific: What did the Premier tell the nurses before the election? Was he honest and up-front before the election?

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition. There is no point of order. In a sense, I believe the question was somewhat ironic.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I make this clear: as part of our negotiations, yes, the health Minister sat down with the union and said, "If your priority right now is wages"—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** What did you say before the election?

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Does the Leader of the Opposition want to know the answer to it? If the priority is now wages, we will negotiate with the union about boosting in particular RN1 and RN2 wages so that they can be second or even first in the nation. We recognise they are way below other States and jurisdictions. Under the Government's proposal, which is 40 per cent more generous than the previous Government's offer, RN8s, which is about 40 per cent of the nursing workforce, would be the second highest paid of any jurisdiction in the country—not first, second first. In relation to RN1s and RN2s, we tried to work with the nurses' association about ensuring we could lift pay to be more competitive with other States.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** That was rejected by the nurses' association, and I am not condemning them for it. I am not suggesting it is outrageous for them to do that.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** We are in a situation where mortgages are rising and, of course, nurses are finding it difficult to pay their mortgages, but we are attempting to come to a consensus. The truth of the matter is that is unlikely to happen.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** But as a result of the Government lifting the wages cap in New South Wales and establishing an independent industrial umpire, the Government's—

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Mr Speaker, it feels like they do not want an answer. It is complete interruption. *[Time expired.]*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Port Macquarie will come to order. The member for Vacluse will come to order. The member for Goulburn will come to order. Their behaviour stood out during that answer. I warn them that they will be placed on calls to order if they continue to interject.

**Mr Chris Minns:** They should apologise.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you. I do not need advice from the Premier.

### TEACHER WORKFORCE

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (11:13):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on the New South Wales Government's work to address the teacher shortage crisis and lessen the impact of merged and cancelled classes on student learning across the State?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:13):** I thank the member for Shellharbour for that great and important question. Under the previous Government's 12-year wages cap policy in New South Wales, we saw teacher vacancies in New South Wales public schools skyrocket. For the first time in the history of public education, resignations beat retirements in our public education system. We were in a situation where just 64 per cent of New South Wales public school teachers were on permanent contracts. That is the kind of dedication that the previous Government showed to frontline workers in our public education system. We had a situation where vacancies rose to 3,311. To put this in perspective, the real-world consequences of this meant there were 10,000 cancelled or merged classes every day in a New South Wales public school.

A lot of people are in the gallery today. When I was in school, when the teacher was away, a substitute teacher would come in—maybe students would cheer that and would be happy about that. In any event, under the previous Government, there were no substitute teachers; the class was cancelled. So we need to put this in context. This was unprecedented when it comes to public education in New South Wales. A previous education Minister

was asked about this. She said, "For Labor to use these claims of a kind of shortage of thousands and thousands of teachers is just not true. The data does not stack up." She went on to say a couple of weeks later, "It is not something that I am overly worried about"—that is good. And in a debate with the now Deputy Premier, then Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the former Minister, said, "You are constantly peddling this myth that thousands of kids are turning up without a teacher ... it is a lie". Ten thousand cancelled or merged classes a day was a lie!

Anyway, I can report to the House that as a result of lifting the wages cap, moving through a once-in-a-generation pay deal for teachers in New South Wales, and ensuring permanency for 16,000 teachers and support staff in our public education system, teacher vacancies are down by 25 per cent in New South Wales public schools.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I can also report to the House that rather than 10,000 cancelled or merged classes a day, the number is now 5,600—a nearly 50 per cent decline in 18 months. That is an extraordinary achievement for our frontline public school teachers, who want to educate the next generation of young Australians. It is a vocation to work in our public schools. They are not going to become millionaires from that profession, but we desperately need them. All they needed was a little bit of help and a little bit of support from the New South Wales Government. [*Extension of time*]

The turnaround in some areas has been massive. In the electorates of Shellharbour and in the electorate of Lake Macquarie, merged and cancelled classes are down 78 per cent; in the electorate of Wallsend, 75 per cent; Camden, 62 per cent; and in Fairfield, 60 per cent. In Liberal and National electorates, in Terrigal merged and cancelled classes are down 77 per cent—

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** In the electorate of Coffs Harbour, 73 per cent; and in Castle Hill, 70 per cent. That is a massive turnaround. Members can say to the public schools in their electorates that there will be a teacher on post, on staff to educate the children. That is a fundamental responsibility of public education. But we were criticised. A member of Parliament put out a statement yesterday saying, "We are still seeing 5,700 cancelled and merged classes in public schools, and that is very concerning." Guess who said that?

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Sarah Mitchell.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Sarah Mitchell. After the election, it was a massive concern. Before it, do not worry about it—it was not a problem. We have seen a 50 per cent decline. This goes from police to health to education. In every single one of those portfolios, the previous Ministers ran those departments into the ground. They now have the gall to stand up and prescribe solutions to the current Government. We will not listen to those opposite when it comes to industrial relations or investment in the next generation because they had 12 years and they comprehensively failed.

## NURSE WAGES

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vacluse) (11:18):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. With nurses in the gallery watching on, exactly what promises did Labor make to them regarding wages during and after the election?

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

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:18):** I begin by acknowledging the Nurses and Midwives' Association and its members in the gallery for the work they do at every one of our hospitals and health facilities across New South Wales. It is critical work, particularly at the moment. It seems unbelievably ironic, and perhaps it is a bit of inexperience, that someone—

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** —from a political party that capped wages for over a decade, which led to other jurisdictions across the country that did not impose wages caps having greater wages gaps than New South Wales, would be so foolish to stand up in the Chamber—

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** Point of order—

**Mr RYAN PARK:** —and talk about an issue—

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

[*Interruption*]

I call the Minister to order for the first time.

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, relevance. The question asked was what promises did the Minister make to the unions and nurses about wages.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. All members will come to order. The Minister will be heard in silence.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Last year this Government promised and delivered the removal of a wages cap that the previous Government imposed for over a decade.

**The SPEAKER:** The Manager of Opposition Business will come to order.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** In addition to that, we also promised and have commenced delivering the biggest reform to the way in which hospitals are staffed in an entire generation. We are the first government in the history of New South Wales to commence, not finish, the rollout of ratios. Members opposite opposed that reform then and they oppose it now, like the wages cap they supported then and support now. Those were the commitments we made.

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The question was about wages, not the trade-off.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister's time has expired. I will hear no further points of order taken under Standing Order 129 in that manner.

### HEALTH SERVICES

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (11:22):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to strengthen public health services across New South Wales?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:22):** I thank the member for Bega for his advocacy and the work that he has done in southern New South Wales over many decades, providing important health services to his community. Most members in the Chamber, but not all visitors in the gallery, would know that when we took over government last year we faced a number of key challenges. Today I outline some of those challenges and will go through some of the reforms this Government is investing in.

Firstly, we knew that the wages cap that was in place for over a decade was causing significant gaps between the pay of our frontline workers in New South Wales and those in other jurisdictions. The Treasurer and the Premier moved swiftly to provide frontline workers with their largest pay increase in over a decade. Secondly, we were confronted with 1,100 nurses who would have their employment terminated from 1 July this year. Thirdly, we were faced with a system that had over 17,000 people on the elective surgery waiting list for longer than clinically recommended. They were three significant challenges for a government to address in its very first week. Over the past 18 months we have worked diligently and carefully with our healthcare workforce, organisations like the Nurses and Midwives' Association, the Health Services Union and the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation to systematically address those issues. We have reduced the elective surgery waitlist by 85 per cent.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Last financial year, we employed around 7,000 nurses, which is 1,500 more than in the last year of the previous Government.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** We removed the wages cap to provide an immediate boost to wages of working men and women who had not seen an increase like that in over a decade. From that, the reform work has continued. We have announced over half a billion dollars in emergency department avoidance services, designed to take pressure off very busy emergency departments across our communities. *[Extension of time]*

In addition, as I outlined earlier, we have been the first government to commence the rollout of ratios across hospitals in New South Wales. The first 100 nurses are in place, and we will continue that rollout in partnership with the Nurses and Midwives' Association, which sits alongside—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, direct relevance. We are now over four minutes into the answer and the Minister has failed to explain why, for two years in a row,

the Government has made real cuts to health spending and why, as the Nurses and Midwives' Association says, this is a catastrophe waiting to happen.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. There is no point of order. The Minister is being directly relevant. That is not a valid point of order. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Just so that everyone in the gallery is clear, the member for Cronulla sat in the Cabinet that imposed the wages cap for over 10 years. That member sat in the Cabinet room that, in the middle of COVID, passed a 0 per cent wage increase for healthcare workers. Importantly, in addition we have reformed salary packaging to see some of our lowest paid workers get thousands of dollars back into their pockets because of a reform pushed and advocated for by the Health Services Union and delivered by this Government. We have more work to do, but we will continue to engage with the workforce, focus on their needs and improve health services.

### BYRON SHIRE OUTREACH PROGRAM

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (11:27):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health on behalf of the Minister for Housing. Byron shire currently has the highest number of rough sleepers in the State, and those people are locals. Will the Minister extend the assertive outreach program for another year in Byron shire?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:27):** I thank the member for Ballina for raising this issue. Anyone who understands the Northern Rivers and North Coast knows that there is an acute housing shortage in that part of the world. I had the opportunity, when I was the shadow Minister for Homelessness, to engage in and go along with one of the assertive outreach teams in the city. I met with people living on the street and living in rough places and spaces, and Homes NSW and its staff engaged directly with them. That was designed to make sure that we provide wraparound services and an opportunity for those people to be housed. I hope that this issue has bipartisan support across the Chamber.

The Government invested \$1.3 million into the new assertive outreach program in the Byron shire local government area. Since patrols began in March 2024, we are happy to share that the team has delivered more than 135 engagements to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in the community. It is wonderful to see engagement has been so high. I am also able to confirm to the member that Minister Jackson met with Byron Shire Council just last week, where council raised similar concerns to her. In that meeting Minister Jackson outlined the various housing programs available to Byron Shire Council and assured the council that we will look into what the New South Wales Government is able to do to not only make the programs more accessible but also extend them. Minister Jackson and the New South Wales Government obviously take the issue of homelessness and housing extremely seriously.

Not a single member in this Chamber, if they were being honest with themselves, could say they have seen a government put so much priority on housing as the Minns Labor Government has done in its first 18 months. Recently the New South Wales Government took the historic step to build more homes and set the State on a path to end homelessness for good. The \$6.6 billion record investment in Building Homes for NSW reflects our commitment to housing and turning ideas into action. The investment is the largest of its kind, a once in a generation program that will directly build thousands of homes across our State to confront the challenge of housing, one of the biggest crises our community members face, particularly young people. [*Extension of time*]

The program will build 8,400 social homes across New South Wales, alongside funding maintenance for 33,500 social homes—something every member across the Chamber would agree is absolutely critical. As we all know, having a safe home is foundational to a person's wellbeing. The 2024-25 New South Wales budget is a blueprint to build the housing the people of New South Wales need and deserve. Our investment into the Building Homes for NSW program is a clear indication of the Government's dedication to addressing the housing crisis and creating long-term solutions to tackling homelessness.

Whether it is the work we are doing around rental reform, planning and providing additional housing, transport-orientated development, social and affordable housing or the assertive outreach teams, let me assure the community that the Government is dogged in its determination to address the housing crisis impacting communities across New South Wales. We will work on this crisis on a number of fronts, and we remain willing to work on specific issues and challenges in local communities. I thank the member for Ballina for raising an important issue. I encourage members of the House who have not gone out on an assertive outreach patrol to do so. They will experience some of the most challenging service delivery situations people will find themselves in. Members of the team at Homes NSW have a big heart and are determined to deliver the very best services for some of the most marginalised people in New South Wales.

## PUBLIC SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (11:32):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to address overcrowding in New South Wales public schools by delivering quality permanent education infrastructure in our fastest growing suburbs?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:33):** I thank the member for Prospect for his important question. I say hello to all the school students and teachers from Granville and Fairfield and the parents from Fairfield West and Riverstone in the gallery. Before I get to the substance of the question, I also pay tribute to Fiona Kelly, the principal of Menindee Central School, who I met last week in Menindee, just outside of Broken Hill. Incredible work is happening at that school. I am really proud to be Fiona's Minister. I had never seen a whole year 1 class give a principal a bear hug. That is the sort of school that benefits from the reduction of merged and cancelled classes that the Premier was talking about in his earlier answer. Turning to the member for Prospect's question, I know he gets very frustrated about the subject I am going to speak about right now—and God almighty, doesn't he have a right to get frustrated! Have members seen what the Liberals and The Nationals did to Girraween Public School?

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Those opposite let Girraween Public School become so overcrowded, refusing to ever invest in an upgrade, that three-quarters of the classrooms were in fact demountables. In education we need demountables from time to time as populations rise and fall, but for an extended period of time three-quarters of that school's classrooms were demountables. The local member, with his community, consistently said, "Hey, we might need an upgrade over here. We've got lots and lots of kids and you don't ever seem to have any plan to upgrade it." The member for Prospect, the Premier and I were there a few weeks ago, and that time of frustration for Girraween Public School is over. We are proud of that. Enough is enough. We have drawn a line under that period and work has now begun on a long overdue upgrade.

The upgrade will replace 38 demountables with permanent facilities for those kids. It goes to show just how much it was needed. The member for Prospect and his community have made a difference by jumping up and down, because the Government has actually listened. There will be new play spaces, and a new library for kids to engage with, where they can have classes and discover a love of reading, which will make sure that they can excel in all of their subject areas. The upgrade will be delivered in two stages, the first at the beginning of 2026. It is long overdue. It is happening because the Government is committed to public education and delivering the upgrades that are needed in Western Sydney.

## NURSE TO PATIENT RATIOS

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (11:36):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. I note the nurses watching in the gallery. The nurses union website states, "the current funding allocation is not enough to roll out ratios in every hospital, ward and unit." Are the nurses correct, or is this another broken promise?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:36):** With the nurses watching on in the gallery, let me assure the House of this: No health Minister—certainly not one from the other side of the Chamber—has ever engaged with the workforce as much as I have.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Wahrenonga to order for the first time. Members will come to order. The Clerk will stop the clock. I call the member for Port Macquarie to order for the third time. I direct the member for Myall Lakes to remove herself from the Chamber for the duration of the Minister's answer under Standing Order 249A.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Myall Lakes left the Chamber at 11:37.]*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Port Macquarie did not stop speaking when I called for order, which the member well knows is disorderly. The Minister will resume his answer.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** It is embarrassing that I have to say this, but I do not need to look at a website to engage with the workforce. What I do is engage with the workforce.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order—

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I find dealing with humans a lot easier.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume his seat.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** The question was not in relation to—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has resumed his seat. I have not yet given the member for Coffs Harbour the call. He knows how it works. It is in the standing orders. I now call the member for Coffs Harbour.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The question was not about the Minister's ability to engage with the union. It was about whether the nurses' union website is correct or whether it is another broken Labor promise.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has wide latitude when answering the question.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Having been working on this initiative for about 5½ years, I will try to condense it, without pictures, into something that members on that side of the Chamber can interpret. In the lead-up to the last election, in relation to the rollout of ratios, the team from the Nurses and Midwives' Association and I put up a proposal that would prioritise those emergency departments and a range of other components, including general wards, across New South Wales hospitals. For those members who do not understand, in other jurisdictions where this has taken place, it has taken many turns. We are trying to do this literally as fast as we can. Unlike other jurisdictions, we have the Nurses and Midwives' Association in partnership with NSW Health on the implementation.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** All of us want to see this rollout done as fast as possible, but I will not be lectured to by a side of politics that did not agree to this reform, does not believe in this reform and will not introduce this reform. That is what I will not do.

#### ROAD TRAUMA SUPPORT

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (11:40):** My question is addressed to the Attorney General. Will the Attorney General please update the House on the New South Wales Government's work to expand support available to family members of persons killed in road crimes?

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (11:41):** I thank the member for Cessnock very much for that question. No member in this place can begin to imagine the pain and trauma and devastation of losing a loved one, particularly in the circumstances of a road crash or road crime. I cannot begin to imagine what families are going through. All I can say is that those families I have met with on a number of occasions now, through their collective group, fervently wish that none of us go through that. What we can do is collectively listen to those families who were impacted by those horrible acts and who say that the psychological and emotional burden of losing family members is massive—it is tectonic.

The New South Wales Government—in fact, all of us—recognise that a death caused by the criminal act of a driver has the same devastating impact on a family that any other act of violence has. That is why, before the 2023 election, we met with families, members of the Road Trauma Support Group and Martha Jabour and we promised to extend counselling services under the Victims Support Scheme to family members of persons killed by road crimes. That is what they asked for. I am pleased to report that the New South Wales Government is delivering on that commitment, and I have given notice that I will introduce a bill today. We are doing that because it is the right and decent thing to do. Later today I will introduce the Victims Rights and Support Amendment (Victims Support Counselling) Bill 2024 to make counselling available through the Victims Support Scheme, under the Victims Rights and Support Act, to family members of a person killed in a motor vehicle crash where someone is charged in relation to that crash.

Under the proposed changes, family members will also be eligible for counselling services if charges cannot be laid because the offender has died or cannot be located, provided there is sufficient evidence to establish that an offence has apparently occurred. An eligible family member will be able to access 22 hours of approved counselling—the same as other victims and their families under the Act—with further hours available if approved by the Commissioner of Victims Rights. Currently, most incidents involving motor vehicles are excluded from being so-called "acts of violence" as defined under the Victims Rights and Support Act. They are excluded from those benefits. Family members of road crime experience the same trauma as any other family who has lost a loved one because of a criminal act. The Government's proposed amendments will ensure they receive the same counselling as they navigate their loss. Anyone who has lost a loved one deserves support as they try to live with their loss, especially if the death has occurred as the result of a criminal offence, including a road crime. [*Extension of time*]

This legislation delivers on our election commitment to offer grieving families the counselling support they asked for and the counselling support they deserve. We have listened to the community and we will deliver legislation that will make a real difference. We all know that loss manifests itself in different ways and at different times. For some, psychological impacts can take time to fully manifest after the immediate shock has been fully comprehended. That is why, in the future, there will be no requirement that family members apply to the Victims Support Scheme within a particular time period after the crime occurred. A person may seek counselling at the time appropriate for them. Eligible family victims will be able to access counselling under the Victims Support Scheme if the road crime occurs on or after a date two years prior to the commencement of the new laws.

However, importantly, the commissioner will retain the discretion to accept applications from family members of people killed before this date in exceptional circumstances. These changes are the direct result of the advocacy of those impacted by road crime and their supporters. I thank the Road Trauma Support Group and the many parents who have come to sit with me and tell me their stories. They are led by the indefatigable Martha Jabour, whom we all know. They are good parents and they are good people. It is their expressions of love, their stories about the impact of their loss, their bravery and their advocacy that has resulted in those changes that I will introduce to the House today.

### NURSE TO PATIENT RATIOS

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (11:46):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. With nurses watching on from the public gallery, is Emma Gedge of the nurses union correct in saying that Liverpool Hospital emergency department [ED] is the only department that has recruited enough staff to meet the Minister's staff-to-patient ratios?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Canterbury will come to order. The Minister is capable of answering the question. He will be heard in silence.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:46):** Firstly, we have all acknowledged the nurses and midwives in the gallery. I get the importance of reading from a script—that is understandable. It is particularly important when—

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Once again, I will go through the way in which the reform works so that the member for Oatley can understand it.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** It is interesting that the member chose Liverpool Hospital for a number of reasons. First, on our very first day the Premier and I met with staff at Liverpool Hospital. We made clear our dogged determination and approach to reduce—

**Mr Mark Coure:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, direct relevance. It was a very simple question: Is Emma Gedge of the nurses union correct in saying that Liverpool Hospital ED is the only department that has recruited enough staff to meet the Minister's staff-to-patient ratios?

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will be directly relevant. The member for Canterbury will cease interjecting.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Overdue elective surgeries have been reduced by 85 per cent. Secondly, in relation to the rollout of ratios—a reform that I am sure the nurses are aware of—the Opposition does not support them. In relation to the rollout of ratios, from the very beginning we made it clear that this reform begins in our emergency departments. In relation to Liverpool—

**Mr Mark Coure:** Point of order: This is my second point of order. It is a very simple point of order under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. It was a very simple question—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Canterbury will cease interjecting. The member for Oatley will resume his seat. I uphold the point of order. The Minister will be directly relevant to the question.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** We are rolling out ratios, commencing in our emergency departments.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** When you begin a reform, you have to start somewhere in the hospital. In partnership with the nurses and midwives we made a decision to start that reform at our emergency departments, which will, for the first time in the State's history, move from a one-to-three ratio.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I understand in Liverpool Hospital, from memory—

**Mr Mark Coure:** Mr Speaker—

**Mr RYAN PARK:** —we have recruited over 30 staff to ensure we rolled that out at one of the busiest hospitals in the country.

**The SPEAKER:** Does the member for Oatley have a point of order?

**Mr Mark Coure:** Mr Speaker, I seek an extension of time.

**The SPEAKER:** I deny the request. The Minister will resume his seat.

#### RENTAL LAWS

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (11:50):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to create a fairer system for the millions of renters across New South Wales?

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

**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) (11:50):** I thank the member for Coogee for her question and for her strong advocacy for the 48 per cent of households in her electorate that are renters. I am thrilled that on 24 October this Parliament passed the most comprehensive suite of rental reforms we have seen in over a decade. The historic legislative reforms follow through on Labor's election commitment to improve rental laws and strike a balance between the interests of owners and the millions of renters across New South Wales.

The reforms will mean that more than 2.3 million renters across our State will soon enjoy the following benefits: No grounds evictions will be banned; rent increases will now be limited to once a year; it will be easier to have pets in rentals; renters must have a fee-free way to pay their rent; and making renters pay for their own background checks will now be banned. The banning of no grounds evictions will ensure housing security for renters, allowing them to make a house a home. The reforms will also give landlords greater clarity on when they can end a fixed-term or periodic lease based on clear, straightforward reasons. The historic reforms from the Minns Labor Government will also make it easier to have pets in rentals, with landlords only able to decline a renter's application to keep a pet on certain grounds. Renters will also have free ways to pay their rent by requiring property owners and agents to offer zero-fee ways to pay their rent, such as a simple bank transfer or the Commonwealth Centrepay.

I am extremely proud to inform the House that the new laws limiting rent increases to once a year and the ban on renters having to pay for their background checks have actually commenced. The ban on no grounds evictions and the rules making it easier to have pets in rentals will start once the Residential Tenancies Regulation 2019 has been amended in early 2025. The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2024 also complements key initiatives already announced to rebalance the rental market, such as the \$6.6 million we are investing to develop the nation's first Portable Rental Bonds Scheme. That reform will mean eligible renters can move homes and take their rental bond with them by digitally transferring their existing bond to their next property. We have also established Rent Check, a new free website that renters can use to help check whether the rent they are paying is fair. We have also funded the Rental Taskforce within NSW Fair Trading. The Government will invest \$8.4 million for a taskforce with inspectors and support teams to help renters and act on serious breaches of rental laws. *[Extension of time]*

But I haven't finished—there's more, Mr Speaker! The Minns Labor Government is providing even more support to renters through a massive \$4 million funding boost to the Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service, which is an extra million dollars a year over the next four years. That excellent service comprises a network of 21 local not-for-profit organisations that help tenants to understand their rights, support them during negotiations and in resolving disputes, and assist and advocate for them at the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. It is a very worthy service for the millions of renters across New South Wales. Those landmark reforms are bringing the New South Wales rental market into the twenty-first century.

The reforms also get the balance right by providing more security for renters and greater certainty for landlords. For too long, landlords and renters have been pitted against each other. But we know that landlords want good tenants and good tenants want good landlords. A better and fairer rental market benefits everyone. The reforms are needed to help families build their lives around a home that they know they will not be asked to leave without reason. The reforms are needed to stop young people abandoning this great State because they cannot take another rental increase. The reforms are needed because pets are part of the family, whether someone is a



homeowner or a renter. We are delivering a fairer balance and greater certainty to the New South Wales rental market at a time when it is sorely needed. In closing, I thank all members in this House who supported the once-in-a-generation reforms which will make a huge difference to the millions of renters in New South Wales.

### HOUSING MINISTER COMMENTS

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (11:55):** My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. The housing Minister said on radio that there are places in Sydney where someone could rent a two-bedroom apartment for \$200 a week. Does a comment like that show how the Government is completely out of its depth when it comes to housing?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:55):** A question like that shows how out of depth and out of touch the Opposition is when it comes to housing. That is what it shows. The Opposition has opposed every single reform to deliver more homes in New South Wales that this Government has introduced. And it is destined to do more. The Opposition left this plan as the planning system in New South Wales. The Opposition left that. This Opposition left private citizens responsible for the planning system in New South Wales. This Opposition left 50,000 families short when it came to social housing. This Opposition is the most tin-eared, ignorant group that I have ever seen when it comes to housing. When it came to giving working men and women an opportunity to have housing—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Oh, here he is, protecting himself.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume his seat.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The Minister was talking about the Opposition. The question was about the Government: Is it out of depth when we see the lowest housing approvals for 12 years?

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. The Minister was not being directly relevant.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I will be directly relevant. We are absolutely not out of touch with the cost of housing. But I appreciate the member for Kellyville has a strong track record of raising issues in relation to planning. In fact, he was so disgusted in his Government that he came into this place and accused it of corruption. He accused the Liberal Party branches in his area of being run by property developers.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume his seat. Members will come to order. I will hear the point of order.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** It is under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The Minister is flouting your ruling.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister answered the question directly. He could not have been more directly relevant. I am surprised in the Leader of the Opposition, but I am not here to coach members on how to take points of order. There is no point of order.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** It is disappointing that the leader of the nimby, the member for Cronulla, keeps interrupting me. He obviously does not like hearing about his Government's track record.

**Mr Ray Williams:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, relevance. I know you have already ruled on that, Mr Speaker. I think the Minister has demonstrated quite clearly that he is completely out of his depth in terms of housing.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I thought you wanted an extension. You are out of your depth in a car park puddle, mate.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume his seat. We shall now resume the orderly conduct of question time. The member for Oatley will come to order. All members will come to order and listen respectfully to the question from the member for Gosford.

### BROKEN HILL POWER SUPPLY

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (11:59):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Lands and Property. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government's long-term lease with Hydrostor will increase energy security for Broken Hill and boost the local economy?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (11:59):** I thank the fantastic member for Gosford for her question. She is a keen supporter of clean energy solutions. I pay tribute to another great community representative, the member for Barwon. In the fallout of the Transgrid outage, the member for Barwon has been an exemplary parliamentarian, a great example of how to manage rural communities. This is something everyone from the Labor Party can attest to. The member for Dubbo should observe and learn how to be as effective as a local member. The member for Barwon put politics aside and put his community first. His focus was solely on getting assistance to his community as soon as possible. For this, I thank him. We are still dealing with the consequences of the Transgrid outage and the very real impacts the Liberal-Nationals Coalition's privatisation agenda is having on our Far West community.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** The Coalition privatised \$90 billion of State assets and still delivered the largest debt New South Wales has ever seen. What has occurred in the Far West is simply not acceptable, which is why we support the member for Barwon's call for a parliamentary inquiry to get to the bottom of what went wrong. While we look for answers, we will continue to support the local community to recover from this incident. But we also need to look to the future. How can we ensure that Broken Hill and the Far West have a diverse power supply and improved energy security?

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** How can we maximise the benefits of renewable energy generation? How can we deliver cheaper energy to our rural communities?

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** Last week in Broken Hill I was proud to announce that Crown Lands has signed a lease with Hydrostor for the construction of Australia's first advanced compressed air energy storage site, in Broken Hill, near the Potosi mine. The Silver City energy storage facility will secure the city's energy future and generate hundreds of jobs. It will be a real win-win for the Far West community. The project will form the backbone of a new local mini-grid to improve Broken Hill's energy security by delivering increased renewable energy generation into the city's power grid. [*Extension of time*]

The project will provide a reliable source of power in the event of a planned or unplanned outage of the local transmission system. Once connected to solar and wind assets, the Far West region of New South Wales will operate as one of the world's largest renewable mini-grids, reliably powering homes and businesses with clean energy. This is not only a big win for energy security but also for the regional economy. The Silver City energy storage facility represents a \$1.2 billion investment into the State's economy during its lifetime. This includes \$250 million to be spent in the Far West during construction. The region's economy will be boosted by \$10 million a year of additional outgoing expenditure. It will be a massive win for the Broken Hill community. The lease will run for 65 years, with construction anticipated to be completed in 2028. This will be the first facility of its kind built in Australia. These are the solutions we need to implement to repair the damage done to our energy grid under the Coalition and its privatisation agenda.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** We are dealing with the issues those opposite left behind, and we are delivering a more secure energy future for our Far West communities.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** To put it simply, Labor is the party for the bush.

#### **PUBLIC HOSPITALS AND REPRODUCTIVE CARE**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (12:04):** My question is directed to the Premier. Following concerning reports that abortion services have been restricted in some public hospitals in New South Wales, what is the Premier and the New South Wales Labor Government doing to ensure full access to abortion and all reproductive healthcare services in the public health system in this State?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:05):** I thank the member for Newtown for her question. Specifically, the member may have been referring to abortion care in Orange. I report to the House that the Minister for Health has confirmed that the level of abortion services provided historically at Orange hospital has been restored and is now available to the community. Of course, we are committed to providing transparent and safe avenues for abortion care in New South Wales. I am aware of a media report suggesting that Queanbeyan District Hospital has closed down abortion services. Our understanding is that media report is inaccurate and that

full abortion services are available at Queanbeyan District Hospital, but of course we will look at the circumstances of that report and how the media came to report it.

In addition to that, the Government is providing \$3.5 million to ensure that we are in a position where safe and clear access to abortion care is provided, particularly in regional communities. That includes funding the Sustainable and Equitable Access to Reproductive Choices [SEARCH] Project, which is about improving access to affordable pregnancy abortions, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales. That has just been given a two-year extension. We believe that model, which involves NGOs, partner organisations and individual GPs, is working and therefore worthy of the funding being continued. Members would be aware that, in most cases, medical or surgical abortions are provided in primary care or private practice settings, but of course we recognise that the public hospital network has a role to play here. That will be fully funded, and the services will be available.

#### TAFE NSW

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (12:07):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to boost skills and training opportunities across the State, ensuring that New South Wales has the skilled workforce it needs for the future?

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (12:08):** I thank the member for Wallsend for her question. She is another tireless advocate for TAFE on this side of the House. Rebuilding our skills base in New South Wales starts with rebuilding TAFE. Last night I had the pleasure of tabling the TAFE NSW annual report. What the reports over the years have shown us is that when we came into government, there had been a 45 per cent decrease in the teaching staff between 2012 and 2022. There is also massive casualisation across the workforce of TAFE, with a 15 per cent drop in the number of permanent teachers, who were replaced by casual and temporary staff members. I am pleased to say that last night's report shows the start of rebuilding TAFE. The annual report tells us that since we came into government, we have seen an increase of 569 teachers across TAFE in New South Wales.

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

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** At the same time, following an \$83.1 million investment in last year's budget, we have started to reduce the number of casual teachers by giving them permanency. We have seen a 10 per cent reduction in the number of casual teachers overall and a 10 per cent increase in the teaching staff. I am expecting that over the next 12 months we will see another 1,200 casuals who will be able to convert to a permanent position in TAFE NSW. That is our commitment to making sure that we are delivering skills in New South Wales. During the last session I talked about the changes to the operating model in TAFE. As a result of those changes, some jobs will change and there will be some redundancies. But over a period of time, there will be a net increase in staff and teaching staff at TAFE.

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

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** It will take a while to undo the mess made by members opposite.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

It is pretty amazing to hear the member for Wahroonga interjecting again after I saw his comments on social media after the last session. He had the absolute hide to say, "It is gut wrenching to see Labor running down TAFE." That comes from a person who oversaw 404 redundancies during his period as Minister.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wahroonga will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** Under the previous Government, from 2014 to 2023, there was a total of 1,841 redundancies. That is gut wrenching. In a LinkedIn post, the former Minister also said that he produced the two biggest skills and training budgets in New South Wales history. I am disappointed to inform the House that is not true. *[Extension of time]*

Not only is it not true, but also the published budget he delivered in 2021 was \$30 million less than the one delivered in 2015. That is a massive cut.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** I wasn't the Minister in 2021.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** He says he was not the Minister in 2021. What is absolutely wonderful about Opposition members is the rose-coloured glasses they like to put on for that period of government. They come into this House every day and imagine either that the world began when the election happened last year or that it was all perfect when the election happened last year. Now they seek to claim that they were not responsible for

the massive cuts. I am proud that this Government has delivered two record TAFE budgets, with a 6.8 per cent increase in 2023-24 and another 4.9 per cent increase in this year's budget.

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

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I am really pleased that recently I joined the Premier and the Prime Minister to announce a centre for excellence in Newcastle.

**The SPEAKER:** I direct the member for Oatley to remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time under Standing Order 249A.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Oatley left the Chamber at 12:11.]*

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** Yes, we are restructuring TAFE to make sure we fix the mess left by the one-TAFE model and deliver more teachers in TAFE classrooms.

#### *Documents*

### **ANTI-SLAVERY COMMISSIONER**

#### **Reports**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with the Modern Slavery Act 2018, I announce receipt of the report of the Anti-Slavery Commissioner for the year ended 30 June 2024, received on 13 November 2024. I order that the report be printed.

#### *Business of the House*

### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:12):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended on Thursday 21 November 2024 to:

- (1) Provide for the following routine of business from the conclusion of question time and its associated routine of business:
  - (a) the moving and consideration of the motion "That the House take note of Christmas felicitations" until 1.30 p.m.;
  - (b) at 2.30 p.m., resumption of felicitations;
  - (c) community recognition statements for up to 30 minutes; and
  - (d) private members' statements, after which the House shall adjourn without motion moved until 10.00 a.m. on Friday 22 November 2024.
- (2) Provide for the following speaking time limits on Christmas felicitations:
  - (a) Premier - 10 minutes;
  - (b) Leader of the Opposition - 10 minutes;
  - (c) Deputy Premier - 10 minutes;
  - (d) Leader of the Nationals - 10 minutes;
  - (e) Leader of the House - 10 minutes;
  - (f) Manager of Opposition Business - 10 minutes;
  - (g) member for Leppington - five minutes;
  - (h) member for Terrigal - five minutes;
  - (i) member for Lismore - five minutes;
  - (j) member for Clarence - five minutes;
  - (k) up to five other Government members – five minutes each;
  - (l) up to five other Opposition members - five minutes each; and
  - (m) up to five other crossbench members - five minutes each.

**The SPEAKER:** I clarify that the Speaker has unlimited speaking time.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** It is traditional for the Speaker to make some sort of contribution.

**The SPEAKER:** That is right. I have the opportunity to make unlimited introductory remarks.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I observe that it is interesting that a person who does not celebrate Christmas is moving the motion for Christmas felicitations.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills*

**JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2024**

**Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (12:15):** I speak in support of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024. The bill makes miscellaneous amendments to justice legislation to improve court, legal and other processes. It ensures operational efficiency, improves and clarifies government processes and functions, and clarifies the regulation-making powers of existing legislation. This is the first of two bills to deal with these matters. Miscellaneous justice legislation amendment bills regularly review and update legislation. All governments use this mechanism to ensure the law is fit for purpose and keeps pace with developments in the community and legal system.

This bill will implement amendments to nine separate Acts. Most of the amending legislation falls under the Attorney General's portfolio area. However, the portfolio areas of the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism and the Minister for Corrections are also covered. Previously, we heard from the member for Mount Druitt, who spoke at length, in detail and with commitment and passion about the Coptic Orthodox Church (NSW) Property Trust Act and the amendments this bill will make to it. The three amendments that I will address are: the amendment that deals with the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 to clarify regulation-making powers; the amendment that deals with the Defamation Act 2005 that affords absolute privilege; and the amendment that deals with the Firearms Act that will update a reference to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. As a country member, I am quite familiar with the Firearms Act and Firearms Registry.

The Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 provides regulation-making powers in relation to a wide range of matters. While the current regulations empower the Secretary of the Department of Communities and Justice or a centre manager to make certain decisions that are relevant to the operation of detention centres—for example, providing approval for a qualified dentist or practitioner to perform functions under the regulations—there is no specific regulation-making power addressing such matters. Whilst these matters appear to fall under the management and operation of detention centres as provided for by the broad regulation-making powers of section 32A of the Children (Detention Centres) Act, out of an abundance of caution, the Parliamentary Counsel's Office has recommended amendments to section 32A to provide specific regulation-making powers.

That puts it beyond any doubt—I should put a caveat on this—and beyond interpretive considerations. The amendments in the bill will clarify that, inserting regulation-making powers relating to searches of a detainee's room and any property in that room; searches of visitors and their vehicle at detention centres; searches of juvenile justice officers and anything under their control at detention centres; and decisions that the secretary or centre manager may make about matters referred to in the regulations, either generally or in relation to specific areas.

I now turn to amendments to the Defamation Act 2005 and the Judicial Commission. State and Territory defamation legislation is based on the model defamation provisions. I recall when it was not, and being involved in debates and advocacy for that change to the defamation law and other considerations. The Standing Council of Attorneys-General, or SCAG, and its predecessors oversaw a review of the model defamation provisions between 2019 and 2023. It considered whether the defence of absolute privilege should be extended to protect people from defamation proceedings when reporting to certain complaints-handling bodies. That was subject to a lot of discussion and consideration. These reforms are happening because it was considered that the potential threat of defamation proceedings may deter victim-survivors from coming forward to police or other complaints-handling bodies to report certain conduct and other things.

The Defamation Amendment Act 2023 extended absolute privilege to matters published to police. That was the first step in implementing what were called part B reforms. Extending that to other complaints-handling bodies was the next step in the implementation of those reforms in New South Wales. It is now considered that absolute privilege should be extended to the Judicial Commission for the purpose of making complaints under section 15 of the Judicial Officers Act 1986. The Judicial Commission was considered to be an appropriate body to list in schedule 1 to the Defamation Act because it deals with complaints about the behaviours of judicial officers, including complaints about harassment, bullying and discrimination, and there is a need for protection due to what is considered to be a negative effect and lack of other protections for complainants.

Sufficient safeguards are in place to protect against damage to reputation if a false or misleading report is made. The Judicial Officers Act provides that a member or an officer of the commission shall not disclose any information obtained in the course of his or her office in relation to a complaint except in certain circumstances. The bill also includes amendments to the Defamation Act to cover the Modern Slavery Committee. I turn now to the amendments to the Firearms Act. The proposed amendments replace redundant references to the "Department of Industry" with a reference to the "Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development", as it is now known, which is an innocuous but necessary amendment. That is in line with the machinery-of-government changes and ensures the currency of the Firearms Act. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (12:24):** I am delighted to speak in debate on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024. At the outset, I acknowledge everyone involved in bringing this legislation before the House, particularly the Attorney General and his team. I note that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General is in the Chamber. I thank him for his ongoing contributions to all matters of law and, indeed, legislation that come before this House. They work hard as a team to ensure that our legislation is up to date and consistent for the relevant people who fall under the scope of legislation and matters of law.

The object of the bill is to make amendments to various Acts relating to courts, crimes and other communities and justice portfolio matters. Some areas of this legislation fall under the jurisdictions of other Ministers, alongside the Attorney General, including the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism and the Minister for Corrections. I acknowledge and thank those Ministers for their contributions. The Acts being amended include the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 and the Coptic Orthodox Church (NSW) Property Trust Act 1990, as well as the Defamation Act 2005.

I will refer more specifically to the Defamation Act later in my contribution, because I believe it is an area of law that is good to be continually strengthened. The days are gone when people can do and say what they like, with the intent to, ultimately, harm other people through their words and actions or through social media platforms. I am delighted to see a change in culture through the law and, indeed, in the broader community and society where that is not accepted. It is very damaging, particularly to young people. Social media is an important platform for communication and engagement with community, which my colleagues in this place across the political spectrum all use, but it can also be used by people to harm or defame other people with malicious intent. I will come back to address this further.

The bill also addresses amendments to the Dormant Funds Act 1942, the Firearms Act 1996, the Prisoners (Interstate Transfer) Act 1982, the Solicitor General Act 1969, the Terrorism (High Risk Offenders) Act 2017 and the Trees (Disputes Between Neighbours) Act 2006. The bill highlights that we as a government and our Ministers proactively continue to review legislation and make sure that amendments are put in place to ensure that our legislation remains consistent. More specifically, amendments to the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 clarify regulation-making powers. Amendments to the Defamation Act will afford absolute privilege to matters published by the judicial report of proceedings and public concern, extending it to publications and disclosure of confidential evidence made to the Modern Slavery Committee. The amendment to the Dormant Funds Act 1982 is also to clarify regulation-making powers, while the bill amends the Firearms Act 1996 to update a reference to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. The Prisoners (Interstate Transfer) Act will be amended to clarify that the Secretary of the Department of Communities and Justice or an officer authorised by the secretary can certify the interstate transfer of prisoners. Turning to the Solicitor General Act, I understand that the Solicitor General is the second-highest ranking lawmaker in the State. Is that correct, Parliamentary Secretary?

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** Yes.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** It is important that the Solicitor General Act 1969 is included in the bill to allow the Solicitor General to exercise the Attorney General's powers when the Attorney General is on leave but still only within the State. Amendments to the Terrorism (High Risk Offenders) Act 2017 will ensure consistency with recent amendments made by the High Risk Offenders Legislation Amendment 2024. Turning to the Trees (Dispute Between Neighbours) Act, some may see it as a bit of a low-flying piece of legislation and Act. But I assure members as a former mayor that it can be quite controversial at times, and any member who has been a councillor will know that. It is good that we are updating that piece of legislation to ensure it is consistent. We want to see conflict resolution and avoid any kind of further action, particularly matters before the courts, so that everyone can be happy and live in harmony despite what trees they have in their neighbouring yards. I note that my learned friend the member for Northern Tablelands finds that amusing. I know he understands precisely what I am talking about.

One may ask why we need this policy based on factual evidence and stakeholders. Legislation needs to be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that laws remain fit for purpose and keep pace with developments in the community and the legal system. The bill introduces several miscellaneous amendments to address developments, improve court and legal processes and ensure operational efficiency, improve and clarify government processes

and functions, and clarify the regulation-making power of the existing legislation. The amendments are ultimately necessary to maintain an effective and functioning justice system and regulatory framework. There is a strong public interest in ensuring that the law is fit for purpose, and the Parliament must make those changes to effectively achieve the law's intended purposes. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (12:30):** Before I commence my contribution to debate in support of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024, I acknowledge and welcome to the Speaker's gallery Rania Bursic and various parents from Fairfield West Public School. They are seeing the process of the passage of bills in this place. The bill before the House seeks to improve court and legal processes, enhance operational efficiency, and clarify government processes and functions and the regulation-making power of existing legislation. The bill implements amendments to nine separate Acts and is the first of two justice miscellaneous bills the Government intends to introduce in 2024.

Amendments are proposed to legislation that primarily sits within the Attorney General's portfolio but also those of the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism and the Minister for Corrections. The reforms are part of the Government's regular program of legislative reviews and improvements. The bill's amendments to legislation include the Coptic Orthodox (NSW) Property Trust Act 1990, herein known as the Act, to reflect updates to the Coptic Orthodox Church's constitution. In 2022 the church changed its constitution to replace the bishop as the sole trustee of the Coptic Property Trust with a board of trustees. However, the current Act continues to provide that the bishop is the sole trustee. The amendments serve to rectify this discrepancy between the constitution and the Act.

The bill also proposes changes to the Defamation Act 2005 to afford absolute privilege to matters published by the Judicial Commission of NSW. That ensures that the defences of publication of public documents and fair reports of proceedings of public concern extend to publications and disclosure of confidential evidence made by the Modern Slavery Committee. The bill also amends the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 and the Dormant Funds Act 1942 to clarify regulation-making powers, among other legislative changes. Overall, the bill will rectify limitations identified in various Acts, enabling more streamlined and efficient government processes and functions. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (12:33):** On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: In reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Wahroonga, Mount Druitt, Lismore, Campbelltown and Fairfield for their contributions to debate on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024. The bill came about in an effort to ensure the law in New South Wales is regularly reviewed and updated so that it is fit for purpose and delivers on the expectations of the community. While varied in nature, these amendments have been developed to address emerging issues, support operational needs and improvements, and clarify uncertainty in legislation by closing gaps in the law and correcting errors.

I refer to the comments of the Legislation Review Committee on the wide regulation-making powers and delegation of powers that would impact vulnerable persons being granted under the proposed amendments to the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987. As the committee noted, those amendments are important and necessary. They provide flexibility and responsiveness in a quasi-custodial setting and could be used to respond to the needs of young people in New South Wales. As the committee acknowledged, regulations must be tabled in Parliament and are subject to disallowance under section 41 of the Interpretation Act 1987. That enables appropriate parliamentary scrutiny of any delegated legislation made under the bill. In conclusion, the ongoing maintenance and improvement of legislation through miscellaneous amendment bills such as this is critical to the work of good governance and effective legislation in New South Wales. The bill provides updates across justice legislation and related areas to ensure the work of government and the legal system can continue effectively. 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

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Mr Edmond Atalla:** Madam Temporary Speaker—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** I am sorry, Parliamentary Secretary. I call the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education.

**WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024****Second Reading Speech**

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (12:36):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I commend the Parliamentary Secretary for his enthusiasm. I have to give him a tick; I think he has missed speaking on one bill this year. He is an amazing performer in contributing to Parliament, and we very much admire his fabulous work. The Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 is all about providing legal clarity and does two important things. Firstly, it provides critical amendments needed to remake three regulations that are relied on to effectively manage water in New South Wales: the Water Management (General) Regulation, the Sydney Water Regulation and the Water NSW Regulation. Secondly, the bill clarifies the legal validity of some licences and approvals that were incorrectly converted from the Water Act 1912 to the Water Management Act 2000.

I will start with the regulation-making powers in the bill. The bill includes a series of amendments to three Acts that are relied on to manage water in New South Wales—the Sydney Water Act, the Water Management Act and the Water NSW Act—to provide clear regulation-making powers. In the course of remaking the regulations that sit under those Acts, as part of a statutory staged repeal process, a need for clearer regulation-making powers for a range of existing provisions was identified. Without clear regulation-making powers in the relevant Acts for those provisions, they cannot be included in the regulations when they are remade. The provisions are critical to the management of water resources in New South Wales.

All three regulations are due to be remade by 1 September 2025. The amendments in the bill need to be passed in this session of Parliament to ensure that the regulations can be remade by that deadline. Remaking regulations is a significant undertaking. A lot of work goes into reviewing and remaking the regulations to ensure they work as they should. The process involves public consultation on draft regulations and an assessment of the regulatory impact of any changes that are proposed to be made. It is an important and transparent process that takes time. If the bill is not passed in this session, the remakes will need to be postponed. Two of those remakes have already been postponed several times, and the Minister does not want to further postpone or delay a process that is in place to protect the health of our water resources, manage access to those resources and benefit the people of New South Wales. It is vital that our water management legislation and the regulations that support it are clear and legally sound so they can be understood and applied as intended.

The bill ensures that all necessary provisions in the regulations can be remade to safeguard drinking water quality and the infrastructure of Sydney Water, WaterNSW and Essential Water. Critically, this includes regulating and prohibiting access to sensitive areas and allowing authorised officers to direct people to move on from places they should not be. The bill also contains amendments to the Water Management Act to make the Water Management (General) Regulation more legally robust. Some of the amendments in the bill have been identified by the Parliamentary Counsel's Office as including indirect Henry VIII provisions. Those provisions are noted in the explanatory notes of the bill. Henry VIII provisions—which, interestingly, I had never heard of until I came back into Parliament this time around; no doubt they have been around since Henry VIII, so I probably should have—allow an Act to be amended by subordinate legislation. They have been included in the bill because they are essential to enable the remake of the regulations next year.

The bill includes a clear power for the Water Management (General) Regulation to require drought works constructed without the need for an approval to be properly maintained or decommissioned. This change supports a more effective operation of an existing provision in the regulation. This amendment is an indirect Henry VIII provision. The amendment will minimise risks to water resources, other water users, public safety and the environment, and ensure these works, if maintained, can be used in future droughts. The bill includes a clear power for the regulations to deal with the way that water allocation accounts are debited if someone has two or more water access licences. This gives effect to existing statewide rules and avoids the need for every water sharing plan to be amended to include these rules.

The bill includes a clear power for water management plans to require advertising of certain applications for approvals. This will improve the opportunity for the public to have their say on approval decisions. While most advertising rules are contained in the regulations, this change will allow the rules for advertising of applications to be specific to the relevant locations where necessary. The bill includes a clear power to grant exemptions from the mandatory conditions on access licences and approvals, including in relation to metering equipment condition. The bill also includes a clear power to place conditions on some exemptions from the requirement to hold an access licence or approval. These are covered by three amendments to the Water Management Act that are indirect Henry VIII provisions.



It is important that the water management regulation allows conditions to be placed on such exemptions to help alleviate residual risks associated with exempting certain water take and use from licensing and approval requirements. We want to reduce unnecessary red tape for water users, but we need to ensure that we are minimising and removing any residual risks to water sources. The bill also ensures that supplementary Lowbidgee water access licences cannot be cancelled like other specific-purpose access licences can. That subcategory of supplementary water access licence was created so that specific rules could be imposed in relation to flood irrigation on the Lowbidgee flood plains during announced high-flow events in the Murrumbidgee Regulated River Water Source.

The bill confirms the ongoing tenure of those licences: the same as it is for other regulated river supplementary water access licences. Importantly, the bill supports regulations that allow water supply authorities to operate effectively to deliver water supply and sewerage services to communities, businesses and industry within their area of operations. That includes regulations in relation to minimising water waste and misuse, regulating plumbing works and drainage works, optimising cost recovery, ensuring proper measurement of water taken, providing access to fire hydrants, and constructing works and infrastructure. The bill ensures that Essential Water, which is the operating division of Essential Energy that supplies water and sewerage services to Broken Hill, can also regulate the discharge of liquid trade waste into sewerage systems, undertake emergency plumbing works and repairs, and deal with land that drains into its two drinking water reservoirs.

All of these changes maintain the status quo while providing legal certainty and allowing key existing provisions to remain in the regulations when they are remade next year. The bill does not change current Government policy or practice. We are simply shoring up what is already in place and providing room for improvements to be made in the future. Without the amendments proposed in the bill, there would be impacts on water supply and sewerage services to the people of New South Wales by WaterNSW, Sydney Water Corporation and water supply authorities. A failure to pass the bill would mean additional risks to the quality of drinking water in Sydney's key water supply catchment areas if the activities in those areas cannot be adequately regulated or prohibited. It would negatively impact communities and water users across the State. The bill removes legal uncertainty and prevents all of these negative impacts.

The second thing the bill does is amend the Water Management Act to validate approximately 169 licences and 32 works approvals across New South Wales. Bulk conversions of entitlements occurred as the Water Management Act was being implemented across the State through water sharing plans. Historical systems were not always up to scratch. An administrative system error did not recognise that some licences were expired when the water-sharing plans commenced and those entitlements were converted from the Water Act 1912 to the Water Management Act 2000. Historical records do not tell us whether the Government at the time communicated with those licence holders about their licences needing to be renewed. Clearly, some of government record keeping was lax in the past. The issue was identified years after conversion.

Those licences and approvals appear valid in the water licensing system, have always been accounted for in relevant water-sharing plans and in the Murray-Darling Basin Sustainable Diversion Limits, and have always been treated by government, WaterNSW and licence holders as valid. The Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 removes any doubt about their validity. Validating these entitlements will give legal certainty to licence holders and to past trading in water rights and allocations. It allows the affected licences to be part of the water market and maintains current water sharing across the State. There are no identifiable risks to water sources, dependent ecosystems, water resource sharing, other licence holders or third parties from validating these licences and approvals. Finally, the bill transfers uncommenced provisions from the Water Management Amendment Act 2010 and the Water Management Amendment Act 2014 into the Water Management Act 2000, which allows for those amending Acts to be repealed. That is just a housekeeping exercise.

As mentioned, the bill is important to give effect to minor changes to multiple Acts that do not warrant bringing separate individual bills before the House. The bill provides amendments for legal certainty. They support the continuation of current operations to protect water quality, deliver services efficiently and effectively, and allow licence holders to continue to access water. These are the first amendments in an organised and prioritised legislative program being pursued by the Government. The program balances enabling time-critical amendments with the need for strategic reform in enforcement, planning, licensing and approvals. Work is underway to bring proposals to Parliament over the next 18 months for significant improvements to water enforcement, planning, licensing and approvals for the benefit of the people, culture and environment of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (12:47):** I confirm the Coalition's support for the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. This omnibus bill will clarify the regulation-making powers of State agencies and corporations and, importantly, the authority of the Minister for Water in relation to water access licences or

exemptions and exemptions in times of emergency. Importantly, the bill validates a small number of licences that have been made previously and whose status has been made ambiguous during transition from the Water Act 1912 to the Water Management Act 2000. During consultation with irrigators and water users across New South Wales, the need for clear and consistent regulatory powers was raised with the Coalition and with me as shadow Minister for Water. The Opposition's view is that in order for our primary industries, farms and communities to thrive, they need clear communication regarding water policy.

The omnibus bill amends the Water Management Act 2000, the Sydney Water Act 1994 and the NSW Act 2014 and repeals the Water Management Act 2010 and the Water Management Act 2014. It clarifies the regulation-making powers of the Minister and of State agencies and corporations, and includes Henry VIII provisions enabling subordinate documents to empower the Minister in relation to water access licence conditions or exemptions, and exemptions in relation to emergencies and the operation of public authorities. It also validates a limited number of licences and approvals made ambiguous, as I said previously, by transition from the Water Act 1912 to the Water Management Act 2000. The bill is a piece of housekeeping legislation, but it is important. It aims to provide legislative clarity where identified through operations under these Acts. It provides scope, including both powers and their limitations, in relation to the Government's management of water resources.

Importantly, the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 solidifies policies and practice developed over time under both Coalition and Labor governments. Engaging with stakeholders at every level is critical for northern and southern basin users and water users across the State understanding their rights and responsibilities and the decision-makers powers that may impact their work. From water operators in Sydney's growing suburbs to irrigators on the Murray, cotton growers on the Namoi and national water-use bodies, understanding the scope of the Government's management of New South Wales water resources can help us all make more informed choices about how our most precious resource is managed. Across the regions we have confirmed broad-based support for the bill. I thank the Government for consulting with Sydney Water, WaterNSW and Essential Water in the drafting of the legislation.

Scrutiny must be given to the Government's application of the changes brought about by the bill, especially during statutory reviews of the regulations. The bill affects thousands of irrigators and water users across New South Wales. The Opposition is pleased to support measures that encourage transparency and scrutiny. It is important to be mindful that even in administrative and housekeeping reform, we must remain accountable to our regional and rural communities in the, at times, highly contested and evolving water space. The House has heard on many occasions the concerns of water users regarding proposed reforms in many areas across water management. Most recently, concerns have been raised about the northern basin Connectivity Expert Panel; in the south and on the Gwydir, in relation to the draft Landholder Negotiation Scheme Regulation; the future of the National Water Agreement; and the next Murray-Darling Basin Plan and associated buybacks. On that basis, we would argue that transparency and clarity has never been more crucial for our water policy.

As opportunities to consider and review legislation are brought forward by the Government through the statutory review process, we would encourage a fair and open interrogation of those Acts and their suitability, and how we could further improve our water policy for years to come. The Coalition will be keeping a close watch on the 2025 statutory reviews mentioned in the second reading speech that will occur throughout the course of next year and which should be wrapped up by September 2025. We will look carefully for potential impacts on urban, rural and regional communities and will not hesitate to call the Government to account if we believe the people of New South Wales deserve better. In the meantime, the Coalition supports the bill, but I reiterate the need for transparency and accountability for regulatory powers. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (12:54):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The amendments in the bill will protect New South Wales communities, the environment and water users. Fixing regulation-making powers in the Acts will ensure there are no unnecessary changes for water users and communities when the regulations are remade next year. Key provisions relied on by the Government, State owned corporations and water supply authorities to sustainably manage water resources can remain in those regulations. The bill meets community needs and protects public health by ensuring water supply authorities are properly authorised to carry out their existing functions and operations. It ensures these authorities can continue to provide essential water and sewerage services without interruption.

Without these amendments, authorities would stop operating as they usually do or become less efficient through having to rely on cumbersome workarounds. This would impact service delivery, and there could be increased operational costs and risks to public safety. For example, the amendments provide clear legislative power for water supply authorities to deal with the installation, maintenance and supply of water to fire hydrants. Without this clear power in the Act, the existing regulations that relate to fire hydrants cannot be remade and water supply authorities will not be able to legally provide the critical services needed by communities to fight fires.

Another example relates to Essential Water, a water supply authority that supplies water to more than 10,000 people in Broken Hill and surrounding areas. The amendments allow Essential Water to continue to regulate the discharge of liquid trade waste into the sewerage systems and undertake emergency plumbing works on its infrastructure when and where it is needed. The amendments in the bill maintain the status quo so Essential Water can continue to optimise infrastructure performance, achieve environmental outcomes, ensure proper cost recovery and minimise service delivery costs, all while meeting the needs of its customers and protecting public safety. The bill also maximises benefits and minimises costs to regional communities in times of drought. The amendments allow the regulations to require drought works, like groundwater bores and standpipes, to be properly maintained or decommissioned. This avoids risks to public safety and reduces costs to the community by ensuring these works do not become unusable over time or cause damage to water sources when they start to deteriorate. The amendments also contribute to protecting the quality of water supplied to the people of New South Wales.

The Sydney Water Act amendments will ensure that Sydney Water can continue regulating access to and use of the controlled areas of its catchment, including Prospect Reservoir, which provides up to 80 per cent of Sydney's drinking water. This power is critical to Sydney Water's operations. It enables Sydney Water to protect water supply infrastructure from damage and drinking water from contamination, which is even more important if public access and use of controlled areas at Prospect Reservoir are to increase. The same applies to WaterNSW and the special areas and controlled areas that it manages. The amendments will protect our health by ensuring that the regulations relied on to provide high quality drinking water to a large portion of the New South Wales population can remain unchanged. In addition, validating licences and approvals affected by conversion issues protects their holders from uncertainty without impacting on other water users, third parties and the environment. These entitlements have been accounted for in water sharing plans and the Murray-Darling Basin sustainable diversion limits since their commencement.

Many have also changed hands through legitimate processes, such as temporary and permanent water trades. The bill removes any doubt about the validity of those licences and approvals, as well as any associated dealings, such as water trades, that have occurred. This resolution has the least impact on all affected parties and ensures that the holders of these licences and approvals can continue to access and use water when they need it, without the risk of losing their entitlements. Validating these licences and approvals helps maintain accuracy in water sharing and planning processes and supports the program of water sharing plan remakes. The bill is an important and effective way to ensure continuity of essential water supply and sewerage services, secure drinking water quality and protect the health of the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (13:00):** I support the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The bill protects water as a vital public asset that is critical to our health and wellbeing and the health and wellbeing of our environments and cultures. It does this by ensuring that WaterNSW, Sydney Water and Essential Water can continue regulating access to and the use of controlled, restricted and special areas around water sources in their catchments. Regulating these areas is key to ensuring the protection of water supply infrastructure from damage and drinking water from contamination. State owned corporations like Sydney Water and WaterNSW, along with water supply authorities like Essential Water in the Far West of our State, deliver essential water supply services to our homes, businesses and public spaces 24 hours a day, seven days a week. With over 5½ million customers, they service 61 per cent of the current New South Wales population. Some water supply authorities also provide safe, affordable and reliable sewerage services to customers.

As members have been informed, a need for clearer regulation-making powers was identified for several critical provisions in the current versions of the regulations. The bill is the best opportunity to remove any doubt and ensure that the essential functions of State owned corporations and water supply authorities, as set out in their respective regulations, are appropriately authorised. This bill does not give additional powers to these entities but ensures the continuity of critical services to the community through appropriate management of water sources. Imagine for a moment that these utilities could not lawfully protect their drinking water dams, reservoirs, pumping stations and treatment plants from damage, pollution or contamination through restricting access by people and stock animals, setting out what activities are acceptable in these areas and sanctioning those who breach the regulations. If the regulations were remade next year without the relevant provisions included in the bill, these utilities will not be able to protect these critical assets and areas appropriately.

For example, the Sydney Water Regulation currently allows Sydney Water to prohibit access to controlled areas, including the land at Warragamba Dam surrounding water supply infrastructure, the land along the Warragamba pipeline and Upper Canal, and Prospect Reservoir—all critical to Sydney's drinking water supply. The regulation also allows Sydney Water to issue directions to move people on from those areas. The power to issue directions to move people on has been exercised since the Sydney Water Regulation was established in 2017, including when assisting with police operations. The regulation also provides for fines to be issued if requirements to control waste and pollution and protect infrastructure are not complied with. It is important that these powers can be retained in the future.

It is not just metropolitan areas that could be affected. WaterNSW's ability to prohibit and manage access and activities in the controlled and special areas of its area of operations is affected. This area includes the Greater Sydney area but also regional New South Wales, Menindee Lakes, Chaffey Dam, Copeton Dam, Burrendong Dam, Carcoar Dam, and many more. Essential Water's ability to prohibit and manage access and activities in the vicinity of its dams and related infrastructure could be affected, risking the supply to approximately 10,500 customers in Broken Hill, Menindee, Silverton and Sunset Strip. In summary, the operations of Sydney Water, WaterNSW and water supply authorities such as Essential Water prevent damage to water supply infrastructure and contamination of our drinking water supplies. They ensure the continuity of water supply services to communities throughout New South Wales. The bill is essential to avoid unnecessary impacts on the ability of these utilities to protect our drinking water supplies and infrastructure. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (13:04):** I am delighted to make a brief contribution to debate on the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Water, departmental staff and her team in bringing this legislation to the House today. I also acknowledge the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education acting on behalf of the Minister in the other place. The bill ensures that things keep working as they are. It provides clarity for those responsible for delivering our water supplies, water users and the people of New South Wales. For the benefit of the House, I reiterate what the bill does.

It provides a clear legislative basis for necessary regulations so they can be remade within statutory time frames; it ensures that Sydney Water, WaterNSW and water supply authorities are appropriately authorised to exercise functions set out in the regulations; it ensures that the Government maintains regulatory oversight of activities that pose potential risks to water resources; it promotes the continued sustainable management of water without excessive red tape or unnecessary burden on water users, businesses, government and those supplying and distributing water to our communities; and it validates longstanding water entitlements that were affected by conversion issues during the transition from the Water Act 1912 to the Water Management Act 2000. The amendments in the bill maintain the intent of the current regulatory provisions. For example, the bill allows Essential Water, as a water supply authority, to maintain essential services to communities and businesses by ensuring emergency plumbing works can be performed effectively and efficiently.

It does this by allowing Essential Water to continue to exempt appropriate persons, such as its own employees or contractors, from holding a plumbing permit when emergency works need to be carried out. The bill establishes clear and explicit legislative powers for existing regulations. Failing to make the amendments contained in the bill would lead to the need to rely on alternative solutions, such as policy frameworks and operational workarounds, to fill the regulatory gaps. These alternatives would be onerous and resource intensive for government and water supply authorities, and difficult to understand and implement. They would be more costly to water users, communities, businesses and industry than shoring up the regulation-making powers in these Acts. For example, without the amendment that clarifies water allocation account debiting rules, each water sharing plan would need to be amended to include statewide account debiting rules where water supply work is nominated in relation to two or more access licences.

Failing to make the amendments in the bill would result in a lack of regulatory oversight of activities that could pose risks to water resources. For example, without the fixes in the bill, there would be no oversight of the maintenance and decommissioning of drought works such as groundwater bores and standpipes. These works could fall into disrepair and cause damage to the water source they are connected to, impacting on neighbouring properties, other water users and the environment. The requirement to advertise approval applications in water management plans, such as floodplain management plans, would also fall away. This would decrease transparency and increase potential negative impacts to water resources, as well as nearby properties and businesses. There would be reduced opportunities for water users and community members to have their say on applications for things like flood work approvals.

The bill maintains the protection of our drinking water by enabling WaterNSW and Sydney Water to regulate activities that threaten our water supplies and critical infrastructure. If aspects of the WaterNSW regulation or the Sydney Water regulation cannot be remade next year due to lack of clear legislative power, those authorities would be unable to enforce certain restrictions on the access to, and the use of, controlled and special areas. Efficient and effective management of activities carried out within those catchment areas is vital to ensuring we continue to have access to quality drinking water.

The bill provides certainty by validating licences and approvals affected by conversion errors. Those licences are still in use and are relied upon by their holders to access the water they need. A single bill with provisions fixing that issue, alongside amendments to shore up the regulations, is an efficient use of the time of both the Parliament and Parliamentary Counsel. The critical amendments to the bill maintain the intent of the

original provisions and keep things functioning as they do currently. For those reasons I support the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (13:10):** In reply: I thank the shadow Minister, the member for Mount Druitt, the member for South Coast and the member for Campbelltown for contributing to debate on the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I appreciate their comments on the issues. The shadow Minister made very constructive comments and I thank her. She foreshadowed that the regulations made under the bill will need to be scrutinised as they go forward. That is absolutely appropriate. We would not expect any less. I appreciate her commentary on that. It is not the right time to flag a number of other issues that have not been gone into in detail in this debate, but some of those will present challenges. I wholeheartedly agree on the northern basin challenges and the re-writing of the Federal water agreement. That is a significant piece of work in the water space for Australia overall. I have had a bit to do with that in the past. It has a lot of implications for how we manage water and new projects and a whole range of things. The future Basin Plan and buybacks are topical and we have talked about them in this place. I agree that, as we move forward, transparency in how those are undertaken is critical.

It is also important that we implement the things that we have agreed to implement so that we are not being punished, essentially, with buybacks because we have not managed to implement elements of the Basin Plan. Most members in this House would probably agree that we do not want to see buybacks, but we certainly need to progress some of the prerequisite measures in the Basin Plan, including those that were supposed to go in for the down water and many other detailed things, which I will not go into otherwise we would be here all day. The bill makes minor but important amendments to the water legislation. They respond to the agenda of the Parliamentary Counsel's Office to reform regulations to ensure that clear legal powers exist for regulation provisions. We are working to avoid postponements of the three regulation remakes affected, and to ensure that Sydney Water, WaterNSW and water supply authorities such as Essential Water are appropriately authorised to exercise their functions. The bill ensures that we can continue to manage water according to the principles and objects of the Act, and continue to do what we need to do to ensure that water is managed sustainably, effectively and efficiently at no extra cost to the public or government.

These are the first amendments, as I said in my second reading speech, that the water Minister will introduce during this Parliament. The introduction of this legislation balances enabling time critical amendments with the need for strategic reform in enforcement, planning, licensing and approvals. Work on those strategic reforms is underway. I thank the staff at the New South Wales Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water for their work and for making sure that people have confidence in our legislation, and that it is clear, coherent, understandable and consistent. I also thank the Minister for her work in this area and the Minister's staff and the staff from the Parliamentary Counsel's Office for their work in moving the bill forward.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **FINES AMENDMENT (PARKING FINES) BILL 2024**

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (13:15):** On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Nobody likes receiving a parking fine. It is made worse if that parking fine is not put on your car at the time of the alleged offence but is received in the mail a week or so later. Not remembering the circumstances that led to the alleged offence can leave a person with no other option but to pay the fine. In my electorate, Central Coast Council issued over 15,000 ticketless fines in 2023, with a penalty value of over \$4 million. The amendments in the Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024 seek to address that circumstance. The object of the bill is to make special provision in relation to the issuing of penalty notices for parking offences. In doing so, it aims to enhance fairness, transparency and alignment of the parking fines system with community standards and, I should say, community expectations. I note the bill has come to this Chamber from the other place.

The need for the changes arose following the shift from the traditional method of issuing parking fines, where councils would leave a penalty notice directly on a vehicle, to the ticketless "print and post" system

introduced by the former Liberal-Nationals Government in May 2020. The current operation of the ticketless parking fine system allows fines to be issued without immediate notification, depriving motorists of the opportunity to collect crucial evidence for any potential disputes. Parking regulations are essential for fair access to parking spaces and efficient traffic management; however, without instant notification, drivers can unknowingly leave the scene unable to document evidence that could support a challenge to the fine. That lack of immediate notice compromises transparency and fairness, prolongs disputes and reduces the deterrent effect of the fine. One of the most troubling aspects of the current system is the potential for motorists to receive multiple fines for the same offence on the same day or over consecutive days without being informed. That unfair practice undermines the fines' deterrent purpose and erodes public confidence in our system of traffic and parking management.

The bill is a measured and appropriate response to community concerns about ticketless parking. It has been informed by extensive consultation. The New South Wales Government has made it clear for the need to protect parking officers in their workplace. While most members of the public exercise civility, we appreciate that the job of a parking officer is not easy. They can face challenging situations when discharging their duties. That is why the bill does not require a notification to be left on a vehicle if it is moving—which is a sound element of the bill—or it is otherwise unsafe to attach a notification to a stationary vehicle. That provision means the bill appropriately balances public interest considerations in respect of procedural fairness with the safety of enforcement officers.

Significant penalties apply for offences that involve assaulting or intimidating someone issuing a parking fine. For example, under the Crimes Act 1900, common assault carries a maximum penalty of imprisonment for two years. An assault that results in actual bodily harm, which includes injuries like cuts and bruises, carries a maximum penalty of imprisonment of five years. An offence of intimidation under the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 1999 also carries a maximum penalty of imprisonment for five years. These are serious offences and committing any of them may result in a jail sentence.

In addition, under the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999, it is an aggravating factor on sentencing if the victim of such an offence was a council law enforcement officer and the offence arose because of the victim's occupation. It is also an aggravating factor under the same Act if the victim was vulnerable for reasons that include their occupation. We have undertaken extensive consultation with stakeholders at various junctures of the policy development process. That has included consultation with the United Services Union—which tends to represent council employees—all 128 councils across New South Wales, Local Government NSW, the NRMA, the Law Society of New South Wales and Community Legal Centres NSW. Those consultations have informed the development of the bill.

I turn now to the specific provisions of the bill. New section 24AC requires authorised officers of local councils and government agencies who issue parking fines to attach notification of a fine to the offending vehicle, except in certain circumstances. The requirement to issue an on-the-spot notification is the default position, but we recognise that detaching a notification will not be practicable or appropriate in certain circumstances. New section 24AD provides that a notification will not need to be left on a vehicle where it is not safe to leave a notification, the vehicle is not stationary, the vehicle is parked in a prescribed zone that complies with the requirements of the regulations, or the regulation provides that it is not necessary to leave a notification. Those provisions are pragmatic exceptions that were intended to apply in very limited circumstances.

New section 24AD (1) (b) and new section 24AD (6) create an exception for prescribed parking zones. These provisions will operate in conjunction with section 24 (1) (d). Prescribed parking zones will require signage that complies with the requirements of the regulation, including but not limited to the wording, size, colour, location and positioning of the signage. That will provide advanced warning to drivers that they are parking in an area where a notification of the issuing of a penalty notice for a parking offence may not be attached to a vehicle. The New South Wales Government has made it clear that issuing authorities will not be able to invoke the prescribed parking notice zone exception by simply erecting a sign. Even if the signage meets requirements in respect of wording, font, size, colour or positioning, the signage alone is insufficient to deem a parking area a prescribed parking zone.

The prescribed parking zone exception will apply to a limited number of parking zones described in the regulations—for instance, enclosed parking areas that use licence plate recognition technology and national parks with limited mobile phone connectivity. The bill contains a range of checks to ensure that the use of exceptions is appropriate. Agencies must also report on the use of such exceptions. These provisions ensure accountability and uphold the community's expectations for fairness. Under new section 24AD, where a parking officer invokes one of the exceptions, they must record their reasons as to why and provide them to the head of the issuing agency. For example, if an appropriate officer does not issue a notification because an exception applies, they will need to make a detailed record about why the officer concluded that the exception applied in the circumstances.

For example, if the officer considers that placing a notification poses a danger to safety, such as where a motorist may be behaving in a threatening manner, the officer must record why they concluded the situation was unsafe. It will be insufficient for the officer simply to state "unsafe". They must clearly outline the material facts and circumstances warranting reliance on any available exception. A failure to meet these requirements will invalidate the fine. Further, if requested, an issuing agency will need to provide the reasons for not leaving a notification to Revenue NSW or a person who is required to pay an amount under a penalty notice for the offence; and issuing agencies will also be required to report on and publish the reasons why notifications were not left. I will provide further detail on these data reporting requirements later.

The timeliness of notifications is a key issue that this legislation seeks to address. Too many parking fines are received weeks after the offence, leaving drivers in the dark and unable to correct their behaviour. Under new section 24AE, parking fines will need to be issued no later than seven days after the offence if a notification was not left on the vehicle. Issuing the originating fine outside of time will invalidate the fine. A fine that is reissued where liability is transferred will not be subject to that particular requirement. One of the issues that concerned the Government was the inconsistency in the collection of photographic evidence of parking offences. While many councils already take photographs of offences, the intention of the bill is to formalise the process and ensure that drivers have access to those photographs.

That provision will ensure that drivers, should they request it, have access to images of the parking offence. That is especially important to enable motorists to exercise their rights of review or contest a fine in court. Those provisions will apply to all parking fines that are issued across New South Wales. New section 24AF requires that photographs be taken of the offence and any notification left on the vehicle. If a notification is not required to be left, the authorised officer must, as far as reasonably practicable, take images that show why the notification was not required to be attached to the vehicle. Those images are required to be retained and provided to Revenue NSW or the driver upon their request. If photographs are not taken as required then, at the very least, Revenue NSW may take that into consideration when undertaking an internal review. In other circumstances, which I will detail, the failure to take photographs may invalidate a fine.

Perhaps the most egregious manifestation of the shortcomings of the current ticketless parking fine system is that motorists can be fined in the same location, for the same offence, on consecutive days, without any knowledge that they have been fined. That is a totally shocking and unacceptable practice that requires immediate remediation. It undermines public confidence in the fines system, it fails to serve as a deterrent and, put simply, it is grossly unfair, as many of my constituents have told me many times. It does not permit the driver to correct their behaviour before receiving subsequent fines.

With that in mind, new section 24AG of the bill prohibits a fine being issued for a parking offence if a fine for the same kind of offence was issued within the previous seven days for the same vehicle, in the same location; if it occurred on the same length of road between the same cross streets or in the same car parking area; and if no notification was placed on the vehicle for the earlier offence. Invalidating unfair fines will help restore public trust in our system. As I mentioned earlier, fines will be invalidated if there is a serious failure to comply with the bill's provisions. The Government considers that a contravention of the requirements to both leave a notification and to take photographs, where there is no exception to do so, is serious enough to warrant invalidating the fine.

That will remove the possibility of instances where drivers have no immediate notification of a fine or any images of the events taking place. We consider that to be unacceptable and unfair. Further, a failure to record the reason for not leaving a notification will also invalidate a fine. The bill also introduces data reporting rules that will require issuing authorities to prepare and publish reports on reasons relied upon to not provide an immediate notification. Reporting on the use of exceptions will not only increase accountability but also help evaluate the success of those measures and see what opportunities there are for future reforms.

Additionally, the bill makes provision for the development of regulations to address operational matters, including but not limited to designing and defining prescribed parking zones; the content, manner and form of data reporting requirements and reasoning in respect of the exercise of the use of exceptions; the particulars that need to be contained in written notifications other than penalty notices; and other grounds for not providing an on-the-spot notification or taking images of the offence. The New South Wales Government will work with stakeholders, councils and other issuing agencies in the development of the regulations. We understand that issuing authorities may require some time to adjust to the new requirements.

The legislation will not commence immediately. However, it should be noted that nothing stops councils and issuing authorities from placing a notification on offending vehicles today. I would like to see Central Coast Council do that. Supporting regulations need to be developed before the bill's provisions are operationalised, and a reasonable time frame for commencement will be set. However, I stress that the changes in the bill are a priority for the Government. The bill is a significant package of reforms intended to restore public trust and confidence in our parking fines system. I thank all stakeholders who have been involved in the development of the policy.

Secondly, I say a special thank you to all of the members of the community who have raised concerns with the Government about the lack of transparency in the ticketless parking fine system. I note the Legislation Review Committee has reviewed the bill. It reported no issues with the bill in the *Legislation Review Committee Digest 20/58*. I thank Laura Akkari and Harriet Malone from the Minister's office. They have been tremendously helpful. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

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

## **ENERGY AMENDMENT (LONG DURATION STORAGE AND INVESTMENT) BILL 2024**

### **First Reading**

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

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later hour.

I welcome visitors to the gallery, guests of the Attorney General, from the Road Trauma Support Group NSW, who are very important people.

## **VICTIMS RIGHTS AND SUPPORT AMENDMENT (VICTIMS SUPPORT COUNSELLING) BILL 2024**

### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Michael Daley, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (14:32):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased, on behalf of the New South Wales Government, to introduce the Victims Rights and Support Amendment (Victims Support Counselling) Bill 2024. The bill will amend the Victims Rights and Support Act to extend victims support counselling to the families of people killed in road crimes. The bill implements a New South Wales Government election commitment to provide better support to families who have lost loved ones through road crime by ensuring that those families can access counselling through the Victims Support Scheme.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge some people in the gallery today, including my friend Martha Jabour and her daughter, Jamelia. Martha has been a fierce advocate for victims of crime, including family victims of road crime, and I thank her and members of the Road Trauma Support Group for their involvement in the development of this bill. I should say that I met Martha when I was Minister for Roads, back in 2008. Our paths crossed again when I was made, at the end of 2009, the Minister for Police and now our paths cross again with this portfolio of Attorney General. It is a pleasure to keep working with Martha. I also acknowledge in the gallery today some family members who have lost loved ones as a result of road incidents: Nadine Willis, Katie Dokmanovic, Gail Proctor and Michael Duke. I acknowledge that this coming Sunday, 17 November, is the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims—an opportunity for all of us to remember those loved ones who have been lost and those who have been injured on the roads. There are far too many.

Victims of road crime have been largely excluded from the Victims Support Scheme in New South Wales. Incidents involving motor vehicles are mostly excluded from being so-called "acts of violence" under the Act. The Government acknowledges that family victims of road crime experience the same immense trauma and suffering as other people who lose a family member too soon because of a criminal act. The bill will ensure that they receive counselling support to assist them to navigate their loss. Under the changes proposed in the bill, a family member will be eligible to access victims support counselling if a person is killed in a motor vehicle crash and another person is charged with an offence relating to the crash. A charge will not be required if the alleged offender has died or cannot be located but there is sufficient evidence to establish that an offence has apparently occurred. An eligible family member will be able to access 22 hours of approved counselling—the same as other recipients under the Act—with further hours available if approved by the Commissioner of Victims Rights.

Eligible family members will be able to access counselling under the scheme if the road crime occurs on or after a date two years prior to the commencement of the new laws. The commissioner will have discretion to accept applications from family members of people killed before this date in exceptional circumstances. Consistent with counselling offered to victims of an act of violence or modern slavery under the Act, there will



be no requirement that family victims apply to the Victims Support Scheme within a particular time period after the crime occurred. A person may seek counselling at the appropriate time for them. The bill also includes a clarifying amendment to confirm that the Charter of Victims Rights, at section 6 of the Victims Rights and Support Act, applies explicitly to victims of road crime.

I turn now to the detail of the bill. Clause 2 of the bill provides that the Act will commence on a day to be appointed by proclamation. This is to allow Victims Services time to implement the changes. Schedule 1 to the bill contains the substantive amendments to the Victims Rights and Support Act. Schedule 1 [1] and [2] make changes to the definitions to reflect new definitions included in the Act. Schedule 1 [3] amends the definition of "victim of crime" that applies to the Charter of Victims Rights. The amendment clarifies that a victim of crime includes people who suffer harm in the commission of a criminal offence involving a motor vehicle. Although the Charter of Victims Rights does currently apply to victims of road crimes, this amendment responds to calls for those victims to be clearly and explicitly recognised, and it will now do that.

Schedule 1 [4] updates the objects of the part of the Act that creates the Victims Support Scheme to reflect that the scheme will now provide support for family victims of road crime. Schedule 1 [6] clarifies that a road crime is not an act of violence unless the act was an intentional killing and the perpetrator has been charged with murder, or the act was a terrorist act That is consistent with the current position under the Act. The distinction is necessary because victims of acts of violence and family victims of road crimes are eligible for different types of support under the Victims Support Scheme.

Schedule 1 [5] to [7] includes a definition of "road crime" in the Act. A road crime is an act or series of acts committed in New South Wales involving a motor vehicle that cause the death of a person. Charges must have been laid against an alleged offender in relation to the act, unless the alleged offender has died or cannot be found. The regulation may prescribe circumstances in which an act does or does not constitute a road crime. A charge is required to give effect to the intention to extend support to people who lose family members due to road crime. Unfortunately, people are killed in motor vehicle crashes caused by a range of factors. However, not all crashes are caused by the criminal act of another person. Determining whether an offence has been committed in a motor vehicle crash is often a complex assessment, sometimes requiring expert technical knowledge. It would not be practicable for Victims Services to assess whether an offence has occurred in all cases. Requiring a charge to be laid creates greater certainty for all parties.

If the alleged offender has died or cannot be located, it will not be possible for the police to lay charges, of course. In those cases, a family member will be eligible if an offence has apparently occurred. Victims Services will consider the available evidence, including police reports, and assess whether an offence has apparently occurred on the balance of probabilities. This will ensure that family members will not be prevented from accessing support in circumstances where it is not possible to lay charges.

Schedule 1 [8] to [11] update the definition of a "family victim" to include a member of the immediate family of a person who has died as a result of road crime. Consistent with existing powers under the Act and regulation, the commissioner will also be able to approve counselling services for relatives other than immediate family members, if appropriate. Schedule 1 [12] updates section 23 of the Act to provide that a family victim of road crime is eligible for the support outlined in proposed new section 29A. Schedule 1 [13] to [15] amend section 25 of the Act, which sets out when people are not eligible for support. The position for family victims of road crime will be consistent with the position for other family victims of crime. This includes that family victims of alleged offenders will not be eligible for support under the Victims Support Scheme unless they were also related to the victim.

Schedule 1 [16] and [17] make consequential amendments to distinguish between a family victim of an act of violence and a family victim of road crime. Schedule 1 [18] inserts new section 29A, which provides that family victims of road crime are eligible for approved counselling services. Under the Victims Rights and Support Regulation 2019, up to 22 hours of counselling will be available, with a further period available if approved by the commissioner. Schedule 1 [19] updates section 30A to provide that, if an act could be classified as more than one of an act of violence, an act of modern slavery or a road crime, a victim is eligible for each type of support under the scheme only once. This is consistent with the current treatment of acts of violence and acts of modern slavery under the Victims Support Scheme. Schedule 1 [20] to [22] make consequential amendments to allow the commissioner to approve counselling services and authorise payments. Schedule 1 [23] and [24] make consequential amendments to allow family victims of road crimes to submit applications and for those applications to be determined. Schedule 1 [25] to [28] amend section 44, which sets out reasons for not approving victim support.

In general, the position for family victims of road crime will be the same as for victims of acts of violence and acts of modern slavery. One difference is that family victims of road crime will not have to wait for associated insurance claims to be determined before being found eligible for victim support. This ensures consistency of

support offered to victims, because victims of acts of violence and acts of modern slavery may also receive approved counselling services even if eligible for workers compensation or support under the police officer support scheme. It will also prevent delays in victims accessing support and reduce complexity for victims navigating the insurance and justice systems after a loved one's death.

Schedule 1 [29] contains savings and transitional provisions. Under these provisions, family victims of road crimes that occurred two years before commencement will be eligible for victim support. The commissioner will have the discretion to approve counselling in relation to road crimes occurring before this time, in exceptional circumstances. The term "exceptional circumstances" is not defined by the bill, but relevant considerations may include the number of individuals killed and their age, and the impact on the families and their community—for example, where a road crime results in the loss of multiple young lives, causing a significant and lasting impact on the local community. This was the case in the tragic Buxton crash that killed five teenagers. I acknowledge the member for Wollondilly for her advocacy on behalf of those families. Schedule 2 to the bill contains amendments to the Victims Rights and Support Regulation 2019. These amendments are required to allow for the authorisation of payments for approved counselling services for family victims of road crime.

Before I conclude, I thank some people who have been instrumental to the development of this bill. I once again thank the Road Trauma Support Group and, in particular, Martha Jabour. I met with this group when I was in opposition and again as Attorney General, and I have been moved by the stories shared with me by its members. Their love for their family members and their advocacy for change have been central to the development of this bill, and they should be commended for their tenacity and bravery. I am standing here today because of them.

I also thank the family victims of road crimes and family members who have lost loved ones in road incidents who have met with me and shared their stories. I mention the member for Camden, the member for Leppington and the member for Liverpool, all of whom have advocated strongly on behalf of families in their electorates who have lost loved ones as a result of road incidents. Finally, I thank those family members who met with me after the indescribable tragedy of the Greta bus crash. All of the immediate family victims impacted by that horrific incident will be eligible for counselling under this bill. This bill will ensure that family victims of road crimes in New South Wales will be able to access critical mental health support through the Victims Support Scheme. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **FINES AMENDMENT (PARKING FINES) BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (14:47):** On behalf of the Opposition, I speak in debate on the Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024. The Opposition will support this bill, which amends the Fines Act 1996 to improve the transparency and fairness of the parking fine system by ensuring that drivers receive on-the-spot notifications of parking fines. I stress that the bill does not reverse the significant reforms undertaken by the previous Coalition Government but instead makes minor changes to improve the Fines Act 1996 to better support motorists. Specifically, it does not remove the ability of councils to issue ticketless fines but instead requires that drivers be issued with on-the-spot notifications of any offences. Said notice can be the penalty notice itself or a short description of the offence and a notice stating that a fine will be sent to the driver.

All members of this place no doubt support the principle of improving the driving experience for motorists across New South Wales. No-one likes to receive a parking fine, and frequently our electorate offices are where our constituents go when they feel they have been treated unfairly, whether that be when a sign is obscured by a tree or when other circumstances arise. This bill is a response to concerns raised by motorists around the current ticketless parking fine system, particularly the difficulty in gathering evidence when a driver wants to seek a review of the fine; the reduced impact of a fine to act as an immediate deterrent and influence behaviour; and that a driver can receive multiple parking infringements before receiving notification via post or the Service NSW app. It is important to note that the bill is supported by the NRMA. On 17 September, NRMA spokesperson Peter Khoury said:

Motorists who abuse the limited public parking spaces available obviously deserve to be fined, however ticketless parking fines removed transparency and made it almost impossible for motorists to contest their fine if they felt they had a legitimate case.

The Opposition believes that the parking fine system should first and foremost be about correcting dangerous illegal behaviour, rather than revenue raising. In 2023-24, 822,310 ticketless fines were issued throughout the State, up 49 per cent from the 551,441 ticketless fines issued in 2022-23. Too often, motorists drive off without being aware they have been issued with a fine or are being issued with multiple fines for the same parking offence without being aware of the initial infringement.

This bill will allow motorists to correct their behaviour without further enforcement by prohibiting a fine being issued for a parking offence if a fine for the same kind of offence was issued within the previous seven days, for the same vehicle in the same location, when no notification was placed on the vehicle for the earlier offence. Furthermore, the bill provides exceptions for the issuing of notices in circumstances where it is unsafe to attach a notification, the vehicle is parked in a prescribed parking zone, the vehicle is not stationary, or the regulations permit a notification not to be attached.

I have said from the outset that the Opposition supports the bill, but I place on record some of our concerns. The lack of a definition of what is considered "unsafe" could have significant impacts on enforcement for motorists. As mentioned previously, a penalty notice or notification does not need to be issued if it is deemed unsafe. In her second reading speech the Minister provided an example of an unsafe situation "where a motorist may be behaving in a threatening manner". That is not satisfactory given the reliance on the definition for a motorist to challenge a fine. Furthermore, while I understand that the lack of a definition in the bill was intentional and is flagged to be addressed in the regulation, the Opposition prefers that the term be defined in the legislation, or that clearer information on the intention of the term in the regulation be available at this point in time. Before concluding, I draw the attention of the House to the fact that in her speech in reply in the other place the Minister for Finance said:

I thank my husband, George, for his wise counsel, astute political antenna and practical and commonsense approach.

It would be fair for one to be intrigued by her tribute and wonder what expertise Mr Houssos has in relation to parking fines. In the past, there was controversy over potential conflicts of interest when the Minister for Finance was responsible for insurance matters while her husband was employed in government relations for the Insurance Council of Australia. My attention was then drawn to a listing for Waverley Local Court on Tuesday 5 December 2023 for *R v George Arthur Houssos*. I am advised that court case related to the issue of a ticketless parking fine to Mr Houssos.

It is important to put on record that the mystery has been solved and the commonsense changes the Minister first demanded in her letter to councils in March 2024, and which are now introduced in this bill, all arose from Mr Houssos' experience before Waverley Local Court in December last year. That also explains the pace at which the legislation has been introduced and the lack of information in certain regards. Despite those concerns, the Opposition does feel that this bill builds upon the achievements of the previous Coalition Government in this space and will give the public confidence that parking enforcement will be open, transparent and uniform—which we encourage Government members and Minister Houssos to be. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (14:54):** The Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024 makes amendments to the Fines Act to improve the transparency and fairness of the parking fines system. The bill ensures drivers receive on-the-spot notifications for parking fines instead of ticketless fines, of which they are notified by mail. The former Government introduced the ticketless parking fine system, known as print and post, in May 2020. It allowed councils and other agencies to issue parking fines without first giving drivers an immediate notification. In a single year, the number of ticketless parking fines issued by councils increased by 49 per cent, from 551,441 in 2022-23 to 822,310 in 2023-24. There was a 54 per cent increase in the dollar value of ticketless parking fines collected by councils.

It is important to note that not all councils issue ticketless parking fines. Only 50 councils across the State are responsible for the massive uptick in parking fine revenue. The key concerns around ticketless parking fines include fairness and the difficulty in gathering evidence in the event that the driver seeks a review of the fine. When a person goes back to their car and sees a parking fine, they can look and notice that the sign was obscured by trees, was completely faded or was knocked over by a car. I have successfully supported people to review parking fines when those things have occurred and they were able to take a photo. If a person gets a fine a fortnight or so later, they do not have that access.

Another concern is the reduced impact of a fine to act as an immediate deterrent. That is very, very obvious. Also, a driver can receive multiple parking infringements before receiving a notification by post or in the Service NSW app. If a person does not understand which rule is in place—for example, when there are multiple signs on the same post—and they park there on a regular basis, they will not know for weeks. I am very disappointed that Cumberland City Council, which covers most of my electorate, was one of the 50 councils that began using the ticketless fine system. In 2023 the council issued 12,026 ticketless parking fines, totalling \$2,428,525. Cumberland council also disgraced itself around the time the ticketless parking fines were introduced, which was in the middle of the COVID restrictions, by being the only council in Sydney that did not reduce parking fines during COVID.

That was under the leadership of then Mayor Steve Christou. Whilst he was trying to make himself out to be a champion of everyone in Western Sydney during the awful longer lockdown that we endured in Western

Sydney, he was still issuing parking fines to everybody. That included people in my electorate who lived in Westmead, in areas where there are two-hour parking zones and no off-street parking. They had been directed to work from home under the COVID rules and were all getting parking fines. There was no leniency shown by the council at the time under Steve Christou's leadership.

Then the council embraced the ticketless parking fines. The council has a specially fitted out Tesla. The parking officer drives down the street and inputs all the information in the car. All the information in the report is ready to go when he gets back to the office. It has improved the efficiency of issuing parking fines for the council enormously. It is not fair or reasonable to ratepayers, particularly in an area where there is a lot of disadvantage already, such as in the Cumberland area. I am very pleased to say that recently the council, led by incoming Mayor Ola Hamed, decided to no longer issue ticketless parking fines. In March the Minister for Finance wrote to all councils in New South Wales urging them to improve their practices of issuing parking fines, and particularly urging the 50 councils that use ticketless parking fines to address the shortcomings by providing drivers with an on-the-spot notification. Perhaps park the Tesla, leave a notification on the car and maybe use it to generate a report back in the office, but make sure you let people know they have done the wrong thing and give them the opportunity to make an appeal.

People come to see members of Parliament all the time to complain about having received a parking fine. It is even harder for people who say they got a parking fine that they cannot afford to pay and do not even remember parking illegally. We cannot do anything to help those people because they have no record of the act. Sometimes they did not even know they had done the wrong thing—or at least that is their claim—but they are stuck with a parking fine because they were not able to take photos or capture any evidence of what might have transpired. People often appeal a parking fine on the basis that they had a specialist appointment but the specialist ran late, they got back to the car and found they had received a parking fine. But if they do not receive the fine for a few weeks, it is very hard to make that argument. It is most unfair. The bill goes a long way towards improving fairness when issuing parking fines in New South Wales.

No-one likes getting parking fines. Sometimes people know they did the wrong thing, but sometimes they have no idea. If they have no idea they got fined until a few weeks later, it is absolutely unfair. The growth in the number of parking fines since ticketless parking fines were introduced by the previous Government is reflective of the magnitude of this gross unfairness as it is so much easier to issue parking fines but so much harder to appeal against them. Important exemptions can apply where councils and parking officers can still issue a ticketless parking fine, including not being required to leave an on-the-spot notification when it is unsafe to do so. In the past, parking officers have been assaulted. We do not want to increase the risk of that happening again. That is why exemptions will apply but only in circumstances when it is unsafe to leave a notification.

I urge the Government and the Minister, in particular, to make sure that we are vigilant about councils taking advantage of the exemption of not being able to leave a notification because it is unsafe to do so and that they do it only on rare occasions. They should not use the exemption as a get-out clause that enables rangers to continue driving around and issuing parking fines that arrive by mail weeks later when people cannot appeal them. I place on record that I am disappointed Opposition members chose to launch a personal attack on the Minister's husband for having received a parking fine and thought that was somehow relevant to bring to the debate. It is tacky and uncalled for. We do not need to do that in this Chamber. This is an important reform for everyone in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (15:03):** The Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024 makes a number of much-needed amendments to the Fines Act 1996 to strengthen the transparency and fairness of the parking fine system. Why is this an issue? When the former Government introduced the ticketless parking fine system in 2020, it allowed councils to issue parking fines without first giving drivers an immediate notification. Unfortunately, the existing system has a number of problems—namely, that it lacks transparency and does not give procedural fairness. The people of the South Coast know this all too well, as Shoalhaven City Council trialled the system in 2022. What the residents of the Shoalhaven experienced are the exact reasons the Minns Government is making the amendments in the bill.

Constituents told us that when they had parked their cars they did not know whether they were at risk of getting a fine in the mail two weeks later. In some cases, even when they had moved their vehicles, they were still getting fined, meaning they were receiving multiple parking infringements before receiving a notification via post or via the Service NSW app. It revealed a lack of transparency and a lack of fairness, and Shoalhaven council did not proceed with ticketless parking once the trial had ended. The centrepiece of the amendments is ensuring that on-the-spot notification of parking fines will be required. This requirement is designed to ensure that members of the public are afforded the due process they deserve when they incur parking fines. The bill will require authorised officers of local councils and New South Wales government agencies to place notification of a fine, or the fine

itself, on the offending vehicle when the fine is issued. Only in very limited circumstances will it be permissible not to leave a notification on the vehicle.

As the Minister for Finance has indicated, the exceptions to the requirement to leave a notification will not be a hall pass for issuing authorities. The exceptions come with safeguards to ensure the integrity of the reforms, and it is worth taking a moment to mention a few of them. If the issuing authority chooses not to leave a notice on a vehicle, the agency will be required to provide the reasoning behind that decision. The reasoning will need to be clear and adequate and explain why a notification was not left. If requested, the issuing agency must provide the reasons for the lack of notification to both the driver and to Revenue NSW. Revenue NSW may also consider the lack of a notification when receiving a request for the review of a fine. Additionally, the reasons for not leaving a notification will need to be recorded and lodged with the head of the issuing agency. Issuing agencies will be required to prepare and publish reports on the use of any exceptions. If any issuing authority begins to overuse or misuse an exception, it will become overwhelmingly apparent. These measures are important for the transparency of the system and to ensure that the public have the means of holding issuing authorities to account.

The people of New South Wales deserve to have the best opportunity to manage their parking fines as quickly and judiciously as possible. To support this aim, the bill provides that, if no notification is left on the vehicle, the officer will be required to post the fine within seven days of the offence occurring. If that does not happen, the fine will be void. The invalidation of fines, if the issuing authority chooses not to comply with the legislation or the regulations, is an integral component to ensuring the effectiveness of the amendments in the bill. There is no room for these provisions to be ignored or misinterpreted. Fines can and will be invalidated if the people of New South Wales are not afforded the due process that the bill offers them.

For far too long, people have been dealing with a demonstrably difficult system for parking fines in New South Wales. The Minns Labor Government got rid of secret speeding fines, and now we are getting rid of secret parking fines. We want to make sure that the parking regime is working as intended, including keeping pedestrians and other road users safe. But we also want to make sure that people understand what they are doing wrong when they are doing it and give them a timely opportunity to correct their behaviour. The bill achieves those objectives for the people of New South Wales in a measurable and meaningful way. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (15:08):** I make a contribution to debate on this timely and important legislation, which seeks to reintroduce fairness to a system that is causing significant frustration among drivers and community members—and understandably so. The Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024 continues the work that the Minns Labor Government began when it got rid of secret speeding fines by getting rid of secret parking fines. Unfair parking fines are often a topic of discussion at social and family gatherings across our community. Everyone has a horror story. People being fined multiple times in one day, people being fined after their vehicle broke down in an inopportune location and people being fined for parking in a disability parking space, despite having a valid disability parking permit, are just some of the many cases that have led to public frustration about the practice of issuing ticketless fines and the sheer exasperation with a process that nets local councils tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars, yet does very little to change parking behaviours—which is the fundamental point of issuing financial penalties, or fines, in the first place.

The system that was introduced by the previous Government, without much thought about how it would impact families, has been an absolute failure. The reforms proposed in the bill are important and necessary to address those problems and ensure that the system meets community expectations by rebuilding transparency and giving procedural fairness to our community. The bill will ensure a more consistent approach across New South Wales and deliver a uniform experience for motorists. The bill requires council to attach an on-the-spot notification to a vehicle. That could be the penalty notice itself or a short description of the offence and a notice that the fine will be sent to them, unless it is unsafe to attach a notification, the vehicle is parked in a prescribed parking zone, the vehicle is not stationary or the regulations permit a notification not to be attached.

The bill appropriately balances public interest considerations in respect of procedural fairness and the safety of officers. Of note, the exceptions in respect of safety will not require an officer to attach an on-the-spot notification nor take images where they have reasonable grounds to have safety concerns. I note that in 2019 in Liverpool there were two separate incidents within the space of a week where parking rangers were assaulted while issuing fines. That was in response to people who were inappropriately parked during school hours, and the assaults occurred in full view of schoolchildren, which is highly unfortunate.

The New South Wales Government understands that local councils are concerned about the safety of infringement officers and abuse and aggression when they are issuing tickets. From early on, the Government has emphasised the need to protect parking officers in their workplace. While the majority of the public exercises civility and respect with their fellow citizens, especially those who are just doing their jobs, we appreciate that the job of a parking officer can be a challenging one that involves risks to their safety. In acknowledging that, the bill

contains an exemption that means that parking officers will not be required to leave an on-the-spot notification where it is unsafe to do so. It is important to note that infringement notices are already issued in person by officers using a digital device, and that they often take photos as evidence for inclusion with the posted fine or upon request by the person who has been fined.

Currently, a person convicted of common assault not resulting in actual bodily harm may be imprisoned for up to two years. Assault with actual bodily harm could see a person sentenced for up to five years. A crime against a council law enforcement officer is an aggravating factor that could be considered by a court when determining the length of the sentence. Hopefully, those deterrents will put paid to the concerns about the risk of parking officer safety and will result in a situation where there is balance between the safety of those issuing fines and the procedural fairness that must be afforded to our community members. Should officers rely on an exception, they are required to record why they concluded that the exception applied in the circumstances and provide this reasoning to Revenue NSW or a person who has been fined for a parking offence if requested.

In terms of why a parking fine is not invalidated if no physical notice is provided, the legislation is clear: The officer must attach a notification to the vehicle if the vehicle is stationary. However, in some cases it may not be possible for this to be attached—for example, if the car drives off before they can attach the notification or if it is unsafe for the officer to do so. In that case, if the notification was not left but there was sufficient evidence provided by the council officer, such as photographs, it must be taken into consideration for the purposes of a review and the invalidation of a fine will occur if there is no notification—for example, there was a reason for it not to be left under the legislation and there were no photographs or evidence taken of the offence. That is a significant failure and warrants an invalidation.

The bill also addresses procedural fairness issues I outlined previously where community members received a notification in the mail of a fine weeks after and have lost the opportunity to gather evidence or immediately contest a fine. That has left them in a situation of believing that a fine should not have applied in that circumstance but are unable to provide the evidence in responding to that because of the time that lapsed between the alleged offence having occurred and the fine being sent to the person.

In relation to the money that has been netted from ticketless fines by councils in my local community in 2023, Fairfield City Council issued 21,470 ticketless parking fines, netting a total of \$5,136,623. That is just more than Liverpool City Council, which issued 20,114 ticketless parking fines, netting a total of \$3,220,188. However, both of those councils pale in comparison with the City of Sydney, which issued 265,181 ticketless parking fines, netting a total of \$42,405,468. That is three of many councils across our State that have issued ticketless parking fines across a number of years. As members can understand, the issue is felt widely and deeply by members of our community, who are frustrated and who see themselves as having been denied procedural fairness in many instances. The bill is exactly the way we need to go about rebuilding community trust in a system that should be looking to change behaviour and not just revenue raise. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (15:17):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024. The bill reaffirms this Government's commitment to fairness, transparency and a parking fines system that reflects community expectations for New South Wales. The bill is a clear step forward following on from our action to eliminate secret speeding fines, and now we are taking the same approach with parking fines. For too long, drivers have been left confused and frustrated by parking fines not being placed on their vehicles, leading them to unknowingly commit repeat infringements or receive fines weeks later by mail. That approach has been particularly harsh on families and individuals who are simply going about their day and then are blindsided by unexpected penalties. The lack of immediate notification has contributed to a system that many view as neither transparent nor procedurally fair.

The Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024 seeks to directly address those concerns by requiring that, wherever possible, a physical notification be left on a vehicle at the time a fine is issued. That measure aims to provide motorists with immediate awareness of a parking violation, establishing a more transparent and equitable process that eliminates surprise fines. However, we also understand there are a few specific circumstances where leaving a notification might not be safe or feasible, and the bill accommodates those exceptions responsibly. In most cases, the expectation is clear that drivers will receive a notification upon returning to their vehicle. If an officer does not leave one, they will need a valid reason recorded in detail. Exceptions include situations where it would be unsafe to leave a notice, such as severe weather conditions or when the parking enforcement officer's safety is at risk due to aggressive behaviour. By ensuring that officers document the rationale for these exceptions, and that the reasons are reviewed and reported by the issuing agency, both the public interest and officer safety are protected while enhancing accountability. This ensures that the process cannot be misused and gives transparency to the public around how these exceptions are applied.

To further improve the system's transparency, the Government is introducing several additional requirements. Councils and issuing agencies will be required to publicly report on instances where exceptions

were applied. This transparency will allow us to monitor and, if necessary, refine the system to meet evolving community standards. Officers will be expected to photograph both the offence and the notification left on the vehicle. Should a motorist contest a fine, these photographs will be available as evidence for Revenue NSW or for the motorist upon request, streamlining the review process and upholding procedural fairness.

The bill prohibits issuing multiple fines for the same parking offence within a week without notification. This addresses a key frustration in the current system, where drivers can be fined repeatedly before they are even aware of their first offence. Further, by enforcing on-the-spot notifications in all practical situations, New South Wales will move toward a consistent, statewide approach to parking fines. The bill also specifies that noncompliance with notification and documentation requirements, such as failure to photograph the offence or issue a penalty notice within seven days, may invalidate the fine. The Minns Government recognises that, whilst most of the public treat parking officers with respect, enforcement can present safety risks. Therefore, the bill ensures that parking officers are exempt from leaving notifications in unsafe conditions, as well as in specific restricted parking zones like national parks or enclosed parking areas that use automated licence plate recognition.

Unlike traffic offences, which are detected scientifically by cameras and do not require officer discretion, parking infringements often require judgement calls by officers. The flexibility to exempt New South Wales police from the notification requirement, given their need for mobility and focus on road safety, is also warranted, as they must remain agile to respond to emergencies. As we transition to this new system, councils and agencies will be given adequate time to adjust their operations to comply with these changes, while still recognising the urgent need to implement a more equitable and transparent system for drivers across New South Wales.

In closing, this legislation represents necessary reform to a longstanding and complex issue. The Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024 addresses community concerns by creating a system that is fair, transparent and consistent across the State. I am pleased to support the bill, which will ultimately foster greater accountability and trust between motorists, councils and enforcement agencies across New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (15:23):** The Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024 is an integral piece of legislation that is designed to reform the current parking fines system in New South Wales. The bill follows years of a hodgepodge approach to notifications for parking fines in the State and firmly establishes that there needs to be notification of a fine left on a vehicle. I have had several complaints from members of my community outlining the problems caused to them simply because they were not aware that they had received a parking fine, so I am glad to see the changes outlined in the bill. Previous speakers detailed the improvements to the parking fines system. They covered issues such as when it is appropriate to not take a photograph of a vehicle that has incurred a parking fine and when it is appropriate for an officer to not issue an on-the-spot notification of an offence. They also spoke about the regulations that will accompany this new legislation.

I take this opportunity to state that the bill has not come about without lengthy consideration and investigation. In looking into the matter, I was advised that 115 of the 177 issuing agencies that can impose parking fines typically do so electronically. At least 30 agencies have confirmed that they never leave any notification on an infringed car. This statistic vexed me deeply. There are undoubtedly motorists driving off from a location, completely unaware that they had incurred a parking fine. In March this year Minister Houssos wrote to 128 councils to express her concern and seek their support for change, after which Revenue NSW surveyed councils to understand what changes they would make as a result. I am advised that of the 86 respondents, 46 per cent indicated that they would not consider leaving a notification on a vehicle unless they were required to do so by law. There is clearly an opportunity for legislative change in this space, which the Government is seizing. The bill also makes it a requirement to leave an on-the-spot notification on vehicles when a parking fine is issued and to take photographs of the offence.

There are many benefits to the improved parking fines regime. To begin with, drivers will be made aware of their parking offences as soon as they occur, allowing them to manage their fines in a far quicker manner. Secondly, there will be the opportunity for significant behavioural change in motorists. In being made aware that they have committed an offence as soon as it occurs, people will be able to alter their behaviour immediately. While the default will be to leave a notification on the vehicle, the bill provides for exceptions to that obligation. For example, there will be prescribed zones where no notification may be left on a vehicle, with these limited areas being strictly defined and signposted. The regulations will specify the requirements for such signposting, including the wording, height, font, colour and dimensions of the signs, and their location or position. The regulations will also prescribe any other circumstances in which leaving an on-the-spot notification will not be required; however, these will be limited and carefully applied.

The bill leaves no room for spurious reasoning to be recorded when an on-the-spot notification has not been left. The reasons will need to be clear and concise, making it apparent why no notification was left. The regulations may prescribe requirements around how such reasons are to be recorded. These reasons will be

considered when the penalty is reviewed. If they are not recorded, the penalty will be invalidated. Where no notification is left on a vehicle, the penalty must be issued within seven days of the incurring of the fine. If it is not, the fine will be invalidated. This will ensure that people have the time and the means to deal with their fines as soon as practicably possible.

New South Wales is currently living through a cost-of-living crisis and dealing with inflation levels that have not been seen for a number of years. The bill addresses unfair processes that can result in motorists receiving multiple parking fines before they even know about the first offence. The bill also provides relief to motorists who are simply trying to do the right thing but have been hampered by complex and confusing signage. I am pleased to support the bill.

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (15:29):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024, which is designed to ensure improved and more efficient outcomes in managing parking fines. The obligations and compliance measures built into the reform allow for a transparent and equitable system that promotes behavioural change through clear messaging and timely notifications. The Minns Labor Government is one that listens. When the community flagged its concerns about secret speeding fines, we got rid of them. Now we are getting rid of secret parking fines. Frustration among drivers and community members over the unfair system is high, which is fair enough and understandable. Members opposite may even have finally seen the light. It is amazing what a different perspective can bring when they take the time to seriously consider the negative ramifications of a system they introduced without much thought about how it would impact families just going about their day. There are serious problems with the existing system: it lacks transparency and does not give procedural fairness.

It is only a Minns Labor Government that will make the important and necessary reforms to address problems and ensure the system meets community expectations. Adopting this legislation will ensure a consistent approach across New South Wales and deliver a uniform experience for motorists. The Minns Labor Government legislation will set higher standards by requiring councils to attach an on-the-spot notification to a vehicle. This could be the penalty notice itself, or a short description of the offence, and notice that a fine will be sent to them. The requirement applies unless it is unsafe to attach a notification because the vehicle is parked in a prescribed parking zone, the vehicle is not stationary, or the regulations permit a notification not to be attached. The bill appropriately balances public interest considerations in respect of procedural fairness and the safety of officers. It requires officers, should they rely on an exception, to make a record of why the officer concluded that the exception applied in the circumstances and provide this reasoning to Revenue NSW, or a person who has been fined for a parking offence, if requested.

Expanding on my colleagues' previous references to the circumstances in which an on-the-spot notification is not required, such circumstances will be limited but necessary—for example, where a motorist has parked in an unsafe location or where there are extreme weather conditions that would endanger an officer. In those circumstances, the officer will be required to post the fine within seven days of the offence occurring and record a sufficient reason as to why notification was not left. However, there will be no room for surreptitiousness in avoiding leaving on-the-spot notifications. The rules around when a notification may not be left will be made extremely clear, both in legislation and regulation, and there will be no room for error. If issuing authorities choose to ignore or avoid the requirements of the legislation, fines will be invalidated.

In her second reading speech, Minister Houssos spoke about unacceptable behaviours that may be faced by issuing officers, particularly when fines are being issued. Cases of abusive conduct directed towards issuing officers have been reported. The media has reported that parking officers have dealt with being abused, spat on, punched or left with serious injuries. Those behaviours are totally unacceptable and should be avoided at all costs. This issue has previously been raised in the Parliament. It is worth emphasising aspects of the penalties that apply for these acts. While the majority of the public do not behave in such a fashion, the impact of the few who do can be significant. Under the Crimes Act 1900, common assault carries a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment, and an assault that involves actual bodily harm carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment.

In addition, under the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999, whether the victim is a council law enforcement officer and the offence arose because of their occupation is considered in the determination of a higher sentence. The Act also considers whether a victim was vulnerable due to their occupation. If they were, it may result in a higher penalty. I clearly state that there is no place for assault or abuse in our society. An individual approaching a ranger and swearing and threatening assault would be an appropriate reason for a notification to not be left on the vehicle. The recorded reasons need to clarify why the witnessed behaviour of the member of the public or the motorist was unsafe and will need to be shared with Revenue NSW and the fine recipient where required.



In its wisdom, the former Government introduced the ticketless parking fine system, also known as "print and post", in May 2020, which allowed councils and other agencies to issue parking fines without first giving drivers an immediate notification. I am glad to say that the City of Parramatta made the wise decision not to go down that path. Historically, the usual practice of councils and other issuing authorities was to issue the penalty notice on the spot. However, over time, the number of ticketless parking fines issued by post has risen dramatically. In a single year, the number of ticketless parking fines issued by councils increased by 49 per cent on the previous year, from 551,441 issued in 2022-23 to 822,310 in 2023-24, which resulted in a 54 per cent increase in the dollar value of ticketless parking fines collected by councils in New South Wales. It is no wonder that Minister Houssos felt the need to act.

In March 2024 the Minister wrote to all 128 councils, urging those who use ticketless parking fines to address the shortcoming in their approach. There are two overriding concerns: a lack of transparency for drivers and a lack of fairness. Under the current system when drivers park they do not know if they are at risk of getting a fine in the mail two weeks later. The fine's impact is reduced because it does not act as a deterrent and influence behaviour. A driver can receive multiple parking infringements before they even receive a notification via post or the Service NSW app. Our reforms address those concerns by increasing transparency and fairness in the system.

A question has been asked around why the rules will not apply to New South Wales Government cameras. There is a big difference in both the gravity and the risk to the public when it comes to a speeding fine in comparison with a parking fine. Parking for 30 minutes over the parking limit and speeding in a school zone are two incredibly different situations. We are talking about a moving vehicle versus a stationary vehicle, for a start. When it comes to parking fines, there is a level of judgement applied by the parking officer. With fixed speed and red light cameras, there is no judgement applied but, rather, a scientific basis to detection.

The people of New South Wales deserve adequate notification of parking fines when they occur. However, there will be exceptions. To ensure that the reforms operate as intended, those exceptions will be prescribed in regulations and the authorised officer must record their reason for not doing so. Fines will be invalidated if that reason is not recorded. I cannot stress that enough. To ensure there is transparency in how exceptions are used, issuing agencies will be required to report on the use of exceptions and to make public those reports. That ensures that we cover those bases and that sound legislation is presented to the Parliament. I am pleased to support the bill.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:39):** I indicate that The Greens will support the Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024. We agree absolutely with the Government that local councils should be required to issue on-the-spot notifications to drivers when issuing parking fines unless it is concerning or unsafe for them to do so. The bill will set higher standards for councils beyond just paper tickets, including requiring councils to take photos of offences, invalidating repeat ticketless parking fines, and introducing data reporting rules to monitor the implementation of the legislation and evaluate if any future reforms are necessary.

It appears that Sydney has a parking fine addiction. According to Compare the Market, we rank fifth in the global list of cities with the most expensive driving fines. We punch way above our weight in parking fines specifically, with single overstay tickets coming in at up to \$220 per infringement in Sydney. The Newtown electorate office has heard from people who have received fines as high as \$772 for a single parking infringement while unintentionally displaying an out-of-date disabled parking permit and despite purchasing a ticket. That is a truly eye-watering amount of money, especially in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. If somebody living on support payments gets a fine, it could mean that they do not eat for a couple of weeks or are unable to pay for rent or essential medication.

Ticketless fines only serve to make it easier for councils to issue astronomical fines, and they certainly have helped to drain the pockets of drivers. Let me be clear that there is also a financial disparity. It is recognised that people who park incorrectly in dangerous places or disabled parking spots should be fined. The issue is that people have been repeatedly parking in places and thinking it is acceptable to park there without realising they have been getting tickets. This is not about trying to provide protection to those who deliberately park in unsafe areas or places they are not allowed to park. This is about trying to make sure that there is transparency about where people can and cannot park for those who park in a place where a fine would be issued.

Since the introduction of the new rules, government statistics show a 49 per cent jump in ticketless parking fines issued in the 2023-24 financial year. Over that same period, revenue increased by 14 per cent and the number of tickets issued increased by 9 per cent. In February the release of a City of Sydney document called "Parking Ranger Goals" showed that inspectors are expected to be "highly productive", issuing fines for a "variety of offences". I stress the irony that the City of Sydney has said that it opted into ticketless parking because of concerns about ranger safety while at the same time it pushed them towards what seem to be concerning and ridiculous productivity targets.

When it comes to fining people, I recall a disturbing moment in the early days of COVID when I saw that the local police station was tasked with trying to increase its number of fines for jaywalkers in the Newtown electorate. At the start of the pandemic, people did not know if the disease was transmitted by air or by touch. They chose not to press the button to cross the road for fear that there was a risk of contracting the virus. They then got fined for jaywalking across the road rather than pressing the button. The idea that we set key performance indicators for either parking rangers or police officers to issue a certain number of fines is of huge concern. I did my local member duty that morning and stood at the intersection pressing the button for all the people commuting to work until we managed to call the police off from issuing jaywalking fines.

In all seriousness, ranger safety is a real issue when considering the impacts of ticketed fines. We acknowledge that the United Services Union has raised concerns about the proposed changes to prohibit ticketless parking fines because of the risk of abuse and the risk to worker safety. The Greens hear those concerns. Councils need to do more to address that by protecting their workers and relaxing quotas and targets, which will ensure that parking rangers are not forced to overpolice parking to meet key targets and can instead look at sensible ways to ensure people are parking safely.

For some residents in the inner city, parking fines are built into the cost of living. For example, we have been repeatedly contacted by residents in Park Street, Erskineville, who have flagged that their street is too narrow to safely accommodate passing traffic and parked cars. While there has been an ongoing challenge to manage the narrowness of the road, drivers have been parking on the kerb from time to time to allow enough space for passing traffic to get through. They have received repeated fines for attempting to try to create more safety so that cars are not wiped out on the side of the road. These are complex issues. The Newtown electorate is in the middle of an inner city area. I am certainly not advocating for making it easier for cars to be the primary mode of transport, but we must recognise that no level of government should cash in and make money from this in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis.

I move now to what I consider to be the key point of this issue. One of the biggest inequities with fines is that they are not progressive. Whether somebody earns \$400,000 a year or \$25,000 a year, they are charged the same for a fine. The impact of a fine if you earn \$25,000 a year or \$400,000 a year is not proportional. Therefore, The Greens support the idea of not criminalising poverty. We should not further punish people on lower incomes by making them pay a fine that is disproportionately high. We should have an equitable fining system. We must ensure that we do not encourage a situation where people have to consistently raise concerns about their financial insecurity in a cost-of-living crisis and ask to have fines waived. I appreciate that fines are often successfully waived when people are suffering from financial hardship, but many transparency issues need to be looked at.

The final issue I raise is the disproportionate impact of fines on people who cannot afford to pay them. It so often adds to ongoing cycles of poverty when people receive fines but are unable to pay them, and they then lose their licence as a result or have some of their income taken from them. Being unable to drive to work as a result of not being able to pay fines creates other issues and is a vicious cycle. I recognise that this has a disproportionate impact on First Nations people. The Redfern Legal Centre has raised that there is often a significant delay in a fine arriving, either by post or electronically, to give people less time to contest it. That is another big issue faced by renters in the State. People can move every six, 12 or 18 months and, as a result, may not be aware of a fine that they have been issued.

I end by adding something beyond the scope of the bill that I hope that the Minister will look into. Some councils choose to set parking meters to the maximum time that a car can park in a spot, rather than the minimum. I note that the Minister is in the Chamber listening to my contribution, and I wonder whether this is a Fair Trading issue rather than a local government or parking issue. Any member who has stood at one of those quite annoying electronic machines and had to press the button to reduce the time will know that it is time-consuming and a hassle. Some councils choose to set it at the minimum and people can increase the time to how much they need, but other councils set the maximum for, say, a four-hour parking slot so people have to stand there and press the button to reduce the time in small increments. There is a hope that people will get frustrated by that process, they will tap away and the council will collect more money from them, even though they only need to park there for half an hour. I hope that the Minister for Finance will look at this as part of the next stage of the review.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (15:49):** I contribute to debate on the Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024. No-one likes getting a parking fine. But what is worse is finding out about it two weeks later—sometimes after unknowingly incurring multiple tickets. That is the reality drivers across New South Wales have faced since the previous Government introduced ticketless parking fines in 2020. I thank the Minister for Finance—I think I will call her the "Minister for Procedural Fairness and Transparency"—Mrs Courtney Houssos from the other place for the work that she has done in trying to make things fairer for the people who are using our roads. I also thank her team for their hard work on the bill.

Under the current system, drivers no longer find a notice on their vehicle. Instead, the fine is sent by post, often arriving weeks after the incident. Over the last financial year alone, councils issued more than 822,000 ticketless fines, a staggering 49 per cent increase over the year before, resulting in over \$158 million in revenue. In the Central Coast local government area, over 15,320 ticketless parking fines were issued to a value of over \$4 million. While I feel sorry for councils—the bill may mean a loss of income—issuing ticketless parking fines is unfair and fails to disincentivise unsafe behaviour until weeks later, when drivers, often furious, receive a notification in the post. Often drivers return to their cars completely unaware that they have been booked and therefore do not have a chance to document evidence if they wish to contest the fine. They cannot say, "I took a photo of the sign and everything else." In my electorate, some drivers have incurred multiple fines before even receiving the first ticket in the mail.

That is why today we are debating commonsense legislation that aims to bring fairness, transparency and prompt accountability back to our parking fine system. The bill will require councils to place a notification on the vehicle at the time of the infraction, with sensible exemptions for cases where parking officers face a hazardous or unsafe situation. Like all frontline workers, parking officers sometimes deal with challenging interactions with the public and the exemption respects their safety. The bill also introduces several critical safeguards to prevent the unfair accumulation of fines. Our legislation will invalidate any repeat fines issued within seven days of an initial ticket unless the driver has received a prior notification. We are requiring councils to take photos of each offence, which will be provided to Revenue NSW or the driver if requested. That will streamline the review process and give drivers more clarity and peace of mind.

Too often, drivers have approached my electorate office after receiving sometimes multiple fines. With weeks having passed since the alleged offence and no photo evidence being provided, community members have no choice but to accept the fine regardless of concerns about its legitimacy. I thank the people who have taken the time to contact my office in their attempt to get out of their fines. I even received a letter from a gentleman who thanked me for trying to get him out of a fine that he thought was unfair even though we were not able to. In addition, the reform includes new data reporting rules to track the use of the exceptions. Those rules will add transparency, ensuring that we can continuously evaluate and refine the system as needed.

The New South Wales Government has worked closely with councils, the NRMA, Local Government NSW, the Law Society of New South Wales and Community Legal Centres NSW to implement sensible reform in this space. While some councils have shown a willingness to improve their practices, others have been reluctant, highlighting the need for consistent statewide standards that meet community expectations. Let me be clear: This legislation does not prevent councils from taking immediate steps to adopt on-the-spot notifications in the interests of motorists and our communities. I encourage them to do so. These reforms are not just about parking fines; they are about fairness, transparency and trust in our system. Together, let us ensure that New South Wales has a parking fine system that is clear and equitable, and serves the best interests of our community. I thank our "Minister for Procedural Fairness and Transparency"—the finance Minister from the other place, Courtney Houssos—for her work, and I thank her team for pulling this together.

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (15:53):** The Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024 responds to concerns from members of the public who have received parking fines sometime after an alleged offence was committed. The concern about any fine received sometime after an alleged offence is easily understandable, whether it is a parking fine, a speeding fine or any other kind of fine. Curiously, though, the bill addresses only parking fines. Interestingly, we have heard nothing from the Minister about surprise speeding fines arriving in the mail weeks or months after the alleged offence has occurred. The bill even explicitly excludes from its operation parking fines issued by police.

Revenue NSW administers parking fines for several local councils under agreements. The Minister could have easily changed the terms of those agreements to implement the on-the-spot notice requirements contained in the bill. It seeks to return us to a last century, paper-based system rather than explore twenty-first century digital solutions to the problem, such as real-time emails or text messages to the registered owner of the vehicle that a parking fine has been issued. Local Government NSW President Councillor Darriea Turley commented that local councils' "greatest concern is the very real risk to the safety and wellbeing of compliance officers". She added:

This decision will put rangers right back in harm's way ...

Councils' primary responsibility remains the safety and wellbeing of their staff. One of the main reasons many councils introduced ticketless fines was to reduce the incidence of verbal and physical abuse of employees.

Councils that adopted ticketless enforcement and vehicle-mounted camera technology have reported a reduction in these incidents as a result.

The other concern raised by Councillor Turley relates to councils' significant investment in new technology to issue infringements. She said:

Many hundreds of thousands of dollars have been invested by councils across NSW on technology, cars, cameras and software ...

With ongoing cost-shifting and the current financial climate affecting councils' ability to provide the services and facilities their communities deserve, these parking reforms would significantly impact council budgets.

Unsurprisingly, Councillor Turley also pointed to the double standards involved in the New South Wales Government imposing on-the-spot paper fine notifications while continuing to issue ticketless fines, including for offences identified through cameras that look inside a vehicle to see if a driver is using a mobile phone or wearing a seatbelt, with no prior warning given. The Government has further legislated for ticketless speeding fines based on the use of point-to-point cameras. The United Services Union also slammed the Labor Government for its failure to give due weight to the real threat to the welfare of its members who work as parking inspectors. General Secretary Graeme Kelly commented:

Removing ticketless parking fines will take rangers back to the bad old days where they suffered broken jaws, black eyes and daily abuse for simply doing their job.

...

The NSW government will be responsible for every assault suffered by a parking ranger from now on.

He also said:

Every time a parking inspector is punched, spat on or abused they'll be able to thank the NSW government for making a difficult situation even more dangerous ... We've had council rangers who've been put in comas, had their jaws broken, been spat on and abused with the most foul mouthed tirades.

Only a few months ago a man who ran down into a parking ranger in Enmore putting him in a coma for two weeks and leaving him with life changing brain and spinal injuries ...

Parking rangers have a tough job and like every other worker in this state they deserve to go home each day, not end up in a coma in hospital.

Unfortunately, the Minister effectively brushed aside those concerns by referring to the fact that parking inspectors, as council law enforcement officers, are covered by the provisions for the aggravating factors in sentencing under the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. However, a possible longer sentence does not directly protect a parking inspector at risk from enraged, entitled drivers about to be issued with a parking ticket. The bill also contains a provision that puts the onus on a parking inspector to assess a risk of imminent assault from a disgruntled driver about to be issued a ticket and, while retreating to safety, to attempt to capture images justifying the decision to avoid risk.

The United Services Union insists that "ticketless parking allows rangers to avoid dangerous situations", not record them. The union spoke to the Government about linking council fines to the car registration system so that drivers could get a text within minutes of getting a fine so they could gather evidence if they wanted to challenge it—which I proposed earlier in my contribution. Mr Kelly hits the nail on the head with this insightful comment:

Parking inspectors have a tough job, people love to hate them, and now the state government is looking for a sugar hit to bump up its popularity and is picking on them too and putting them in danger, it's disgraceful.

The Government is choosing to ignore well-articulated concerns of both local government and the relevant union. I urge the Minister to begin work on modern digital solutions as proposed by the United Services Union. Notwithstanding those observations, the Opposition acknowledges the Government is ultimately responsible for the design of its fine system and will not oppose the bill.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (15:59):** I contribute to debate on the Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024. I was pleased to hear members on the other side of the Chamber join with and herald the unions. It is a pity that when they were in government they did not heed what the union movement had been saying and implement any changes of their own. The member for Goulburn raised the question of the capacity of councils to pay for these changes. I have some sympathy for those councils because, indeed, it was members on the other side of the Chamber who drew up the boundaries and amalgamated the councils. In Auburn, Cumberland council lost its high-paying rates, and there is a dogleg border around Granville station. Instead of following Parramatta Road, there is a deliberate dogleg that takes out ratepayers and denies Cumberland council those additional rates to pay for services. If it had that money to pay for those services, it may be able to pay a few more parking rangers to walk around together.

This legislation requires notification of a penalty notice for a parking offence to be attached to a vehicle. If the ranger does not do so, they must record the reasons and provide a copy. It also requires an appropriate officer who issues a penalty notice for a parking offence to take images that show the act or omission that constitutes the parking offence. Everybody who has worked in an electorate office knows of the heartache of older residents, pensioners and those on welfare benefits who find out three or four weeks after the event that they have received a parking offence. It is distressing and stressful. They come to us with their concerns, wanting help from members

of Parliament. Electorate officers do a good job of trying to help them to work out when and why the parking offence happened and whether there was, in fact, a breach of the rules. The bill helps to get around that problem.

People have a right to know if they have been fined. The idea that a ranger can send out a real-time email to notify people of an offence requires that they somehow have access to people's personal emails attached to those vehicles. That is pie in the sky. I am surprised members on the other side of the Chamber have suggested that solution. The solution is to issue a fine at the time of the offence. Obviously there is a concern about rangers who issue fines. That is why a provision has been included so that if there is any risk, rangers may record that and provide the details later on as part of their protection. People are far too aggressive towards rangers, who are just doing their job. That is why parking rangers and a range of other frontline service workers were included in special laws to protect them from assault.

The reality is that parking rangers who issue tickets are just doing their jobs. People who receive tickets and assault rangers must remember that those rangers will suffer because of their actions. My office is inundated by people who tell us about the shortage of parking in the area. People park across other people's driveways. It is extraordinarily stressful for a little old lady to come home with her shopping to find that she cannot access her driveway and get out her shopping. It is extraordinarily stressful for a mum who is trying to get her kids to school but finds that someone has parked across her driveway. People who double-park to drop off their kids at school are stopping the whole traffic system around the school and creating chaos for every other parent who is trying to drop off their kids.

The rangers who are issuing parking tickets—and now they will issue paper tickets so people know they have received a fine—are doing that job to protect many people in our community from stress and discomfort. It does not happen on just a few occasions in my electorate; it happens quite often. That stress and discomfort is created by people who insist on ignoring the road rules and parking regulations around the State. We see everywhere houses with two, three or four cars. I am not sure that each household needs four cars, but for those that do have four cars and do not have private parking for them, what happens out on the street is we have issues with people illegally parking close to corners and in front of driveways. The reality is that as cars have gotten bigger and people have begun parking on corners, more and more accidents are occurring because there is no space for people to see the road and safely move out beyond the intersection.

The people who suffer the most in car accidents are those in smaller cars who cannot see past those bigger cars or who are hit by those bigger cars when they are driving down the road. Under the bill, the New South Wales Government will provide a very sensible measure to ensure that people know when they have been fined. People will not receive fines three or four weeks after the event. That will allow them to pay the fine or factor it into their budget. The bill also provides that rangers do not have to issue a fine if they believe they are at risk, which is a very sensible measure. Quite frankly, if people could show a little more courtesy to each other we would not need to introduce this legislation. Parents do not need to drop their child at the front gate of the school. Parents can park their car 100 metres away and walk. If everybody did that, we would not have half the congestion problems that we have in the morning.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (16:06):** I am sincerely delighted to make a brief contribution to debate on the Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Try to control your delight.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** I note the commentary from the member for Wahroonga; it is always welcomed, of course. Members may ask why I am delighted to contribute to debate on the bill. It is because there is probably no-one more experienced in this field when it comes to fines than me. I reckon I have had more than anyone in here! That is the reality of it.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Don't brag about it.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** I have had parking fines and what have you over the years—it is terrible. But I am delighted because the legislation is about cleaning up the process. I understand the Opposition does not oppose the bill. I acknowledge and thank Opposition members for their collaboration and for ensuring that we can fix this process. I will be very brief. I assure parking rangers and others out there that there are provisions in the legislation for their protection. There is no way that any government—the former Government, any future government or, indeed, this Government—would introduce any piece of legislation to this place that would put someone in harm's way.

First, I do not believe it is the intent of any of my colleagues on either side of the House to make a decision that would jeopardise someone's safety. Secondly, Parliamentary Counsel would not let us do so anyway. It would sort that out, or it would be brought to our attention by stakeholders. I reaffirm that certainty and provide that assurance for rangers and anyone else who may be affected when it comes to issuing parking fines. As has been

said before, the Government gave an undertaking to remove secret speeding fines and it is now removing secret parking fines quite simply because it is the right thing to do. No-one likes getting a fine, but when they do they should expect that the process is just, fair, safe and transparent. I believe this bill provides that opportunity.

Ultimately, when I break it down more specifically, it will require councils to attach an on-the-spot notification to a vehicle. This could be the penalty notice itself or a short description of the offence and notice that a fine will be sent to them unless, first, it is unsafe to attach a notification, the vehicle is parked in a prescribed parking zone or the vehicle is not stationary, or the regulations permit a notification not to be attached. The bill appropriately balances public interest considerations in respect of procedural fairness and the safety of officers. Of note, the exceptions will not require an officer to attach an on-the-spot notification or take images where they have reasonable grounds for concern for their safety. That is, by extension, the point I made earlier. Should officers rely on an exception, they will be required to make a record of why they concluded that the exception applied in the circumstances and provide their reasoning to Revenue NSW or, if requested, a person who has been fined for a parking offence.

Introduced in the legislation are data reporting rules to monitor the use of exceptions, to increase transparency for the public and assist in the evaluation of the reform, and to identify if any future reforms are necessary. An authorised officer is also required to take photographs, including photographs of parking offences and the notification attached to the vehicle. The images must be provided to Revenue NSW or to a person who has been fined for a parking offence, if requested. That will streamline the review process for any challenged fines. It will apply to all parking fines, not just ticketless fines.

Furthermore, the legislation will prohibit a fine being issued for a parking offence if a fine for the same kind of offence was issued within the previous seven days for the same vehicle in the same location and no notification was placed on the vehicle for the earlier offence. That will address a key concern about the existing system, that drivers can be fined multiple times for the same offence before they even become aware of the first infringement. It also sets out the circumstances in which noncompliance with the proposed requirements will invalidate a fine—for instance, where there is a failure to take photographs and to leave a notification, or a failure to issue a penalty notice within seven days if no notification was provided.

The requirement to issue an on-the-spot notification will not apply to a limited number of parking zones, such as enclosed parking areas that use licence plate recognition technology and national parks with limited mobile phone connectivity. Regulations issued by the Minister for Finance will clearly specify the parking zones and describe the wording, font size, colour and location of signage to give drivers sufficient advance warning that they are in a ticketless infringement zone. In addition, councils will be required to publish data about the number of parking fines issued, including the number of fines where an on-the-spot notification was not provided. That data will then be used to monitor the implementation of the reforms and evaluate any further changes required.

The reality is, as with any piece of legislation, it can always be amended, tested and adjusted. The Government feels—and certainly I do feel—that this bill has found the balance in addressing the issues that have stood for a long time. When I say "a long time", I reflect back on the previous Government, which introduced the ticketless parking fine system, also known as Print and Post, in May 2020. It allowed councils and other agencies to issue parking fines without giving drivers immediate notification. This bill addresses that and puts fairness back into the process. Historically, the usual practice of councils and other issuing authorities was to issue the penalty notice on the spot. However, over time, the number of ticketless parking fines issued by post has risen dramatically. In a single year, the number of ticketless parking fines issued by councils increased by 49 per cent on the previous year, from 551,441 issued in 2022-23 to 822,310 ticketless parking fines in 2023-24. That resulted in a 54 per cent increase in the dollar value of ticketless parking fines collected by councils in New South Wales. A further breakdown is available.

In March 2024 Minister Houssos wrote to all 128 councils urging those that use ticketless parking fines to address shortcomings in their approach. There are two overriding concerns: a lack of transparency for drivers and a lack of fairness. The bill addresses those two key factors. Under the current system, drivers do not know, when they park, if they are at risk of getting a fine in the mail two weeks later. Secondly, the impact of the fine is reduced. It does not act as a deterrent or influence behaviour. It ultimately becomes a form of revenue raising rather than doing what a fine or any infringement process is designed to do: remedy an unlawful practice. We need to make sure that whatever process we have in place to remedy the behaviour and conduct of others ultimately shows them the correct way to go. I commend the bill to the House and thank all my colleagues for their contributions.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (16:16):** On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: In reply: I thank all members—I think there were 12 in all—who contributed to the debate on the Fines Amendment (Parking Fines) Bill 2024. The bill introduces practical reforms to the current parking fine system to create a fairer and more accountable process that meets community expectations in New South Wales. We need to ensure that people are

immediately notified of a parking offence. If they do not get that notification, there needs to be a good reason for why they did not receive it. At the outset I note the comments made by Opposition members as to the motivation behind drafting and bringing the bill to the House. I note that any historical revisionism that attributes the changes to anything other than common sense, fairness and transparency is cynical at best and offensive at worst.

Ticketless parking fines were introduced in 2020 by the previous Government. There has been an exponential increase in fines issued since that time. Peter Khoury from the NRMA, Australia's peak motoring body, said about the current system, that since some councils began introducing the ticketless parking fine system four years ago, it was clear the system was broken and needed to be fixed. For this reason, he said, the NRMA commends the New South Wales Government on today's announcement. Khoury also said that ticketless parking fines leave motorists in the dark and rob them of the chance to contest their fine if they believe they have a legitimate case. He said that the NRMA has been against the approach from day one and that the bill ends that situation and addresses the problem squarely.

I now turn to the issues raised by members during the debate. The member for Miranda noted that the term "unsafe", or "not safe", used in the legislation was not defined. I do note that a working group has been set up to examine all the definitions needed under the provisions of the Act at section 24A, which require detailed reasons to be given when an enforcement officer declines to issue a parking notice on the spot due to the circumstances of the issuing, in that officer's view, not being safe. The working group will work through that. Section 24A requires detailed reasons to be provided if that exception is used. Then the member for Miranda got down into the parking bay gutter, so to speak. In response to her comments, I refer to my previous comments about the motivations behind the bill. Despite her tremendous misgivings about the bill, I note she has indicated she supports it. I am not sure how deeply held those misgivings are.

The member for Granville noted the number of fines issued in her area and the use of technology by councils to ramp up the fine process and how that has contributed to the unfair current system introduced by the former Liberal-Nationals Government. The member for South Coast noted the lack of procedural fairness in the current system. The member for Liverpool pointed to the previous Government's changes as being the root cause of creating an unfair system, which undermined the faith of many of her constituents in our legal system. The member for Mount Druitt said that the changes were essential to rebuilding the community's confidence in our justice system in New South Wales. The member for East Hills noted that the Minister had already written to councils about the Government's concerns with the system and how it was being used by councils, and due to the lack of response from local government, it was necessary to introduce the bill.

The member for Parramatta explained why speed cameras are not covered by the bill. I will make some further comments on that. The member for Newtown, in a way in which only the member for Newtown can, explained the challenges of inner-city living. She noted that the former Government's system incentivised councils to impose productivity demands on their workers, which contributed to an unfair work environment and an unfair legal system. I hope we all remember her important point about the unfairness of a fine in relation to a person's income. I support her comment 100 per cent. It would be great if the Government during its time in this House could try to make the issuing of a fine better related to a person's income. That would be a great reform in this State.

The member for Gosford reminded us that nobody—especially those living on the Central Coast—likes getting a fine. She noted that her local council had tried to replace some of its lost revenue with fines revenue as a result of changes introduced by the former Government. The member for Goulburn asked why speeding fines were excluded. There is a big difference in both the gravity and the risk to the public between speeding and illegal parking. Parking for 30 minutes more than the limit and speeding in a school zone are two different situations. We are talking about moving vehicles. It is very difficult to attach a speeding notice to a moving vehicle, which I am sure after a moment's reflection the member for Goulburn would understand. It should also be noted that there is a level of judgement applied by parking officers when issuing parking fines, whereas the use of fixed speed and red light cameras is a technical response that provides a decision-making and fine-issuing process that is more streamlined.

The member for Auburn noted that council amalgamations incentivised many councils to try to replace some of their lost revenue with fines revenue due to their lack of revenue-collecting ability after amalgamation. The member for the great city of Campbelltown ended the debate as only he can, by reminding us of how the previous Government's system affected working people throughout the State. I thank all members for their contributions. The New South Wales Government looks forward to working with all stakeholders to continue to roll out these reforms. As I indicated, a number of working groups will be set up to inform the regulations and to inform the ongoing process we follow as we make the system of law enforcement in this State a fairer one for all of our citizens. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN:** On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CHILDREN) BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:25):** 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 (Children) Bill 2024. The bill will introduce several miscellaneous amendments to correct a minor error in an uncommenced amendment to the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 and to ensure clarity and transparency in the decision-making of the Children's Court and sentencing statistics. 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 to achieve that. I now turn to the detail of the bill. Schedule 1 to the bill will amend the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 to correct a minor error in an uncommenced amendment to the Act. The amendment will clarify that, for proposed section 36C (1) of the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012, a relevant person must notify the Children's Guardian of the commencement of proceedings, a conviction or a finding of guilt against the relevant person of a prescribed criminal offence outside of Australia in certain circumstances.

Schedules 2 and 3 to the bill will amend the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987 and the Children (Community Service Orders) Act 1987 to clarify the actions that the Children's Court may take in response to breaches of certain court orders, such as good behaviour bonds. The Children's Court has jurisdiction under section 41 (4) of the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act to hear and determine breaches of good behaviour bonds, probation and youth justice conference outcome plans. It also has jurisdiction to hear applications to revoke children's community service orders under sections 21A and 22 of the Children (Community Service Orders) Act.

In relation to breaches of good behaviour bonds, probation orders or outcome plans, section 41 (4) of the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act provides that the court may deal with the person "in any manner in which the person could have been dealt with by the Children's Court in relation to the offence", effectively limiting the court's powers to the penalties contained in section 33 of that Act. In relation to applications to revoke children's community service orders, sections 21A and 22 of the Children (Community Service Orders) Act provide that the court may either:

- (a) revoke the order, or
- (b) revoke the order and deal with the person ... in any manner in which the person could have been dealt with for that offence by the court had the order not been made. That similarly limits the court's powers to the penalties contained in section 33 of the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act. In the decision of *R v Kai*, the President of the Children's Court held that the court did not have the power to take no action in respect of a breach of bond due to the terms of section 41 (4) of the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act. The charge was instead dismissed under section 33 (1) (a). The president noted that the imposition of the penalty would not reflect the objective seriousness of the offence on the child's record and would contribute to misleading sentencing statistics. Prior to that decision, it was assumed that the Children's Court was empowered to take no action in respect of a breach of bond. Kai has disrupted that common practice and has caused uncertainty and diminished transparency in the Children's Court sentencing process.

Schedules 2 and 3 will amend the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act and Children (Community Service Orders) Act to give the Children's Court express power to take no action, to vary or revoke conditions, to impose further conditions and to revoke an order in response to breaches of bond, probation orders and community service orders. It will also give the Children's Court the power to take no action or to revoke an order releasing a person on the condition that the person complies with an outcome plan if the court finds the person breached the outcome plan. The amendments bring the children's breach process in line with the adult model in section 108C (5) of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999. The amendments will address the uncertainty in *R v Kai* and allow the prior common practice of the Children's Court in respect of breaches of court orders to continue unimpeded. In conclusion, this bill is an important part of the Government's ongoing work to regularly review and update legislation to ensure that it continues to meet its objectives. I commend the bill to the House.



### Second Reading Debate

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (16:31):** I speak on behalf of the Opposition in debate on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Children) Bill 2024. I note my comments earlier in the day that this is an uncontentional piece of legislation, which the Opposition will support. There are two main aspects of the bill. Schedule 1 to the bill makes a very minor amendment to correct a typographical error and inserts the word "prescribed" before "criminal offences" to schedule 1 [10] to the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012. That deals with an amendment to the Act that has not yet commenced. The amendments in schedule 2 essentially reverse a decision of the Children's Court on the interpretation of section 41 (4) of the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act in the decision of *R v Kai* [2024] NSWChC 5.

The amendments are essentially repeated for both the Children (Community Service Orders) Act in schedule 2 and Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987 in schedule 3. They clarify that the court has a discretion to take no action, vary or revoke conditions, impose further conditions, extend the relevant maximum period for the order or revoke an order of the court. It is completely desirable that judicial officers have full discretion to make decisions that they think are in the best interest of justice in any particular case. If there is any uncertainty about the extended judicial powers in that respect, making it abundantly clear by giving them the full range of possible actions is entirely appropriate and supported by the Opposition.

I reiterate that there is a plethora of very small bills in the justice space that could be easily consolidated into one bill. It is unfortunate that the Department of Communities and Justice is being required to split up bills that it no doubt would have—and did, when we were in government—put into one larger bill. I encourage the Government to be more efficient in that respect and put all the amendments in one bill so we do not have to go through the facade of having multiple bills pass through the Parliament when the changes could be made far more efficiently, particularly when they involve uncontentional material.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (16:35):** I am delighted to make a brief contribution to debate on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Children) Bill 2024. When I look at the many pieces of law reform that the Government has introduced in this place, it is fair to suggest that there are not many more important reforms—whether they be minor, major, miscellaneous or otherwise—than the laws that protect our children or enhance the law to protect children and, indeed, provide the judiciary every instrument to do so. They are the most precious people in each and every one of our lives.

I note that the shadow Attorney General made reference to combining miscellaneous bills. I am advised that as part of the miscellaneous amendment bill process, the New South Wales Government sought proposals from stakeholders who were well placed to identify issues requiring reform to maintain an effective justice system. The Government received a large number of reform proposals through that process. They are being progressed through multiple bills, which reflects the time needed to develop and consult on the proposals for reform. But I note the shadow Attorney General's point.

I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General, who is present in the Chamber, for his work in the Attorney General's office on this piece of legislation. He is progressively committed to and enthusiastic about reforms to legislation, particularly when it comes to the protection of our children. The bill implements amendments to three separate pieces of legislation. First, it amends the Child Protection (Working with Children) Amendment Bill 2022 to correct a minor omission to an uncommenced amendment requiring disclosure to the Children's Guardian of proceedings, a conviction or a finding of guilt for a prescribed criminal offence outside Australia.

Second, the bill amends the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987 and the Children (Community Service Orders) Act 1987 to clarify the actions that the Children's Court may take in response to breaches of certain court orders such as good behaviour bonds. The Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987 sits within the Attorney General's portfolio, of course. I acknowledge the Attorney General and his team's enthusiastic contribution and progressive approach to law reform in New South Wales, which I believe has been on display during this sitting week with not only this bill but also other matters. The Child Protection (Working with Children) Amendment Bill 2022 sits within the portfolio of my good friend the Minister for Families and Communities. She also has an enthusiastic and progressive approach to law reform, particularly for the protection of children. The Children (Community Service Orders) Act 1987 is within the portfolio of the Minister for Youth Justice, yet another Minister with a progressive and reformist approach to laws for our children.

The bill was subject to limited targeted consultation with stakeholders whose proposals helped shape the reform. Specific stakeholders consulted include the Children's Court of New South Wales, Legal Aid NSW, Youth Justice NSW, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Aboriginal Legal Service, the Law Society of New South Wales, the New South Wales Bar Association, the NSW Police Force and the Chief Magistrate's office. One may ask what alternative policies and mechanisms were considered in advance of the bill.

Appropriately, the identified issues and policy outcomes targeted in the bill can only be achieved through the legislative amendments that are before the House today. I note the shadow Attorney General's comments and contribution, which is always welcome but, ultimately, mostly irrelevant.

Specifically, the amendment to the Child Protection (Working with Children) Amendment Act 2022 is necessary to clarify that the disclosure requirements set out by new section 36C (1) apply to "prescribed" criminal offences. This amendment will clarify the application of this uncommenced provision and allow it to operate as intended. Schedules 2 and 3 to the bill concern amendments to the Children (Community Service Orders) Act 1987 and the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987, which are necessary for a number of reasons. In the decision of *R v Kai*, the President of the Children's Court held that the court did not have power to take no action in respect of a breach of bond due to the terms of section 41 (4). Instead, the charges were dismissed. The president noted that the penalty would not reflect the objective seriousness of the offence and would contribute to misleading sentencing statistics. Prior to this decision, it was assumed that the Children's Court was empowered to take no action in respect of breaches of bond. The amendments in the bill will address that uncertainty following Kai and allow the prior common practice of the Children's Court in respect of breaches of court orders to continue unimpeded.

The sentencing powers of the Children's Court remain unchanged. The bill does not augment or expand the sentencing powers of the Children's Court but instead restructures them to ensure greater efficiency and transparency. For example, the power to take no action on a breach of a good behaviour bond can currently be replicated by revoking the bond and imposing a new bond equivalent to the remaining term of the existing bond. Similarly, the power to impose a new condition on a bond can be achieved by imposing a new bond equivalent to the remaining term of the existing bond, with the additional condition included. The proposed amendments streamline that process by avoiding the need to impose a new order. To conclude, I again thank members of this House for taking an assertive approach to law reform, particularly around the judiciary. I thank the Opposition for supporting this legislation, because it displays that each and every one of us in this place will always do everything that we can to keep our children safe. I thank the House.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (16:43):** The Justice Legislation Amendment (Children) Bill 2024 makes miscellaneous amendments to communities and justice legislation relating to children to improve and clarify court and legal processes and ensure transparency in sentencing statistics. This is the second of four justice miscellaneous bills that the Government seeks to introduce in 2024. Justice legislation amendment bills are introduced into the Parliament as part of the Government's regular program of legislative reviews and improvements, as the regular review and updating of legislation is an important mechanism to ensure the law is fit for purpose and keeps pace with developments in the community and legal system.

The bill will implement amendments to three separate Acts: the Child Protection (Working with Children) Amendment Act 2022 to correct a minor omission to an uncommenced amendment requiring disclosure to the Children's Guardian of proceedings; the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987 to address conviction or finding of guilt for a prescribed criminal offence outside of Australia; and the Children (Community Service Orders) Act 1987 to clarify the actions that the Children's Court may take in response to breaches of certain court orders, such as a good behaviour bond. The Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987 sits within the Attorney General's portfolio, while the Child Protection (Working with Children) Amendment Act 2022 is within the portfolio of the Minister for Families and Communities, and the Children (Community Service Orders) Act 1987 sits within the portfolio of the Minister for Youth Justice. I commend the three Ministers involved for working together to ensure that those Acts are fit for purpose into the future. As the member for Campbelltown stated in his contribution to debate on this bill, children are the future of this country and their welfare is important to every family in Australia.

The Government receives proposals for reform of legislation from a number of stakeholders. This bill was subject to targeted consultation with specific stakeholders, including the Children's Court of New South Wales, Legal Aid NSW, Youth Justice NSW, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Aboriginal Legal Service, the Law Society of New South Wales, the New South Wales Bar Association, the NSW Police Force and the Chief Magistrate's office. Why did they tell us that these amendments are needed? Schedule 1 to the bill concerns the Child Protection (Working with Children) Amendment Act. The amendment was needed to clarify that the disclosure requirements set out by new section 36C (1) apply to prescribed criminal offences. This amendment will clarify the application of the uncommenced provision and allow it to operate as intended.

Schedules 2 and 3 to the bill each concern the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987 and the Children (Community Service Orders) Act 1987. In the decision of *R v Kai*, the President of the Children's Court held that the court did not have power to take no action in respect of a breach of bond due to the terms of section (41) 4. Instead, the charge was dismissed. The president noted that the penalty would not reflect the objective seriousness of the offence and would contribute to misleading sentencing statistics. Prior to this decision, it was assumed that

the Children's Court was empowered to take no action in respect of breaches of bond. These amendments will address the uncertainty following Kai and allow the prior common practice of the Children's Court in respect of breaches of court orders to continue unimpeded. It was found that if the amendments were not made, then relevant legislation would not reflect developments in the legal system and result in adverse consequences, including a lack of clarity in legislation and uncertainty about operational practices, in light of case law developments.

The amendments in the bill will commence on assent. Once the relevant provisions in the bill commence, the amendments will take effect. Ministers responsible for administering the legislation being amended and agencies supporting those Ministers will advise stakeholders of the amendments where relevant and implement any operational changes. I reiterate that is a really important part of this Government's regular program of legislative reviews and improvements. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (16:49):** I contribute to debate on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Children) Bill 2024. As members have outlined, the bill makes miscellaneous amendments to communities and justice legislation relating to children to improve and clarify court and legal processes and to ensure transparency in sentencing statistics. That is a critical objective, and I am certain every single member supports it. As we heard from the member for South Coast, the bill is the second of four justice miscellaneous bills the Government intends to introduce this year. The bills are part of the Government's regular program of legislative reviews and improvements. Any good government undertakes reviews of processes to ensure that legislation is up to date, relevant and correct. That is done for a number of reasons. Regularly reviewing and updating legislation is an important mechanism to ensure that the law is fit for purpose and keeps pace with developments, both in the legal system and for the people whom we serve each and every day in our community.

The bill amends three separate Acts. The first is the Child Protection (Working with Children) Amendment Act 2022. The bill amends that Act to correct a minor omission to an uncommenced amendment requiring disclosure to the Children's Guardian of proceedings, a conviction or a finding of guilt for a prescribed criminal offence outside Australia. That seems straightforward to me. The bill also amends the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987 and the Children (Community Service Orders) Act 1987 to clarify actions that the Children's Court may take in response to breaches of certain court orders, such as good behaviour bonds. The three Acts the bill amends sit within the Attorney General's portfolio, as well as the portfolios of the Minister for Families and Communities and the Minister for Youth Justice. I note that the Parliamentary Secretary for Youth Justice has entered the Chamber, which is great timing.

It is important to consult with the legal fraternity and advocacy groups to ensure that any proposed changes are on track and in line with community expectations and the expectations of the legal fraternity. The bill was subject to consultation with the Children's Court of New South Wales, given that it amends three Acts relating to children; Legal Aid NSW; Youth Justice NSW; the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; the Aboriginal Legal Service; the Law Society of New South Wales; the New South Wales Bar Association; the NSW Police Force, which recently received a significant pay rise thanks to the Minns Labor Government; and the Chief Magistrate's office.

It is expected that during the stakeholder consultation period those agencies and groups might propose other ideas or flag future changes, and that we may need to work on those. I note that happened during the consultation process for this bill and that stakeholders proposed other amendments. That happens from time to time. We have taken some of them on board and will work with stakeholders on the proposed amendments to deliver legislative reform in due course. I think some of the proposed amendments will be introduced in the new year for consultation and the Parliament's consideration. People might ask, "Why has the Minns Labor Government introduced two justice miscellaneous bills within such a short time span? Would it not be more efficient to put them together?" I think a member of the Opposition made a contribution to the debate to that effect. I do not remember which member it was.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** I do not remember that.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** The Parliamentary Secretary does not remember the contribution; it was not particularly memorable.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** You better read the *Hansard*.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** I had better read the *Hansard*. I remember there being some criticism as to why the Government has introduced various bills. As part of the miscellaneous amendment bill process, the New South Wales Government seeks proposals from stakeholders who are well placed to identify issues requiring reform to maintain an effective justice system. When a large number of reform proposals are received through this process, they are progressed through multiple bills. We have broken them up to make a pathway to churn constantly through the various reforms because, first, this is a reforming government; and, second, this

Government is about continual process improvement. We will not rest on our laurels. There will not be 12 years of neglect under this Government. Month after month, week after week, day after day, we will undertake the hard work of reform. We will continue to improve this State during this parliamentary term and hopefully in many terms to come.

Schedule 1 to the bill amends the Child Protection (Working with Children) Amendment Act to clarify the disclosure requirements set out by proposed new section 36C (1), and they apply to prescribed criminal offences. The amendment will clarify the application of this uncommenced provision and allow the provision to operate as intended, as I mentioned earlier. Schedules 2 and 3 to the bill amend the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act and Children (Community Service Orders) Act because of a decision made by the President of the Children's Court in the case of *R v Kai*. The court held that the court did not have power to take no action in respect of a breach of a bond due to the terms of section 41 (4). Instead, that charge was dismissed.

The president further noted that the penalty would not reflect the objective seriousness of the offence and would contribute to misleading sentencing statistics. We need accurate data in order to check those things. Prior to that decision it was assumed the Children's Court was empowered to take no action in respect of breaches of bond. The amendments will address the uncertainty following *R v Kai* and allow prior common practice of the Children's Court with respect to breaches of court orders to continue unimpeded. People might ask, "Does this amendment change the sentencing powers of the Children's Court?" The answer is a firm no. The amendment does not augment or expand the sentencing powers of the Children's Court but instead restructures them to ensure greater efficiency and transparency. Efficiency and transparency is one of the missions of the Minns Labor Government.

For example, the power to take no action on a breach of a good behaviour bond can currently be replicated by revoking the bond and imposing a new bond equivalent to the remaining term of the existing bond. Similarly, the power to impose a new condition on a bond can be achieved by imposing a new bond equivalent to the remaining term of the existing bond with the additional condition included. The proposed amendments streamline that process by avoiding the need to impose a new order. While rescinding and issuing new bonds might keep some people in their jobs, this important reform is a much more efficient way of getting rid of red tape in the legal system. In wrapping up, this fantastic piece of legislation again shows that the Minns Labor Government is a government of action. It is the second of four justice miscellaneous bills, and members on this side of the House eagerly await the additional two amending bills. I commend the bill to the House.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** It being 5.00 p.m., according 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*

### **ORANGE ELECTORATE RAIL SERVICES**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (17:00):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Recognises the Orange community's wishes for daily return passenger rail services between Orange and Sydney.
- (2) Congratulates the Government and the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads on the active consideration and the steps taken to engage with local community on this proposal.
- (3) Recognises the benefits of improved passenger rail for Orange and surrounding communities.

I bring to the attention of the House a matter of significant importance to the people of Orange and the surrounding communities. It is a subject that resonates deeply with my electorate and has been at the forefront of ongoing discussions between the Government and local stakeholders: the desire for daily return passenger rail services between Orange and Sydney.

Firstly, I acknowledge the strong and sustained advocacy over the past decade of the passionate members of the Orange Rail Action Group, also known as ORAG. Early in my first term as the member for Orange, ORAG initiated a petition that called on the New South Wales Government to extend the *Bathurst Bullet* daily return passenger rail service to Orange. ORAG successfully obtained more than 10,000 signatures in support of the petition. Residents, business owners and local leaders have since maintained their clear desire to see seamless daily return passenger rail services between Orange and Sydney. This is not merely about convenience. For many, it represents a crucial lifeline for accessing essential services in Sydney, including health care, education and employment opportunities. It also offers families the chance to stay connected and businesses the opportunity to expand their reach, supports decentralisation, and provides visitors a smooth and easy way to explore the beauty of the Central West.

There is a real and pressing need here, and the community has been united and clear in expressing that. This is not just about nostalgia for the days when such a service was commonplace; it is about recognising the modern demands of this growing region and ensuring that transport infrastructure keeps pace. It is also about forward planning and creating a future that embraces connectivity and accessibility for regional communities. I extend my thanks to the Government for actively considering this proposal and taking steps to engage with my local community. In particular, I thank the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Minister Aitchison, for her genuine efforts to listen to the concerns and aspirations of the people of Orange and beyond.

Just last week, at the behest of the Minister, Transport for NSW hosted a community consultation event in Orange. I was pleased to see a strong attendance and a very constructive consultation. The forum and round table had direct input from key stakeholders and members of the community, providing valuable insights into the needs of the local community and the broader Central West. It is heartening to see the Government recognising the significance of this issue and exploring potential pathways to make it a reality. After many years the region finally feels heard on this, and I look forward to continued engagement on this important issue. I also look forward to the next steps taken following this consultation. This kind of dialogue between communities and government builds trust and delivers outcomes for regional communities. I acknowledge the ongoing work by Transport for NSW and other agencies in reviewing existing rail infrastructure and assessing how capacity in the region can be expanded. Those discussions are crucial to moving towards a solution that not only serves the needs of today but also supports future growth in the region tomorrow.

The benefits of improved passenger rail services cannot be overstated. For the residents of Orange, Blayney and beyond, daily return services would mean enhanced access to Sydney's economic, cultural and social opportunities. But the benefits go both ways. Reliable and frequent rail services would encourage more Sydneysiders to visit the Central West, boosting the tourism sector, which is vital to the local economy. With picturesque landscapes, vineyards, unique sporting and cultural events, and vibrant communities, the Central West has much to offer those looking to escape the hustle and bustle of city life, even for a short while. Improved transport links would make those opportunities more accessible.

For local businesses, daily return rail services would provide a direct link to Sydney's commercial hub. With enhanced connectivity, businesses in Orange and the broader Central West could more easily collaborate with partners in Sydney, attend meetings and access wider markets. Crucially, improved rail infrastructure is a pathway to reducing road congestion and supporting the Government's Towards Zero policy to reduce the road toll. As New South Wales looks to more sustainable and efficient transport solutions, passenger rail services offer an efficient alternative to the State's reliance on motor vehicle travel. Encouraging more people to take the train reduces wear and tear on the road network and the potential risks associated with road use.

Seamless daily return services would be a game changer for residents and the many visitors who come to explore the region. This investment in rail infrastructure would deliver long-term social and economic dividends for Orange and the entire Central West. I stand with the community in calling for seamless daily return passenger rail services between Orange and Sydney. We also seek the overnight stabling of the rolling stock in Orange to alleviate the current empty run of the bullet rail service between Lithgow and Bathurst at the start and end of each day. If the train is stabled in Orange, it would start and end its daily journey with passengers on board, making much more economic sense.

Orange locals have been clear in their wishes. The benefits of improved rail connectivity are also clear and comprehensive. I commend the Premier and the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, who is in the Chamber, for taking this issue seriously and for the steps already taken to engage with my local community on this matter. This is an important step in delivering a service to meet the needs of my community. Let us continue working together to ensure that this service is made a reality, benefiting not just the residents of Orange but all those in the broader Central West, who would thrive from improved access to our State capital.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (17:06):** The Minns Government recognises that rail services between Orange and Sydney are becoming increasingly important as this area grows. I thank the member for Orange for bringing this matter to the attention of the Government and ORAG for its continued advocacy in diligently trying for years to have this service improved. Recent efforts to improve these services have been welcomed by the community, which appreciates the Government's commitment to enhancing regional transport. The Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Minister Aitchison, has played a crucial role in facilitating community involvement in shaping the proposal, a critical step in ensuring that the service addresses local needs. Community consultation efforts gathered insights into the travel needs and preferences of residents in the Central West region. The Government also conducted an engagement project to gather input from stakeholders, including councils, community organisations and industry groups.

As of now, the only regular rail connection in the area is the *Bathurst Bullet*, a popular daily service that has become essential for commuters in Bathurst and Lithgow. However, I note that the service does not extend to

Orange. The extension of similar services to Orange would greatly improve accessibility, allowing residents to reach Sydney for work, education, medical care and leisure without relying on long road journeys or connecting buses. The Government has integrated this initiative into its broader Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plans, with a specific focus on the Central West and Orana regions. As the Minister regularly points out, Labor is the party of the bush. This plan, aligned with the Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041, aims to meet the future needs of these regions in terms of population growth, economic opportunities and, crucially, transportation infrastructure. Through the plan, the Government aims to create a cohesive framework that enhances regional connectivity, promotes jobs growth and supports housing development.

Improved transport infrastructure will also help to address the existing shortage of housing in smaller regional areas, making them more attractive to new residents and businesses. A key element of the consultation process was the launch of the *Have Your Say* survey, which encourages residents from Orange and surrounding communities to provide feedback on current transport services and potential rail improvements. This survey, open until 22 November 2024, has already generated significant public interest, demonstrating the high level of community support for the proposed rail service. Following the survey's conclusion, the Government will analyse feedback and assess various logistical factors, including patronage forecasts, timetable options, fare structures and staffing requirements. These elements will be essential in designing a sustainable and efficient service that meets community expectations and government standards.

As part of the New South Wales Government's commitment to improved regional transport, the plan will also consider the impact of heavy vehicles on local roads, the importance of bridges for road and rail networks, and the need for safe, accessible public transport. The Government is mindful of the challenges the residents of Orange face such as limited access to health care and the impact of road safety. It views enhanced rail options as a means to address those issues by providing a safer and more environmentally friendly alternative to road transport. Beyond local benefits, the Orange-Sydney rail connection is intended to support broader regional connectivity.

Currently, residents in Orange can access the Bathurst Intercity services via NSW TrainLink coaches, but the convenience of a direct rail service could significantly enhance Orange's connection to Sydney and the neighbouring regions. The proposal complements the existing Dubbo and Broken Hill rail services, which also pass through Orange, although those routes are currently impacted by industrial action and have been replaced with road coaches. The Government's response highlights a commitment to provide safe and affordable public transport options across the State that enables regional residents to connect with broader transport networks. By aligning its rail expansion goals with strategic transport and infrastructure plans, the Government is working to address regional development and connectivity challenges in a comprehensive manner.

The upcoming public exhibition phase for the Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plans, which is scheduled for mid-2025, will provide further opportunities for community input, ensuring that the final plans reflect regional priorities. With continued engagement, the New South Wales Government aims to create a transport solution that meets the present and future needs of Orange and its neighbouring communities, strengthening ties between regional and metropolitan New South Wales.

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (17:11):** I support the motion moved by the member for Orange. Rail is an efficient form of transport that moves millions of Australians every year. It is the most popular form of public transport, well ahead of buses. A study in 2023 showed 42 per cent of people on public transport use trains compared to about 35 per cent who use buses. People who live their entire lives in the city know how difficult life can be when there is a train strike or problems on the rail network, but most have no idea what it is like to live in a regional area without a reliable, or any, train service. In regional areas people often have to travel great distances for medical appointments and business meetings, to interact with government agencies or just to visit relatives and friends. Passenger railways are therefore a great thing for country people. There is a huge desire to reinstate defunct services or to create new services across many areas of New South Wales. One of those areas is Orange.

The people of Orange have long lived without a regular efficient train service linking them to Sydney. Such a service would not just be for going to shows, pubs or restaurants; it would be a vital link to essential services including medical and business appointments, and education and job opportunities. It is also a way to bring more tourists to the area, especially those who might be reluctant or unable to hire a car to drive from Sydney to Orange. The benefits of a fast, reliable passenger service to Orange go beyond that. Strengthening the connection will bring the State into the modern era. It recognises that regional areas are a vital part of the economic, social and cultural make-up of the State and needs to be more accessible for everyone. Many other nations around the world, like Japan, have connected their capitals to outlying areas via fast, reliable passenger train lines, resulting in huge benefits including increased tourism, building up regional workforces and increasing inland economic activity.

In the nineteenth century, New South Wales was powering ahead with building a network that would be the envy of the world. In 1855 the first trains in New South Wales travelled from Sydney to Parramatta Junction. That soon expanded west, going over the mountains in the 1860s, reaching as far as Nyngan in 1883 and Bourke in 1885. Orange opened its first station in 1877 and a line branched off through Condobolin in 1898. In 1927 this line reached Broken Hill via Menindee. I have a personal connection with the expansion of the railways. My grandfather Frank Butler, who served in both World War I and World War II, spent time between the wars working as a linesman on the railway in Nyngan in the 1930s. According to the 1930 Australian electoral roll, he and his family lived on Pangee Lane in Nyngan. The railway line between Nyngan and Bourke was often prone to damage from flooding. Over the decades there has been some major damage caused by floods, which kept people like my grandfather in work but was a continual source of frustration for those who relied on the railway.

After World War II, trucks and cars became cheaper to buy and to run during the post-war boom, and fewer people were willing to submit to the sometimes uncertain schedules of country railway lines, finding it more convenient to simply jump in their car and drive. Car manufacturers like Holden launched "Australia's own car" in 1949. It encouraged people to drive to the countryside as the company also made vehicles that were better able to handle our country roads. Passengers did not entirely abandon trains, but they became less economical to run. Some country lines were progressively closed down from the '60s to the '80s. The line that linked Nyngan to Bourke was badly damaged by the flooding of the Bogan River in 1989. The army also blew up part of the line to divert floodwaters. Subsequently, the Government decided that the cost of repair was too great and it was abandoned. While other major lines have survived, the loss of passenger train services to many parts of New South Wales has proven to be a blow to regional economies, reducing tourism amenities in rural areas.

For many, the romance of country train rides has continued. When I was growing up, I often used to take trains up to the Gold Coast to visit my dad. It was always a bit exciting to be catching a train, to be in a carriage or, better yet, in a sleeper, and watching the countryside roll by. The public appetite for passenger services remains strong. In my electorate I often hear from constituents who want to see passenger services reinstated. Members only have to look. Any time an election rolls around, there is almost always a political party that promotes a fast-train service between the capitals—it never happens but it certainly gets spoken about.

Governments, and political parties, need to do better when it comes to making these sorts of commitments. We need to listen to what the public wants. The community in Orange want a train link to Sydney, and it would be a popular move almost anywhere across the State. I note the Minister is in the Chamber. This morning we did some filming to promote a new bus service that is running from Broken Hill to Mildura via Sunset Strip, Menindee, Pooncarie and Wentworth. That is great news. It certainly gets people moving. I say to people to literally get on board. This is a trial and if they do not use it, they will lose it.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (17:16):** I thank the member for Orange for moving the motion and for giving me the opportunity to make a contribution on behalf of the Opposition. I also congratulate the member on the petition. More than 10,000 people signed the petition of the Orange Rail Action Group seeking to improve passenger rail services between the Central West and Sydney. That is another great step forward arising from the advocacy of the member. The Transport for NSW consultation and round table that occurred last week at Orange was attended by the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, the member for Orange and my good colleague Sam Faraway, MLC, who, as the former Minister, committed prior to the election to review all rail services to make the most of opportunities that the new regional train fleet project will give us. We are certainly excited about that.

In the regions we hear a lot that the community has a desire for better rail services. They want a rail service not just for educational and economic opportunities or for getting to health appointments, people just absolutely love the rail service. That came as bit of a shock to me when I became the local member. In my youth, I did not appreciate the great respect that communities have for rail services. After picking up the shadow portfolio for regional transport, I have enjoyed speaking to various groups all over the State who have a passion for increasing rail services for their communities. I thank them all. In my electorate, the Two More Trains for Singleton group has done wonderful work over the years. I acknowledge Martin Fallding for his efforts to achieve additional train services between Singleton and Newcastle. That started off as a trial and is now a permanent addition. It is a big step forward. The Minister would have also heard from the Maitland to Cessnock rail line project group, which is totally passionate about increasing rail services.

I acknowledge the great work of the member for Bathurst in delivering the *Bathurst Bullet*. That is another great feather in his hat. Sydney Trains operates a twice daily intercity service between Sydney and Bathurst on the Blue Mountains line, which is known as the *Bathurst Bullet* and uses Endeavour diesel railcars. NSW TrainLink operates a daily XPT train service between Sydney and Dubbo via Orange and a weekly Xplorer train service between Sydney and Broken Hill via Orange. A daily TrainLink coach connection comes all the way

to Sydney and several coach connections operate daily from Orange to Lithgow, where passengers join train services.

This opportunity to extend those services comes about as a result of past decisions made by the Coalition Government to invest in the \$2.8 billion Regional Rail project, after the contract was signed in 2019. The Regional Rail fleet consists of 29 new trains, including 117 new carriages. The fleet uses bi-mode technology. I find it fascinating that that technology will allow the fleet to run on electric lines as well use diesel generators, meaning we can extend that service. My brother-in-law is particularly excited about having a full wi-fi service in those carriages because the lack of a wi-fi service drives him crazy.

Those new trains have arrived in the country and were transported to Dubbo. We wait with bated breath for them to come out of testing and start hitting the tracks. I point out that the new trains provide a unique opportunity to look at the entire rail network in regional New South Wales. We can improve services in many areas. This transition from the old stock to the new stock provides a lot of opportunities. We need to be courageous about that. We need to look at regional economic growth. We need to conduct trials and see where we can make the most of opportunities.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (17:21):** It gives me great pleasure to contribute to the public interest debate on rail services in the Orange electorate. This is an important issue that has received a great deal of public interest. The member for Orange collected 10,000 signatures to generate this discussion. I listened with interest to the shadow Minister's contribution. Being new to the portfolio, he might have misunderstood the commitment of the former Minister. Although he said he was going to a lot of things, he never actually did the consulting or put pen to paper to provide the funding. Be that as it may, it is a great day. It is not going to happen someday far away; it is actually going to happen.

We have launched an engagement project. I visited Orange with the member for Orange as well as the Federal member for Calare, Andrew Gee—for the reference of the member for Upper Hunter—and the former Minister. It was good to bring together everyone who has been there right from the beginning, as well as some stragglers who came when it suited them. I acknowledge the member for Bathurst. This initiative has replicated the effort of getting the community onboard. The Orange Rail Action Group are the heroes and I know the member for Orange has supported that group for a long time.

The Government is listening not just to the need for those services—we have all heard about the need—but also to the need to get the logistics right. It is about getting right the meals, provisioning, fuelling, storage and, most importantly, crewing to make sure that everything will align and work so that the service will be used by people in Orange as well as the surrounding towns and villages. As has already been discussed, quite a number of people attended the stakeholder meetings. There were 40 stakeholders at the targeted stakeholder workshop and an additional 40 members came to drop-in sessions, which was great. A number of potential interim solutions were put forward and we received some great feedback from the community. At Transport we are trying to lean into listening, not just when we want to hear but when people want to tell us things. The Have your say website has been really successful, with 580 submissions as of today. That is an excellent level of engagement.

This is not just about rail for Transport for NSW. On my big whirlwind trip through the Central West, we met with many councils from the Central West-Orana district about the Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plans. This is about incorporating all modes of transport so that we do not have a rail plan, a public transport plan, a road plan and an active transport plan in isolation. Instead, we bring them together to connect people in the communities with education, health, opportunities and jobs. The message we heard from those consultations in Orange is that people do not have a way to invest in their health. I come from a regional area—I live in Maitland now, but I have lived in Walcha in the past—and I know that people do not often get diagnoses because they know there is no pathway to attend treatment. That message came through loud and clear. There were some very compelling stories in that session. Education opportunities are important as well.

We want a New South Wales that is for everybody, including everybody west of the great divide. We want everybody in this State to have the opportunity to get around. As the member for Barwon highlighted, we are looking at bus services for the smaller villages and towns that are not on the rail network and do not have public transport. Under the Minns Labor Government, they are now getting those. It fills me with pride to go to communities in Collarenebri, Brewarrina, Mildura, Pooncarie, Sunset Strip, Menindee et cetera and say, "Here, you have an opportunity for public transport." I know that the Orange rail service will be a significant step forward for the community. We are committed to working with the local member, as we do with all our local members across regional New South Wales, to get the best outcome for his community. I thank the member for bringing this public interest debate before the House and allowing us to contribute to it and show our commitment.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (17:26):** I support the motion moved by the member for Orange about the need for a daily passenger service for Orange and thank him for bringing this public interest debate to the



House. I note that the member for Orange says that the Government is giving this idea active consideration, and I hope that is true. It sounds true, but let us see. If it is true, it may be a sign that the Minns Government is realising just how important reliable rail links are between rural New South Wales and Sydney. In my electorate of Murray, we have a troubling situation where we have just two passenger trains in and out of Griffith each week. Two trains—can members believe it? Honestly, we cannot blame people in Griffith for joking that it is easier to walk to Sydney than catch a train.

Recently the Minns Government spent millions—they have allocated millions—for the upgrade of Griffith station to improve accessibility. Let us use it. Make no mistake, this is important work. Everyone should be able to access our railway stations. But it would be great if more trains from Sydney also accessed our railway stations in the bush. Put simply, we need more trains, more often. Rail connectivity should never be seen as a luxury that rural areas are made to live without. Trains are a crucial lifeline for people in rural New South Wales. Rail connectivity allows people to access universities, hospitals, doctors and job opportunities. It is really important for people coming to our area for jobs. Trains also allow families and friends to stay connected.

The internet and digital connectivity means we can Zoom ourselves to anywhere in the world. Surely we should also have enough rural rail services to allow people living in rural New South Wales to visit our capital city when needed. We should never forget how important rail services are for the elderly members of our community, who may not be able to drive long distances anymore but still need to travel. Modern Australians are mobile. We like to travel and sometimes we simply have to travel to access services and opportunities, and that is occurring more and more. The days of people being born in a country town and staying in that country town their whole lives are well and truly a thing of the past. That is why rail connectivity is so important. In summary, I support the member for Orange. I hope he gets his increased services. I say to the Minns Government: Do not stop with Orange. Please send some more trains to Murray soon.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (17:29):** I thank the member for Orange for moving this public interest debate motion. I acknowledge the work that the member does for the electorate of Orange, and also the work that he does to advocate for better connections from Sydney to the Central West. I will speak about regional rail connectivity. The fact is regional rail passenger services are used by tens of thousands of people every day. They move people within our regions and between major regional centres and Sydney. Passengers travel for a variety of reasons. They travel for work, tourism, medical appointments, to attend events, to access services or even just to catch up with family and friends. Our major regional centres and communities along rail corridors are important and vibrant parts of regional New South Wales. They offer diverse and affordable housing, access to employment and education, and lifestyle opportunities. The continuation of strategic planning and delivery of rail connections within regional New South Wales is important because it will increase the number of commuters, and not only connect more people in regional New South Wales but also alleviate growth pressures in parts of Sydney.

I speak particularly about the *Bathurst Bullet*. A lot of people have spoken about it today. There is no doubt that it is a fantastic example of how better rail connection has enhanced a regional centre. As the local member, one of my proudest achievements was to see that service up and running. The *Bathurst Bullet* came into service in 2012 after decades of being told it could not happen—decades of people saying not enough passengers would use it, there would be no rolling stock and therefore we could not have it. But we made a commitment and we delivered on it. The Bathurst Rail Action Group did an incredible job. It circulated a petition that gathered over 20,000 signatures. The petition had the support of the local council, the business chamber and local community organisations, which all wanted to see a daily service in the area.

The service was also important because it opened up opportunities for business. People were able to attend medical appointments. They were able to access medical services in the city and also catch up with family and friends. We also wanted to make it a daily service that people can catch in the morning and return on in the afternoon. It was such a success that a second service was introduced in 2019. Already over 24,000 passengers are utilising that service every year. People can choose between two services in the morning to travel to Sydney and two services in the afternoon to return to the Central West. Stops were also introduced at both Rydal and Tarana. I acknowledge Minister Aitchison, who is in the Chamber. I thank her for the conversations we have had about additional stops along the corridor. They will give people important travel options.

It is important to note that a new fleet of trains is just around the corner. We should use that opportunity to provide additional services not only to the electorate of Murray but also to areas like the Central West. We must consider any concerns that are raised. Establishing a train service in Orange will be quite complex. The Government will need to make significant investment in necessary infrastructure and stabling. We also know that jobs are reliant on the daily service to Lithgow. Cleaners rely on it and drivers could take industrial action. We should also be mindful of overcrowding. Additional stops will impact people who use the service. We do not want passengers standing for hours on end. I thank the member for Orange for moving the motion. At the end of the day, we should take the opportunity to increase rail services in the Central West.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (17:34):** In reply: I thank the member for Riverstone, the member for Barwon, the Minister and member for Maitland, the member for Upper Hunter, the member for Murray and, lastly, the member for Bathurst for the tone of the debate this afternoon and the manner in which it was conducted. It was interesting to listen to all those speakers. Other than the member for Riverstone, they are all regional representatives who have a clear understanding of the challenges that people in rural communities face in accessing reliable, consistent and affordable public transport. I will touch on some of the points that a couple of members raised. I will start with the member for Bathurst, who spoke last. He has a great legacy, having achieved rail services for his local community. I accept and acknowledge that.

The service has overwhelming support from communities and councils like Blayney, which passed a resolution supporting the stabling of the service in Orange; Millthorpe, whose rail action group attended the meetings that we held in Orange last week; Cabonne, which passed a resolution at its council meetings also supporting the stabling of the service in Orange; and Parkes Shire Council. There is wideranging and broad support for this service across the Central West. I acknowledge and appreciate the remarks of the member for Bathurst, but I assure him that people in Bathurst will not miss out. Passengers will not be left stranded or have to stand on trains if and when the service is running. Services and seats will be available for them. We had good discussions with members of the Bathurst Rail Action Group who were in attendance at the Orange conference.

Further to the points raised by the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, I am very thankful for the way the Minister has engaged with both me and my community in relation to this issue. The Orange Rail Action Group and the wider community are certainly very appreciative because, unfortunately, for many years we got nowhere with the previous Coalition Government. That has now changed, and I thank the new Government. I thank the Minister for the way that she has approached this issue. It is important to my local community, who feel this is something they are entitled to and deserve. They believe they have strong support across not only Orange but also the broader Central West. We have heard a whole range of varying reasons this service is important—whether for tourism, economic, educational or cultural reasons, or so people can travel to Sydney for health appointments or to go to the airport. The service will be well supported. I thank all members who contributed to the debate. I commend the motion to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Community Recognition Statements*

**MAR YOSIP PARISH ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (17:38):** I was privileged to join His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Awa III, His Eminence Mar Meelis Zaia and members of the Assyrian Church of the East for the laying of the foundation stone of St Yosip's church in Leppington. This important milestone marks a significant moment in the growth of the church in my electorate. The Patriarch's visit to Australia also included a patriarchal luncheon, attended by many esteemed leaders of the eastern churches, the Premier, the Minister for Multiculturalism and the member for Fairfield. The Australian visit was particularly significant for the Assyrian church community in Sydney, as His Eminence Mar Meelis Zaia was awarded the Patriarchal Grand Cross. The honour recognises his exceptional 40 years of dedicated service and leadership as bishop and now archbishop within the Assyrian Church of the East. The warmth and generosity shared among those in attendance at both events made them truly memorable occasions that highlighted the strength of community bonds and the enduring importance of faith. It was an immense privilege to play a part in His Holiness's visit.

**BE KIND FRIDAY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (17:39):** I commend and thank Oran Park local Mr Pat Frusciante and the not-for-profit organisation of which he is a director, Be Kind Friday, for their dedication and commitment to fostering kindness. Its mission, which is defined by Pat and reflected through its actions and events, is to inspire individuals and communities to come together every Friday and embrace kindness as a way of life. One of the methods by which Pat and his amazing colleagues seek to achieve that kindness is through the school talks they hold, where they educate children about the value of kindness. I was pleased to learn that they had a wonderful discussion with students from Oran Park Anglican School and that the response to the event was very positive. Our community and society are much better off for the contribution of Pat and his team at Be Kind Friday. On behalf of the electorate of Badgerys Creek, I thank them for their service and wish them the very best as they continue their important work.

### VICTOR CHANG SCHOOL SCIENCE AWARDS

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (17:40):** Penrith students were recently honoured with a Victor Chang School Science Award. The award is presented to year 11 students who have earned recognition for their efforts in biology, physics, chemistry and other science subjects. Established in 2004 in honour of pioneering cardiac surgeon Dr Victor Chang, the awards are committed to promoting science in the broader community and the application of science for the betterment of our society. The prestigious award fosters an interest in STEM career pathways and honours students for their educational achievement, innovation, creativity and hard work. I give a huge congratulations to the 30 students who were honoured with an award. They came from schools across Penrith, including Cranebrook High School, Jamison High School, Kingswood High School, Montgrove College, Nepean Creative and Performing Arts High School, Penrith Anglican College, Penrith Christian School, Penrith Selective High School and St Dominic's College. Again, I congratulate all student award recipients and hope they continue to pursue their passion for STEM.

### ALLEGRA SCHOOL COFFS HARBOUR

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (17:41):** A small special assistance high school in Coffs Harbour's CBD is making a big difference across our community. At the forefront of inclusive and individualised education, Allegra School Coffs Harbour welcomes young people from a range of learning and social backgrounds who have barriers to learning and have found mainstream schools challenging. Allegra's success lies in creating a balanced approach to academics and wellbeing. Using a combination of extensive learning support, small class sizes and a differentiated approach to the curriculum that is tailored to the individual, Allegra is creating transformative learning experiences by providing opportunities for students to thrive. I thank the Allegra community for warmly welcoming me on my recent visit. Their commitment to all the students in their care was quite evident to me. School principal Erin Caceda, deputy principal Stuart Hughes and coordinator of student wellbeing Danielle Free lead a dynamic team. Allegra is managed by a board of governance comprising chair Jared Young, deputy chair and public officer Tasos Nicolaidis, treasurer Peter Cleal, secretary Jasmine Nelson, Melissa Hogan and Andre Lekas.

### BRAYDEN MORRIS

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (17:42):** I acknowledge a remarkable young entrepreneur in my community. Twenty-one-year-old Brayden Morris from Milperra launched his own soccer coaching business when he was only 15, starting with a single participant. Through sheer determination, a love for the game and an unwavering commitment to his craft, he has grown that one-on-one coaching session into a thriving community of 60 to 70 players. Brayden's experience as both a coach for the Milperra Lions Football Club and a former player with Bankstown United has given him ample experience to train a new generation of local soccer stars. It was inspiring to hear about Brayden's passion for soccer, his dedication to fostering local talent and his success with his small business. I was particularly impressed by his plans to expand his girls' and women's coaching program, encouraging broader participation. I congratulate Brayden on all he has achieved. I have no doubt there is much more success ahead. He is an inspiration to many in our community who are vying to turn their passion into a business.

### JOEY LONGFORD

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (17:43):** I recognise the outstanding contributions of Joey Longford, founder of Nuranurra Support Service in Leeton. Established in 2022, Nuranurra, derived from the Wiradjuri word meaning "consistently" or "always", embodies a steadfast commitment to community wellbeing. Joey's dedication focuses on engaging vulnerable children, encouraging their active participation in the community and nurturing their potential. While his initiatives encompass the entire community, he places significant emphasis on supporting the shire's youth and Indigenous residents. His efforts extend to running programs in schools, promoting values of resilience, empowerment and belonging. In recognition of his tireless work, Joey was honoured with the 2024 Citizen of the Year Award by Leeton Shire Council. That accolade celebrates his extensive contributions through various programs, initiatives, events and fundraising efforts. Joey is to be congratulated on his commitment to his community and the impactful work he does with young people.

### SET IN SEPTEMBER THE LABEL

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (17:44):** Recently I met with Mehroz Afzal and Seemab Awan, the founders of Set in September the Label, a charity that raises awareness and much-needed funding for bowel cancer in Australia. The charity was established in honour of their sister, Afroz Awan, who at the age of 33 was diagnosed with stage four bowel cancer. Just three months after her diagnosis, at the age of 34, Afroz lost her battle, leaving a big void in the hearts of her family, including her 10-month-old baby boy. Through their grief

and struggle to cope with her loss, the sisters decided to carry on Afroz's legacy through the organisation by providing every Australian the opportunity to receive an early diagnosis, access to care and hope for a cure. The charity works to bring bowel cancer awareness to people aged 25 to 44, to assist with access to early testing and to recognise the symptoms. Earlier in the year I attended a fundraiser organised by the sisters, which raised a total of \$220,000 for bowel cancer research. Well done to Mehroz and Seemab. May their good work continue to make a difference to the lives of others.

#### **NSW RFS HAWKESBURY CATERING BRIGADE**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (17:45):** I congratulate the NSW RFS Hawkesbury Catering Brigade on their efforts during the New South Wales State championships in Albury this year. The brigade achieved first place in the Eat Street Catering Challenge, serving nutritious meals for firefighters and other RFS personnel. Complying with this year's theme of Mexican food, the Hawkesbury Catering Brigade prepared and served lunch and a snack item. Volunteers from the brigade used the available ingredients effectively to create 85 tasty portions of the assigned meals. I congratulate and thank the members of the catering brigade, and note how crucial their role is in supporting our Rural Fire Service personnel. The success of the team at the State championships is truly a testament to their skill and ability to provide excellent meals at various district- and State-level incidents and events.

#### **LIVERPOOL ARTIST IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (17:46):** My rotating art exhibit, Liverpool Artist in the Spotlight, has been a great success since I launched it earlier this year. Tonight I share with the House details of our latest installation of five pencil-drawn portraits courtesy of local artist Laura Dogao. With fantastic likenesses of Australian icons such as Ita Buttrose, as well as a self-portrait, Laura's work has been a welcome feature in my electorate office foyer. Laura is a quiet but witty lady who joined the Liverpool Art Society's boatshed group. I am told her work is so admired by her peers that it was difficult for the Liverpool Art Society to pick just five artworks from the many fantastic pieces she has created. Laura puts her love of drawing best in her own words. She said:

I have always enjoyed drawing and I can spend hours on a drawing without realising it. I find the whole process quite absorbing. It is quite therapeutic.

I know that many people feel just like Laura about the link between art and wellbeing, and I thank her for allowing me to share her artworks with our community.

#### **DEBORAH MAIR**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (17:47):** Deborah Mair has reached a milestone in her career, clocking up 30 years in the childcare industry with Bathurst Family Day Care. Throughout that time she has nurtured countless children in Bathurst, teaching them fundamental skills along the way. Over the past 30 years her workdays have been filled with arts and crafts, games, music, cooking and other activities that support a child's learning and development. Deb has had a long-lasting impact on the lives of all the children she has cared for. The families Deb has become part of still recognise her years later. It takes a special type of kind-hearted person to have the patience to treat the children in their care like their own. Deb has been able to do just that, ensuring each child feels loved and learns vital developmental skills so they are prepared and confident to start school. This career gave Deb the life she strived for and, in turn, Deb gave the Bathurst community the service we so desperately depend on. I extend my thanks to Deb for her three decades of service to child care in the Bathurst region and congratulate her on that significant milestone.

#### **PARRAMATTA RIOT DAY**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (17:48):** It's a riot! On Friday 25 October the annual Riot Day took place at the Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct at North Parramatta. Some 197 years ago on 27 October 1827, 100 convict women were missing at the morning muster. Within hours, Parramatta town was in uproar. The women, who were hungry and fed up with the reduction in rations and their appalling living and working conditions, broke out of the factory and penitentiary and moved to the streets of the town. The annual Parramatta commemoration of the 1827 riot was hosted by the Parramatta Female Factory Friends and sponsored by the Parramatta Leagues Club. The female factory and its buildings served the colony as a place of confinement, a labour exchange, a place for textile manufacturing, a marriage bureau, a place for female incarceration and, sadly, a site where children of convict women were forcibly removed. The stories of hope, resilience and survival are held there. Those hidden and often untold stories are of national significance. They go to the heart of the Australian identity.

## BUSHLINK

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (17:49):** I proudly honour the incredible work of Bushlink, a social enterprise of Northside Enterprise in Brookvale, which creates real and valued employment for people with disability through a network of working environmental project teams. I acknowledge Adrian, Ben, Dylan, Joel, Joshua, Kieran, Mark, Max, Robbie, Tarek and Will for their tireless work promoting respect for all abilities and making significant contributions to bush regeneration. The amazing Bushlink participants have collectively dedicated 99 years of community service through their commitment to people with disabilities. Bushlink offers meaningful employment, fostering empowerment and inclusion, particularly in our local schools, and now aims to expand its school programs across the northern beaches, creating more opportunities for people with disability and building a more inclusive community. In fact, it will probably want to expand further—talking to everyone else in here. Our community is grateful for Bushlink's dedication and the positive impact it has on all of us. You guys rock! Thank you.

## GINA HOLLAND

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (17:50):** I acknowledge Gina Holland, who is a pillar of my local community. Gina Holland has been a cornerstone of PCYC Bulli for more than two decades, exemplifying unwavering dedication and a genuine passion for supporting local youth. Her journey with PCYC began as a volunteer, where she spent the first 10 years tirelessly contributing her time and energy. Now, as a treasured staff member, Gina coordinates a range of club activities, including basketball and point-of-sale and reception duties, while also ensuring the club remains clean and welcoming. Gina's dedication to PCYC Bulli is further highlighted by her exceptional fundraising efforts. Always the first to raise money for the club, she plays a vital role in securing resources that directly benefit the young people of the Illawarra. On behalf of the community, we thank Gina for her unwavering commitment and resilience. Her journey with PCYC Bulli serves as an inspiration to all, showcasing the profound impact one individual can have on their community.

## GYMEA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (17:51):** I acknowledge the beating heart of the GyMEA shopping village, the GyMEA Chamber of Commerce, which held its annual fair on 27 October. The GyMEA Village Fair is the highlight of our community calendar, with this year's festivities being enjoyed by more than 50,000 people throughout the day. More than 200 stallholders were present, selling food, fashion, homewares, services and entertainment. I thank the major sponsors for making the event possible for our community—namely, Sutherland Shire Council, Tynan Motors Hyundai, the GyMEA Hotel and Stone GyMEA. Established in the 1950s, the chamber is a dynamic, not-for-profit organisation that seeks to boost economic growth, represent the voice of local businesses and help its members to succeed. I recognise the chamber's hardworking committee, which strives to maximise business potential in the Sutherland shire. I acknowledge president Esna Lee, vice-president Dean Eades and secretary Brooke Colquhoun-Lesslie. I congratulate the GyMEA Chamber of Commerce on yet another successful GyMEA Village Fair and commend its continued support of local businesses.

## TIM HODGE

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (17:52):** I congratulate three-time Paralympian swimmer Tim Hodge, who has capped off his extraordinary 2024 campaign with the top gong at the Swimming Australia Awards this week. Twenty-three-year-old Tim Hodge has been in a class of his own since winning back-to-back world championships in 2022, and he was the favourite to win gold in the 200-metre individual medley, which he did in a Paralympic record time after breaking the world record at trials in June this year. The Auburn swim club champion, who earned the title of Iron Man at the Paris games, can now add Swimming Australia's Paralympic Program Swimmer of the Year to his achievements. Congratulations to Tim on this well-deserved triumph. We are all incredibly proud of him.

## NSW WINE MONTH

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (17:53):** It is November, and what does that mean? It means it is NSW Wine Month, and what a great time to celebrate New South Wales wines—especially those from the Hunter Valley. The Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association chief executive officer, Jennie Curran, has managed to kick off the festival with the Hunter Valley Uncorked Balmoral Wine and Food festival, which was held at Balmoral Beach. Great food, the absolute best wine and some good beats meant that, by the end of the day, the dance floor was full—an important KPI for any festival, I am told. All credit to Louise and Gus Maher from Hunter Valley Events, who really worked hard to make the event a success. The Sydney Cellar Door festival was also held at The Rocks in Sydney. What a fantastic initiative from NSW Wine president Mark Bourne and his team. With plenty more events coming, I give a call-out to all our restaurants, venues and members of Parliament: Drink more New South Wales wine!

### SENIOR CONSTABLE ALISON STEWART

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (17:54):** I love it when local people who have been doing good, effective work on the ground for years are recognised for their service, so I was beyond excited to see Senior Constable Alison Stewart take out the top award at the NSW Police Officer of the Year Awards last week. Alison has an extraordinary 36 years of service and has been a crime prevention officer in the Port Stephens-Hunter Police District since 2014. Over the past decade, I have seen firsthand the work Alison does to support vulnerable families and communities, offering practical support and advice. By forging connections across our community, Alison has created positive pathways for young people at risk. I can genuinely say that Alison has made a difference to the lives of so many people that her impact is immeasurable. As if her police work was not enough, in her own time Alison helped to start up and drive a beautiful initiative, the Backpack Venture, which supports students in need. On behalf of the New South Wales Government, this Parliament and the people of Port Stephens, I congratulate Alison on her award of Rotary Police Officer of the Year 2024 and on her longstanding service to our community.

### PICTON SHOW

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (17:55):** The Picton Show is a wonderful event that I look forward to each year. Held over the weekend of 26 and 27 October 2024, this country show always has a great turnout of visitors and also entrants in the show categories. I make special mention of the CWA Picton District Country Women's Association for their delicious Devonshire tea. No-one does scones like the Country Women's Association and it was lovely catching up with One Stop Community Assistance and the Picton VIEW Club members, making a difference in our community at the show hall. From bull rides, the ute show, woodchopping, agility dogs and a reptile show to fireworks, horse events and the arts and craft pavilion, this year's show had something for everyone. Other highlights included scarecrow displays, Thomas train rides, milking and shearing demos, Troppo Bob and Fizzies Ed shows, and displays by the Campbelltown Steam Museum and Razorback Crank Handlers. Congratulations and thank you to the entire show society—the Picton District Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society Inc.—on organising an amazing line-up of events.

### CABRAMATTA ELECTORATE REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (17:56):** On Monday 11 November 2024 I had the privilege of attending the Remembrance Day service at the Cabra-Vale Diggers Club, a solemn and moving occasion to honour the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. As we gathered together, we took a moment to remember those who died, those missing in action and those wounded in service to Australia, as well as victims' families who are suffering. The service was a powerful reminder of the courage and dedication of those who defended our nation, ensuring that we could enjoy the peace and freedom we have today. It is through their sacrifice that we are able to live in a country that values security, liberty and the wellbeing of its people. I thank the president of the club, Major Walter Robinson, OAM, and the leadership and management team for their kind invitation and I congratulate them on successfully organising the Remembrance Day service.

### MASSEY PARK GOLF CLUB

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (17:57):** I congratulate Massey Park Golf Club, which was crowned Metropolitan Club of the Year at the 2024 NSW Golf Industry Awards on Monday night. The Metropolitan Club of the Year was awarded to Massey Park Golf Club in recognition of its tremendous commitment to fostering an inclusive spirit. The club welcomes players of all ages and, in the past few years, has particularly focused on encouraging juniors and women to take up the great game. The club has recently installed a new 70-kilowatt solar system, making it energy efficient, and completed consultation on a new strategic plan. Everyone in Concord knows that Massey is the place to go for a delicious meal, thanks to Enrico and the team at the family brasserie. The success of the club would not be possible without the dedication of the board. I sincerely congratulate club president Rob Gilder, vice-president Stephanie Callaghan, treasurer Garry Ryan, directors Rick Slowgrove, Stephanie Cross, David Bowyer and Steven Turner, captain Ben Woods, vice-captain Brett Morrison, general manager Pat Cullen and all the hardworking staff. Congratulations, Massey Park Golf Club.

### WENTWORTHVILLE DIWALI STREET FESTIVAL

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (17:58):** On 9 November 2024 I was delighted to join Cumberland council's Diwali Street Festival at Wentworthville. Diwali is celebrated widely by people of Hindu, Jain and Sikh faiths, as well as our wider Aussie community, to honour the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness. Throughout Diwali, diyas are lit in homes across Western Sydney as friends and family gather to pray, give thanks, create beautiful rangoli and feast together. In the heart of Wentworthville, the street bazaar attracted some 10,000 revellers to celebrate the Festival of Light. It was great to join local friends to light the lamp, share delicious

lados and watch vibrant cultural performances. Congratulations to Cumberland mayor Ola Hamed, councillor Suman Saha and the dedicated community volunteers on organising a fantastic event that unites our community. I wish everyone a happy Diwali and prosperous new year.

#### **SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS ARTS TRAIL**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (17:59):** It was great to attend the opening event of the 2024 season of the Southern Highlands Arts Trail, celebrating its fourteenth year of showcasing the vibrant artistic talent of our community. I was pleased to attend along with the member for Goulburn and Jesse Fitzpatrick, the Mayor of Wingecarribee, and his fellow councillors. The opening night's event brought together select pieces from the upcoming trail, offering attendees a chance to meet some of the artists behind the works. The trail is an opportunity to see a diverse range of artworks from talented local artists and is held over two weekends in November at different studios and locations all over the highlands. It encourages locals and visitors to explore the area, while taking in the breadth of talent we are lucky to have. The arts trail is a community-wide celebration of art in the highlands, and all are welcome to visit the artists and their studios.

#### **FAIRFIELD LIVERPOOL CRICKET ASSOCIATION**

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (18:00):** The Fairfield Liverpool Cricket Association has been invaluable in promoting the love of cricket for so many young people in south-western Sydney for decades. I know this because I was one of those kids, and I have seen the transformative effect as the association's volunteer coaches, trainers, umpires and administrative personnel make lives better. In addition, the association has successfully revitalised girls' cricket, as well as introduced initiatives like the T20 winter competition and junior programs, which have attracted young players from across Sydney. I commend all the amazing people behind the association, including its president, Peter Moore, its representative girls' coordinator, Vinay Chattree, and its secretary, Sharjeel Siddiqui. They do great work. From the bottom of my heart, I thank them.

#### **COMMANDER AARON SCOTT**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (18:01):** I thank Aaron Scott for his service to our community as commanding officer of HMAS *Watson*. HMAS *Watson* was commissioned in March 1945. Located at Sydney's South Head, it is the navy's premier maritime warfare training establishment. Commander Scott joined HMAS *Watson* in October 2022. He has embraced our community, and we have embraced him. He has left his mark, building important and constructive relationships with our local residents, schools, P&Cs and RSLs. On base, he has overseen major upgrades that will include new training facilities, residential quarters, front gates and a health centre. Commander Scott leaves us to take command of HMAS *Stuart* in Perth in December 2025. We will miss his presence and his leadership. On behalf of the electorate of Vaucluse, I wish Aaron and his family all the best as they head west.

#### **ROSLYN MCFARLAND**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:02):** I acknowledge one of the fabulous authors in my electorate, Roslyn McFarland. The community of the Blue Mountains attended the launch of her latest book, *Foreign Attachments*, at the Grand View Hotel in Wentworth Falls the week before last. Roslyn's book was published by Ginninderra Press. The many hundreds of people in the Blue Mountains who came out to celebrate Roslyn and her latest book also celebrated the work she has done in melding real people's stories with fiction. I look forward to reading her book. We do not often have much time as members in this place, but I am told that I will be transported to the experience of Australian artist Stella Bowen. I congratulate Roslyn.

#### **JUDY GOODSSELL**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (18:03):** At the end of this school year Neutral Bay Public School will say farewell to its much-loved principal, Judy Goodsell. Judy will be retiring after seven years of dedicated service to the school community as its principal and 17 years of working as a principal in the department. Her dedication, vision and warmth have shaped not only the school but also the lives of countless students, families and colleagues. Excitingly, I was able to work alongside Judy to deliver a major upgrade to Neutral Bay Public School, which is completely transforming the school, and the students are looking forward to enjoying the upgrades next year. Judy has cultivated a legacy through her close work with the P&C of holding fundraising events such as the Pampered Pooch Parade, colour runs and the school fair, and has ensured a strong program of extracurricular activities for students. Throughout her tenure, Judy has imparted to the school community the importance of a balanced education. She has fostered a culture of resilience, compassion and honesty. Neutral Bay has been so fortunate to have such a passionate and engaged principal. As a mum at the school, I have come to appreciate her even more. I thank Judy for all she has done for the school and the community and wish her every success in the future.

### CELEBRATION OF SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (18:04):** On 12 November I was proud to attend the Celebration of Special Religious Education, which was attended by over 400 people, in the Parliament of New South Wales. The event celebrated that we live in a vibrant multi-faith and multicultural society. This is our greatest strength—living in harmony, enjoying freedom and being inclusive. These are our Australian values of freedom of faith and culture, be it Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Baha'i or one of so many more faiths. I congratulate two schools that received an award for building social cohesion through excellence in special religious education: Concord High School, led by principal Victor Newby, and Northbourne Public School, led by principal Michele Hedge. I acknowledge the speakers: swami Bishop Brian, Mazen, Steve, Surinder, Michele, John and Bishop Michael. Finally, I recognise and give a big thank you to Murray Norman for all his leadership in putting this event together.

### KU-RING-GAI BUSHFIRE EXPO

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (18:05):** We are coming up to bushfire season, and it is more important than ever to ensure that our communities are ready for any bushfires this summer. I recently attended the bushfire expo hosted by Ku-ring-gai Council, the Rural Fire Service, the State Emergency Service, the Neighbourhood Watch, the NSW Police Force, and NSW Fire and Rescue and spoke with representatives of each of them about how to prepare for the upcoming bushfire season. My electorate of Wahroonga is surrounded by beautiful bushland and an abundance of trees. Whilst we are fortunate to live in this environment, the bushland brings some risk during summer. It is important that, as we head into the hotter months of the year, residents are ready for any emergency that could unfold. There are resources available for accurate bushfire information that residents of my electorate and the rest of New South Wales can access, including the Rural Fire Service's website, the Hazards Near Me app, the Bush Fire Information Line and so on. I thank all the agencies for this informative event.

### AVEN AND CHARLES LIN

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (18:06):** I am delighted to congratulate Aven and Charles Lin, who will celebrate their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in December. There is something to be said for 25 years of marriage. It is a symbol of love, loyalty and, no doubt, triumph over the inevitable adversity that one would encounter in more than two decades of partnership. Throughout life's journey, they would have seen significant change. Communities evolve, technology develops and people come and go from within our respective orbits. To have the steady presence of a life partner—in Aven's case, Charles, and, in Charles's case, Aven—is to experience that journey to its fullest. Aven and Charles's example is one that we can all aspire to: an enduring partnership and building an enriching legacy. I ask the House to join me in congratulating Aven and Charles and wish them both a happy twenty-fifth wedding anniversary.

### *Private Members' Statements*

### WILDLIFE REHABILITATION SECTOR REVIEW

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:07):** I will talk a bit about the New South Wales wildlife care and rehabilitation sector review. I am leading this review and will provide recommendations to the Minister for the Environment in the other place, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, about opportunities to improve support for the wildlife care and rehabilitation sector and associated veterinary sector. The review will take around a year, and a report will be submitted to the Minister in October 2025. The Government will consider future funding opportunities following the statewide consultation. The outcomes of this review will ensure that the Government's support for the sector is strategic and efficient and is provided to the areas of highest need.

This consultation is the direct result of a three-year strategy that was coming to an end and the rehabilitation sector expressing a clear desire to shape the future. As part of a number of round tables, site visits and consultations across the State over the next year, the Government has asked me, on its behalf, to express appreciation to wildlife carers for their commitment and dedication to rescuing tens of thousands of injured, sick and orphaned native animals each year. For example, in 2022-23, nearly 105,000 animals of 532 different species were rescued, including nearly 3,500 threatened animals. The week before last, at the beginning of this review, I travelled with some departmental staff to Queanbeyan for a round table. The room was filled with wildlife carers, who talked to us about some of their hopes for the future, some of their fears and their work.

Many members will remember that during the Black Summer bushfires not only did we see the destruction of homes, lives and great expanses of land, but also what came to the fore through media attention was the huge amount of wildlife that was impacted. Since that time, the ways we can better support those who support, care and rehabilitate our wildlife has been front of mind for different agencies and governments. Visits to Queanbeyan, Bungendore and the Mid South Coast were part of two days of intensive travel. We visited Steve Garlick and the



team at Possumwood Wildlife Hospital in Bungendore. We visited Janelle Renes, Renata Cooper and the WIRES carers team at Bimbimbic, just outside of Batemans Bay. We visited Kate Toyer, a vet at the Eurocoast Veterinary Centre at Surf Beach. We then went on to Wandandian and Wildlife Rescue South Coast in Falls Creek. I acknowledge the fantastic work that Belinda Donovan does there. It was really humbling to see some of the work and check on the outcomes of the care and rehabilitation of a range of gorgeous native animals.

Last week I got on the road again and headed out to Dubbo, where we met with a number of carers from the Central West who do this work. It was great to welcome different members and council representatives to each of the visits. As the Parliamentary Secretary leading this review, I thank those wildlife carers and express my gratitude on behalf of the Government. I thank Josh Gregory, from the Minister's office, and the agency representatives from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, including Janelle, Susan, Karen and John. I thank the fantastic people at Taronga Western Plains Zoo, including Alisa, Jodie and Steve for hosting me. It was a great trip.

### **HORNSBY RELAY FOR LIFE**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (18:12):** Sadly, cancer affects all of us in some way. Whether it is a family member or friend who has been diagnosed, we all know someone who has been affected by cancer. My father and more recently my friend and colleague the member for Davidson have been diagnosed with bowel cancer. Cancer is one of the most significant medical challenges faced by not only our country but the whole world. It is estimated that 165,000 Australians were diagnosed with cancer in 2023. That equates to 452 people every day. Almost two in five Australians will be diagnosed with cancer by the age of 85. Recently I attended an important local event to raise awareness and much-needed funds for the Cancer Council, the Hornsby 2024 Relay for Life, which was held at Rofe Park. I was joined by the member for Davidson; the member for Hornsby; the Federal member for Berowra, Julian Leeser; Mayor of Hornsby Shire Council Warren Waddell; Councillor Sallianne McClelland; and Councillor Nathan Tilbury.

On the day, 435 relay participants took part in the event, making up 59 teams. People were dressed in all sorts of colourful outfits, bringing some joy and brightness to the day. Despite the gloomy and rainy start, the community came out in support of this great cause. The 24-hour relay commenced with fantastic performances by Peter Kirkland, OAM, on the didgeridoo, the Hornsby RSL Pipe Band and the Golden Kangaroos Hornsby Concert Band. The participants and teams continuously walked throughout the night and into morning to complete the relay. So far, the event has raised more than \$100,000.

It is absolutely critical that we continue to spread awareness about all types of cancer so we can be better equipped to recognise different symptoms and detect early signs of cancer. Regular skin checks and blood tests can help ensure that treatment begins as soon as possible. The story of the diagnosis of the member for Davidson is an important one. He was donating blood when staff at Australian Red Cross Lifeblood told him to visit a doctor. The doctor then asked him to get a colonoscopy, and he was then diagnosed with bowel cancer. That is an important reminder to not only get regular blood tests but also donate blood if you can—it could end up saving your life as well as someone else's.

The most common types of cancers that are diagnosed in Australia include prostate cancer, with approximately 24,000 people diagnosed every year; breast cancer, with approximately 20,000 people diagnosed every year; melanoma, with approximately 17,700 people diagnosed every year; bowel cancer, with approximately 15,700 people diagnosed every year; and lung cancer, with approximately 14,500 people diagnosed every year. Each cancer brings its own unique characteristics and challenges, with no two cancers the same. The statistics are sobering and remind us of the importance of looking after our physical health, ensuring that we are making the time to see our doctors and getting regular skin checks and blood tests.

Recently, when the Cancer Council visited Parliament to hear the debate on the motion moved by the member for Davidson, we had the opportunity to speak with the CEO and the people who work at the Cancer Council. They emphasised that certain foods and lifestyle activities such as drinking, smoking or a lack of exercise can all contribute to a heightened risk of cancer. We are very fortunate to live in a country that has some of the best hospitals, clinicians and treatments in the world. With treatments like chemotherapy, radiation, immunotherapy and targeted therapies having transformed the fight against cancer, we must continue to invest in our cancer treatment and research, hospitals and technologies.

While a cancer diagnosis comes with a range of emotions such as fear and grief, it also brings hope—hope for a future with treatments and cures for all types of cancer. I often tell the story of my father, who was diagnosed with bowel cancer at the age of 58 and lived to a good 92½ years of age. The Cancer Council's Relay for Life is an important way for my local community to take part in raising funds for the Cancer Council and raising awareness of the importance of regular health checks. I cannot speak highly enough of the work that the Cancer Council does in research, cancer education and awareness. I thank everyone who was involved in

organising the event and all those who participated in the Relay for Life. I hope to see more people involved next year.

### UNIVERSAL ROBOTICS CHALLENGE

**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) (18:17):** Former professional basketball champion Michael Jordan once said, "Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships." That is certainly true for a group of very fine young students from Ingleburn Public School who made history when the team won bronze at the 2024 Universal Robotics Challenge finals in Osaka, Japan. It was a fantastic achievement for those kids and the school. In fact, the Ingleburn team was the first Australian team to ever achieve a podium finish at the Universal Robotics Challenge. The team comprised of year 5 students Aarifa Shabbir and Flynn Wangpaibul, year 6 student Winston Thio, and year 4 student Claire To. The Ingleburn team was one of three Australian teams among a total of 40 from around the world. A Japanese team won gold, while a school from Thailand took home silver.

Ingleburn Public School won its way to the championships by winning the year 3-6 division of the 2023 Universal Australia national final. I am told that the students demonstrated exceptional skill and teamwork to claim the bronze medal. In the finals, students tested their robot-building and programming capabilities, simulating real-world tasks. I recently paid a visit to Ingleburn Public School to meet the young champions and their teachers to personally congratulate them. I must say that I was impressed with their skill, their aptitude for learning and their enthusiasm. One of the things that struck me most was their ability to lean into each other's strengths and work together effectively. To learn those skills from a young age is certainly setting them up for future success.

Robots are transforming the way we live our lives. As adults, we may marvel at those advancements, but for children, the world of robotics provides an opportunity to explore, learn and create. Bringing the Universal Robotics Challenge into Ingleburn Public School has allowed students to think beyond the classroom, as well as engage with cutting-edge technology. It was former Ingleburn Public School deputy principal Rebecca Dao who first realised the potential that robotics had to inspire the young students. Robotics encourages creativity, critical thinking, teamwork and problem-solving in a hands-on approach that is both engaging and fun. Students learn to adapt quickly, think on their feet and develop perseverance. Learning robotics also helps students acquire knowledge of mechanical engineering, electronics, coding and other STEM disciplines. It helps boost young people's confidence in digital skills and prepares them for the future job market.

Ingleburn Public School principal Graeme Green is thrilled with the students' success and has described it as a "remarkable achievement". I would have to second that. Our community is incredibly proud of all the young students involved, proud of their innovative solutions, proud of their spirit of collaboration, and proud of their hard work and determination. Of course, the students' success is owed, in many respects, to their wonderful and dedicated teachers. I particularly acknowledge the efforts of Melinda Phan, Sandra Nguyen and Caliopi Armamentos. They provided unwavering support, enabling the students to compete and excel at the highest level.

Those teachers also demonstrated their dedication in taking the four students to Japan for eight days. It was an incredible experience for all involved, particularly the young students. In case members are wondering, I heard all about the Pokemon Centre, Universal Studios and eating lots of sushi. Claire, Winston, Flynn and Aarifa had a lot of fun, and they certainly deserved it after their fabulous success. I thank all the outstanding teachers and staff who have been instrumental in the team's success and supported them on this incredible journey. Being part of a team is rewarding, and success is even sweeter together. I am confident that the success of Ingleburn Public School students will inspire the next generation of engineers and problem solvers. Thanks to the students that I have met at Ingleburn Public School and the teachers who are so encouraging of the students, I know that the future is certainly bright for the people of New South Wales and Australia.

### COFFS HARBOUR ELECTORATE COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (18:22):** The Coffs Coast is home to a multitude of community champions and we are proud of them all. I pay tribute to each of them for what they have done, what they are achieving and the way they are going about it. They always strive to do their best, with great success. Community spirit was on show recently when the NSW Rural Fire Service family on the Coffs Coast gathered to mark a special milestone and to honour one of its own. The Woolgoolga Rural Fire Brigade celebrated 75 years of serving our community with an afternoon of camaraderie to reflect on the past and to look forward to the future. The highlight of the afternoon was the unveiling of the *Noel Bultitude*. The brigade's medium tanker (category 7) was renamed in recognition of Noel's remarkable service and inspirational work ethic. Noel Bultitude, OAM, now 90,

is a founding member and former captain of the Woolgoolga Rural Fire Brigade, where he remains an active member.

The brigade captain, Scott Hodgkinson, described Noel as a key brigade member, who is always working at the station, while Superintendent Sandra Huer, the Coffs Coast team district manager, congratulated the brigade on its commitment to keeping the community safe. I am proud of our RFS crews on the Coffs Coast, and I thank them for their vigilance not only during the current bushfire danger period but every day of the year. My thoughts turn to all of our frontline emergency services workers and regional communities across New South Wales as we remember the catastrophic 2019-20 bushfires, five years on.

From accolades for the Rural Fire Service to honours for a wonderful local lady, Coffs Harbour's Mary Davis would know more than most of us about the simple pleasures that a garden brings. Her steadfast dedication to gardening and horticulture over the past 55 years has included mentoring, growing a career, writing, public speaking, teaching, tour leading, judging and organising events. Mary, aged 95, is a Coffs Harbour Garden Club member, who has been bestowed a prestigious Garden Clubs of Australia president's award in recognition of her important contribution to this field. Mary moved to Coffs Harbour in 2021 with her husband, George, who is aged 100. She joined both the Woolgoolga and Coffs Harbour garden clubs, where she would soon become an active member. I congratulate Mary on her achievements and her endeavours in making the Coffs Coast an even more beautiful place.

Another fantastic achievement which has made us all extremely proud on the Coffs Coast has catapulted a Sawtell surfer to a world title and global fame. Scott Schindler has claimed gold in the Men's Grand Masters (over 50) at the 2024 ISA World Masters Surfing Championship held in El Salvador. The newly crowned king of the surf, aged 53, is basking in the glory of his first world championship title. Finals day provided ideal conditions, with the world's best surfers aged over 40 seeking the top honours. Scott told Surfing Australia that it was a surreal feeling to win a world title. He said:

It's a dream come true at any age and a true testament to the hard work that goes into this achievement.

Winning for myself, the team, and Australia is a moment that will last forever.

Scott is highly regarded in the surfing community and is well respected for his leadership in the sport. I congratulate him on winning the world title and for being a fine ambassador for the Coffs Coast. I must add that Scott was also my first boss when I moved back to Coffs Harbour. He ran a software company, and I know that he has since been a great mentor for entrepreneurs in the software and online space in that time as well.

Dedication has also reaped rewards for two year 6 students at St Augustine's Primary School, who have been awarded high distinctions in a prestigious mathematics competition. Jaxen Moore and Sachin van der Walt scored in the top 5 per cent of students in the 2024 Newcastle Permanent Primary School Mathematics Competition in the North Coast District, placing equal first in the year 6 division. The entire St Augustine's Primary School community is extremely proud of Jaxen and Sachin. So, too, is the wider Coffs Coast community. I am pleased to publicly acknowledge the achievements of all of these outstanding individuals who call the Coffs Coast home.

### ASSOCIATION OF BHUTANESE IN AUSTRALIA

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (18:26):** On Saturday 5 October I was delighted to represent Minister Kamper at an Australian Bhutanese multicultural event. We gathered to celebrate 16 years of successful settlement of the Bhutanese people in Australia. The event was organised by the Association of Bhutanese in Australia. It is a celebration that I have attended over many years. The community came together and remembered 16 years ago, when many people who were in attendance arrived on the shores of our beautiful country—each filled with hope, dreams and the desire for a better life. At the time, the journey from Bhutan to Australia was not merely a change of scenery but a profound transformation in their lives and ours. Whether they came 16 years ago or one day ago, we all celebrated not just the years that have passed but the remarkable resilience, strength and spirit that they have all shown throughout this journey.

As we enjoyed the many performances on the night, it gave us all the opportunity to reflect on the diversity that exists within our communities, especially in Western Sydney. I am proud that Penrith has been a refugee-welcome area since 2008. It is important that differences are celebrated, where, despite our backgrounds, we come together to share our cultures and where the values of inclusivity and respect thrive. The stories and experiences of the Bhutanese community weave the rich narrative of our Australian identity. I thank the hosts of the event—Mr Devi Charan Gautam, president of the Sydney division of the Association of Bhutanese in Australia, and his brilliant team—for putting together such a wonderful event. The team's remarkable leadership has fostered a strong, cohesive and culturally rich community in Australia.

The event is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the Bhutanese community. We honour our Bhutanese Australians' commitment to preserving their cultural identity while creating new lives in their new homeland. I thank them for introducing their culture to our own and weaving a new culturally unified identity within our Western Sydney community. Their contributions to our culture and economy and their support for our multiculturalism have benefited all of us. Together, we are the stronger for it. I express my gratitude to the numerous organisations, volunteers and individuals who have supported the Bhutanese community throughout their journey.

On the night as we witnessed the cultural immersion, it was evident that each of the many performances touched the hearts of everyone present. I know that we were all inspired by the many talents on display. The performances covered the generations and certainly build a base for the Bhutanese Australian children to embrace their culture. We also watched international Bhutanese singers perform. Once again, I thank the Association of Bhutanese in Australia for inviting me to the special event. It was memorable as it was successful, and I look forward to attending many more.

#### **MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (18:30):** Imagine buying a car for your family and driving around for years trusting that the seatbelts were working and that the airbags were ready to go if something went wrong. How would you feel if the dealer who sold the car turned up one day and took the seatbelts and airbags out of the car? Would you feel as safe? Would your family feel as safe? Of course you would not feel as safe because the protections that are there to save you have been taken away. That is what has happened to everyone living in the Murray-Darling Basin. The Federal Government has quietly ripped out the seatbelts and airbags, and it looks like they are also about to crash the car. I will explain.

In 2013 the Commonwealth Government needed the Murray-Darling Basin State governments to agree to let the Feds basically control the entire river system. Naturally the States did not blindly trust the Federal Government. Why would they? History tells us that a lot of things the Feds promise should be taken with a grain of salt, and so the States asked for some protections as part of this intergovernmental agreement. Fortunately, the States ultimately had their way. An agreement was reached that contained key protections for basin communities and basin States. The most important of those protections was section 4.7—section 4.7 was the seatbelts and the airbags—because it said the Commonwealth could not do anything in its basin plan unless it was "socio-economically neutral or beneficial". It was as if the Commonwealth Government was a doctor signing up to the Hippocratic oath and promising to first do no harm.

Under the intergovernmental agreement the Commonwealth was not allowed to do anything to harm basin communities. The Commonwealth was only allowed to leave basin communities as they are or make things better for them. For years, that worked, but then last year the Commonwealth decided it wanted to start doing harm. That is right, the Commonwealth Government decided it now wanted to run the basin in a way that would knowingly do socio-economic harm to basin communities. Instead of being a good doctor, the Commonwealth had decided to make some people sick, and so it quietly walked away from the intergovernmental agreement.

For example, the Commonwealth amended the Water Act 2007 in order to allow it to pay compensation to basin communities when it does socio-economic harm to them. In other words, it knows it is going to do harm, otherwise it would not be talking about compensation. Clearly, the Commonwealth is planning to crash the car without seatbelts or airbags, and it wants to be able to pay the passengers hush money after the crash. That is if the passengers survive. The Commonwealth Government should not need to pass laws to compensate basin communities because the Commonwealth should not be doing harm. The socio-economic harm test was a vital protection. The Commonwealth Government must not be allowed to walk away from that test.

Which brings us to the obvious questions: What the heck is the New South Wales Government doing about the removal of those protections? Why is Rose Jackson not jumping up and down and defending basin communities in New South Wales from harm being done by the Federal Government? Why is Premier Minns not standing up to the Federal water Minister and saying, "No, Tanya, I don't consent to you harming basin communities; rather than compensating basin communities, first do no harm"? Instead, we get silence on the issue from Premier Minns and Minister Jackson. That is totally unacceptable. I call on the New South Wales Government to speak out and insist that the Commonwealth Government continues to honour the intergovernmental agreement. New South Wales deserves the protections it was promised. We must protect basin communities. We need the protections agreed to in section 4.7.

#### **TRIBUTE TO JOHN PETER DONNELLAN**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (18:35):** On behalf of the electorate of Auburn, I pay my respects to John Peter Donnellan, who has sadly passed away. John was an integral part of our community, a man who devoted

himself to its betterment across many of our local institutions. John was a devoted husband to Noeline, a partnership that began in their teenage years through the Catholic Youth League. Together, they raised a loving family: Michelle, Terry, Brendan and Matthew, along with their partners Tony, Anna and Kate. John was a proud grandfather to 13 grandchildren and a great-grandfather to five, who will carry on his legacy in the years to come. One of John's old school friends Brian Barton captured the essence of his life and contributions beautifully. Brian said:

John was a member of the generation that propelled Australia into this wonderful era that we now enjoy. He certainly played more than his part as a family man and citizen at large. I will miss him, as will his old schoolmates and many in the community.

John is perhaps best known in our community as the solicitor who led the fight to keep the Western Suburbs Rugby League Club alive in the 1980s. That was no small feat, as many in this House would know. John was not just any solicitor; he was perhaps the only fitter and turner to become a solicitor in New South Wales. He did it the hard way, studying part-time over the course of sixteen years to achieve his qualification. That determination and dedication were trademarks of John's character. His journey as a solicitor proved to be a blessing for the Western Suburbs Magpies. In 1983, when New South Wales Rugby League attempted to remove Wests from the competition, John was the club's legal representative, standing firmly by the club in its time of greatest need. In his tribute to John, Kevin Hammond, a long-time member of the club, noted:

There were many wonderful people who made substantial contributions to the fight for our Club's survival over an extended period, but none more important than the unwavering efforts of John Donnellan. There have been those who have attempted to assume the mantle of the saviour of the Magpies, but with due respect, the one person who drove and orchestrated the fight with the NSWRL was John.

John's contributions to the Western Suburbs Rugby League Club were profound, and his devotion went beyond his professional obligations. He was a life member of the Western Suburbs Rugby League Club and a long-term Pratten Park Magpies member. Despite being entitled to use the box facilities, he often chose instead to join the crowd around the fence, preferring the camaraderie of fellow supporters over any privilege. That humble approach to life is indicative of his character; he never sought accolades but gave his all to causes close to his heart.

John's legacy extends beyond sport. He was deeply committed to his faith, serving as an integral part of the St Peter Chanel Catholic Church and remaining a lifelong contributor to its activities and community. His dedication to the Catholic Church was unwavering, as was his commitment to the values it espoused. Likewise, he was a lifelong member of the Australian Labor Party [ALP], where he served as president of the Berala branch of the ALP and president of the Auburn State Electorate Council. Through his work with the ALP, John contributed significantly to our local political landscape, advocating for the values of fairness, community and opportunity for all.

Brian Barton's words offer an insight into why John was so cherished. He was very much embedded in the values of his generation, which stood him in good stead throughout his life. John exemplified the virtues of a generation who knew the meaning of sacrifice and dedication. He valued hard work, integrity and loyalty, and those principles guided him in both his personal and professional lives. On behalf of the New South Wales Parliament and my colleagues past and present, I extend my deepest sympathies to Noeline, the Donnellan family and all who were touched by John's remarkable life.

## REMEMBRANCE DAY

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (18:39):** I begin with a quote from Athol Patterson, "Memories alone I can share." Athol served in World War II, lived in Frenchs Forest and was a member of the Forestville RSL Sub-Branch. He was also my late grandfather. I share my grandfather's quote because the word "memory" is similar to the word "remember". On Monday 11 November at 11.00 a.m. we marked Remembrance Day, honouring those who died or suffered serving in wars, conflicts or peace operations. We choose this day to remember because the World War I Armistice took place on the Western Front in France at the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918. After more than four years of horrific fighting and the loss of millions of lives, the guns on the Western Front fell silent.

Although memories can fade with the passage of time—or, even worse, be lost to history—we must as a community know the importance of remembering. We owe it to past generations and we owe it to future generations. The quote "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" is from George Santayana, and it is very relevant to the world we live in today. As members of the Legislative Assembly in 2024, we are reminded of the sacrifices of war. Behind me in the Chamber there is a World War I memorial to Sergeant Edward Larkin, the former Labor member for Willoughby, and Lieutenant Colonel George Braund, the former Liberal member for Armidale, who were tragically killed in the Gallipoli campaign in 1918. Lest we forget Edward and George.

I now turn to World War II. My grandfather Athol was a part of what we now call the greatest generation, which also includes local veterans Don Kennedy, OAM, and Roy Taylor. The greatest generation were men and women—some of whom grew up witnessing World War I from afar—who were shaped by a postwar society that included the Great Depression and the global rise of anti-democratic forces. They fought during World War II to protect Australian values—namely, freedom—helping to build what we now know to be modern Australia. My grandfather's story of service mirrors that of the greatest generation. At the outbreak of World War II he joined the Australian navy. After just one day, he was honourably discharged due to having a disability to do with bad hearing. But he was committed to serving and signed up to the United States Merchant Marine. Before he died, he put pen to paper and wrote down his memories. His story is very local to the northern beaches. He wrote:

On the ship "Arc-abba", we left Kembla on 29 May 1942 at 9pm headed for Newcastle. I was standing on deck while passing across Sydney Heads and could see the pine trees on Manly beach. We now had a flat at Queenscliff, and my thoughts would have been with my family who were there. Little did I know that at that precise time, 9pm, the miniature submarines entered Sydney Harbour on their venture of destruction. The mother submarine, which carried them from Japan to Sydney, must have been in the vicinity at this time my ship passed them. The sea on many occasions was nearly the cause of my demise. However, I still drift down memory lane on occasions, for instance when sitting at the beach watching the incoming tide and the horizon beyond and the passing ships through Sydney Heads. Memories alone I can share.

It would be remiss of me not to recognise the local RSL sub-branches in the Davidson electorate community. I thank the Forestville Sub-Branch, led by president Bob Lunnon; Sandy Howard; Vincent Williams, CSC; John Scifleet; John Balfour, OAM, JP; Stuart Hablethwaite; Peter McAskill, JP; and Kevin Leary. I also thank the Roseville Returned Servicemen's Memorial Club, led by president John Whitworth; Christopher Walsh; Arthur Willis; Timothy Watts; Mark Nyman; Alex Roth; Greg Johnson, OAM; and Michael Byrnes. In this Remembrance Day 2024 week, let us all renew our commitment to the meaning of the words, "We will remember them. Lest we forget."

### KARUAH PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (18:44):** The Minns Labor Government is committed to continuously improving our schools, creating spaces that foster learning, inclusivity and connection with community. At Karuah Public School this vision takes a deeply personal form. A transformative project has recently been completed that not only upgrades the school but also creates a culturally safe and welcoming space for Aboriginal students, families and the entire community. Karuah Public School has stood for over a century, but its history has not been smooth. It now stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of the beautiful community it serves. From humble beginnings in 1884, when Karuah Public School was founded on land leased from local sawmillers on the northern side of the river, to its relocation in 1908 to its current site on the other side of the river, the school has grown from a modest room of seven square metres into a thriving hub.

However, the school has not always been a hub for all. Due to cruel government decisions of the past, Aboriginal children were excluded from attending the school from 1907 until well into the 1950s. They were subjected to blatant discrimination and the denial of their right to education for decades. Whilst the unfair, unjust actions of the past will never be forgotten, I am pleased to report that healing has begun. Recently, I attended the launch of the school's reconciliation action project, which was truly unforgettable. It was a day when the injustices of the past were confronted amidst a celebration of a much fairer future, and where education and culture came together in the most meaningful way. The project beautifully captures the school's commitment to nurturing stronger, more inclusive relationships not only within the school but also with the broader community, marking an important milestone in the school's journey towards reconciliation.

My dear friend Worimi Elder Uncle John Ridgeway set the tone on the day with a generous welcome to country at the very school that had refused him entry as a child. Just think about that for a moment—an Elder willing to welcome people to lands where he was once not welcome. His generosity is extraordinary, and this spirit was the tenor of the day. Uncle Justin Ridgeway performed a smoking ceremony and the awesome student Aboriginal dance group mesmerised us all with their talent. Distinguished Worimi Elders Aunty Bev Manton, Uncle Joe Perry and Uncle Paul Callaghan also reminded everyone present of the importance of learning lessons from the past and moving forwards with respect. These Elders, who proudly shared their ties to the school, underlined the importance of the project through their wisdom and heartfelt reflections. Many powerful words were said on the day, but I share something Worimi Elder Aunty Bev said:

At its heart, reconciliation is about building stronger relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, for the benefit of all Australians. It means working together to overcome the divisions and inequalities that still exist, and education is key to fostering cultural competence.

They are wise words indeed. I could feel the change at the school on the day, demonstrating the success of its reconciliation action plan—from the vibrant school hall, the welcoming and meaningful entrance, and the proud faces of the students and staff, all wearing their commitment to reconciliation with pride. Under the strong and

careful leadership of principal Toni Lyle, the school has become a living example of how we can work together to heal, learn and create lasting change. Karuah Public School is a place where reconciliation is not just a project, but a living, breathing part of the school's identity. In fact, stepping into the school now serves as a reminder of the past and a future driven by the ambition of reconciliation. As part of the reconciliation project, footprints were painted on the school's entry pathway. They start out black and white, walking side by side, but then the black feet disappear, reflecting the period of grave injustice. Walk on and the black feet reappear, then both black and white footprints turn into rainbow colours.

The incredibly thoughtful approach taken by the school's staff, students and community has turned a seemingly simple path into a clear demonstration of their deep commitment to acknowledging the past and paving the way to a fairer, brighter future. It is this careful attention to detail and collaboration with community that has resulted in vibrant, meaningful upgrades to the school that will leave a lasting legacy for generations to come. I congratulate Principal Toni Lyle and all of the staff, students and community members who helped to make this project so meaningful. Finally, I leave the House with a powerful message from the day: Karuah kids can do anything. It is with this spirit of hope, determination and reconciliation that the future of this school and its students shine brighter than ever.

### UPPER HUNTER ELECTORATE ROAD PROJECTS

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (18:49):** Tonight I provide the House with an update on the Port to REZ, or renewable energy zone, road upgrades for the Upper Hunter electorate. I begin this evening by saying to my constituents that they should be cautious of reading too much into headlines and prepare to be somewhat underwhelmed. When the Government announced the Port to REZ upgrade last month, some people might have become quite excited about \$128 million in Australian and New South Wales Government funding towards 320 kilometres of road upgrades and ancillary works. Detailed maps for the 19 upgrades between the Port of Newcastle and the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone show that eight locations in the Upper Hunter electorate are identified for improvements under that upgrade program. Sounds promising—until we hear about the magnitude of what is expected to be coming up the New England and Golden highways. For example, for the recently modified Liverpool Range Wind Farm, which is proposed for between Merriwa and Coolah, we are expecting 185 turbines, which is down from an originally approved 267, but the maximum wind turbine height has increased from 165 to 215 metres.

What will the Upper Hunter electorate receive from the upgrade of eight locations funded by \$128 million? A lot of signs will need to be removed, relocated or amended; trees located around intersections will be pruned or removed; some fence lines will be established, and there will be roadworks where some new asphalt will be laid. Is that major construction? I think not. I am sure I can hear my constituents saying, "But \$128 million? Surely there are some substantial road improvements." So let me go through some of the projects to see which ones need more than signs moved, work done on trees or some fencing adjustments. Firstly, there will be some road-widening at Whittingham. Secondly, there will be a retaining wall and asphalt additions at Jerrys Plains. The route takes a detour off the Golden Highway towards Muswellbrook. Unfortunately for the big trucks, they cannot cross the bridge over the Hunter River at Denman. This is a long-known problem for heavy freight. I am concerned that we are missing an opportunity for an upgrade to the bridge to solve that long-term problem.

As the route heads up Denman Road to the intersection of Denman Road and Bengalla Road, the existing kerbed median at that point needs to be upgraded to cater for the changed traffic conditions. When the route reaches the junction of the Golden Highway and Vinegaroy Road, Cassilis, a new embankment and dedicated right turn lane off the highway are proposed. To borrow the phrase, I suspect the proof of the pudding will be in the eating as to what benefits these changes will deliver for motorists and communities of the Upper Hunter. Just returning for a moment to the Muswellbrook detour, I note that the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads has been quoted in the media as saying:

... Transport for NSW and EnergyCo are currently carrying out a review of roads across the designated renewable energy corridors to determine if any roads should be reclassified as state roads.

In an earlier statement on 18 July the Minister said:

The NSW Labor Government is helping take the pressure off Muswellbrook Shire Council by assuming responsibility for two local roads critical to the state's future energy needs. Bengalla Road and Wybong Road, between Bengalla Road and the Golden Highway, will ... be reclassified from local to state roads, opening the door to more potential investment from the NSW Government.

I remind the Minister that a commitment has been made, but the challenges ahead are great. There are many more burdens on my community that will come from the heavy vehicles that are travelling on small community roads. For example, the Port of Newcastle needs to bring in 9,500 wind turbines and 30,000 components. The Port of Newcastle CEO, Craig Carmody, stated that if they run just six trucks a night, it will take 11 years to get all the

equipment out to the REZ. Infrastructure Australia CEO Adam Copp stated yesterday that he had heard suggestions about using zeppelins to get the equipment out there.

I will finish, most importantly, on this point: We need proper traffic studies completed that show the impact on my community from these movements and true plans that will show how we will manage traffic when the oversize and overmass loads are travelling through. Planning for the future should urgently start with the Denman bridge and include the Muswellbrook bypass. Currently in the media, the REZs are being spoken about as fast-tracking, but how can we fast-track the energy grid if we are in the slow lane for infrastructure?

### **RONGDHANU AUS-BANGLA CULTURAL SOCIETY**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (18:54):** I congratulate the organisers and participants of Rongdhanu Aus-Bangla Cultural Society annual talent award program. Rongdhanu is a Bangladeshi community organisation based in Lakemba in my electorate and is one of the leading cultural organisations of the Bangladeshi community in New South Wales. This amazing organisation has been working with the local community for the past 15 years, including with the children and community leaders, to provide young people with a platform on which to showcase their talents. The Rongdhanu Aus-Bangla Cultural Society works to motivate young people in the community not only to get involved and showcase their talents but also to provide a comfortable and nurturing environment in which young people continue to learn about their culture and traditions. This is so important to our vibrant and multicultural community.

Every year the organisation holds its talent award program to encourage the local young children to express their talent and passion for education, sports, culture, literature and social activities by recognising their achievements. It is certainly a highlight of the year to see the children being recognised for their skills. I am very fortunate to have a very large Bangladeshi community in my electorate of Canterbury who have contributed so much to enriching our community, making notable contributions in many areas, including local business, government, education, health care, law and sports. Their entrepreneurial spirit and experience have resulted in the establishment of various successful businesses and organisations in my electorate and in the wider community. They have been big contributors to our great State.

I thank the young children who participate in the talent award program. I also thank their parents and their grandparents for the emphasis they place on nurturing those young people. The talent program encourages young people to be more confident in speaking their language, in practising and performing their dances and also in being involved in local sport that is really important in my community. Again, I thank the organisers and I acknowledge president Ayesha Ahmed, general secretary Kahandaker Ali Ahsan, Nafis Khondker, and Lincoln Shafiqullah, who coordinated this fantastic event. I also again congratulate all the award recipients on their fantastic efforts. I know that they have been practising and that they continue to enjoy this terrific event.

It is always great to see young children being inspired and encouraged to pursue their passions. These awards are a testament to their hard work and dedication. I am a very big supporter of the work the society does. I again thank the organisers of the program. The annual talent award program is once again before us. I wish everyone all the very best. I want them to know that this speech is a reflection of them, their community and the contribution that they have made to New South Wales.

### **WILTON SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (18:58):** Welcome to Wilton, the heart of what developers promised would be a 30-minute city, alleging we can go about our daily tasks within 30 minutes. Last week in one of the most fun ways to deal with a frustrating situation, we gathered locals together to have a not-so-amazing race. Imagine, if members will, an amazing race, but a race to get everyone to core locations that are expected in a 30-minute city. Spoiler alert: There are no hospitals, high schools, clubs, universities, or work hubs that are local; nor can we get to the airport, new or old, within 30 minutes.

Each of us took on a persona, jumped in a range of vehicles—private, public and active transport—and off we went on our journeys. Dan and I drove to the airport. We are often promised everything with the new airport, but we get the negatives and none of the positives. As we drove this route through Wollondilly on roads that have a shared status between the State and council, we passed through our beautiful towns and villages, which are just that—towns and villages. They are not ready to cater for the infrastructure needs for the airport plonked on our doorstep without consideration for the new communities moving in, let alone the existing ones. I reached the closed gates of our newest gateway to the world in over an hour. Amazingly it takes less time to fly from Sydney to Melbourne now, which is total madness.

Bev Spearpoint headed to the bus stop in Wilton to catch public transport to the club. She had to call a friend to pick her up, because of all the bus services in Wollondilly only two are private services to take people



around. She could not decipher the QR code timetable, nor could she guarantee that if a bus arrived it would have disability access. I know there is a promise for new buses, that the review taskforce recommended new buses, and that the developers are now promising their own bus services. But right now, even if you have a ticket to ride, they do not care because the services are not there. Door to door, it took Bev 80 minutes for a 20-minute trip, and that is only after being helped by a friend. If anyone wants to meet up with their friends, they better leave early, and good luck getting back home!

Louise Edgecombe was off to the University of Wollongong. It is one of the closest to Wilton but is still a long trip. There is no public transport for those students and Picton Road is packed day to day with huge trucks constantly transporting freight and cars from Port Kembla. If only we had a government-owned link using the partially constructed bridges from, say, Maldon to Dombarton? I am being cynical, of course, but it is not a joke. That road is deadly and it is not something our students should risk using over and over. With the trip taking 40 minutes door to door, plus taking into account cost of travel and no viable public transport, it is no wonder the university struggles to place students in face-to-face vital services such as health and science.

Noel Lowry was on his bike once again, this time to go to the office in Tahmoor. While Wilton and the new developments in Wollondilly have amazing bike paths, there is no viable way to connect Wilton to the rest of Wollondilly. It is blocked by bridges that have no safe pathways for bike riders, unless they take up a full car width. With the steep hills and bridge over the Nepean, poor Noel was stranded on the Wilton side and had to return. That is the issue with all the new developments: there is a beautiful suburb that connects to nothing—no sewer or major infrastructure.

Benn Banasik and Carly Bibb went off for their appointments at Bowral Hospital. It is promised to take 30 minutes, but do not rely on that. It took those two over 50 minutes and they missed their appointment. It is lucky that she was not having a baby. The services in Bowral are improving. I hope for a new clinical services plan. The new equipment will be great and it will be even better with additional beds, but will someone get there within 30 minutes from our growth area? It is just not going to happen. That more than anything shows the need for the outreach services to plant the seed for what our community will need in future. I thank Dan Ilic, Carly Bibb, Bev Spearpoint, Noel Lowry, Louise Edgecombe and Benn Banasik for agreeing to put on some costumes and have some fun filming the not-so-amazing race. We did not hit on all the other services that are missing, but perhaps watch this space for the sequel. Spoiler alert: I will be fighting for the infrastructure now so the race and the towns get much more amazing.

### CONNECT NORTHERN RIVERS

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (19:02):** I talk about an organisation that operates in the electorate of Lismore that I represent and also more broadly across the Northern Rivers: Connect Northern Rivers. The country that it operates in and with is Githabul, Bundjalung, Yaegl and Gumbaynggirr. That broad area is represented by a large number of land councils and local governments. The people who operate it essentially give youth pathways to education and a pathway to life. I will share in a moment some of the figures about the youth who participate. Chairperson Peter Skaines does a terrific job; as does treasurer Matt Blackham; directors Glen Young, Deb Page-Thomas, Derek Robertson and Karen Cook; chief executive officer Melissa Hughes; and her management team Kate Dickinson, Margaret Hughes, Anna Toole and Aaron Hayman. Aaron is probably the person I have had most to do with, particularly in Lismore.

From figures in the organisation's *2023 Annual Report*, 2,681 young people participated in the program. Of those young people, 73 per cent then successfully re-engaged with education, training or employment by the end of their time with Connect. The organisation works with a lot of youth who are disengaged from school and education and helps them find pathways. Indigenous youth made up 17 per cent and non-Indigenous youth made up 83 per cent. Fifty-one per cent were male, 48 per cent were female and 1 per cent were non-binary. Twenty-one per cent were 18 years old, 50 per cent were 17 years old, and 22 per cent were 16 years old.

Finally, 10 per cent of the participants had a disability. Sixty-four per cent of the work placement participants came from socio-educationally disadvantaged schools, and 3,003 work placements were successfully completed. There were 669 young people who participated in the Connect programs due to disconnection from education. There were 1,598 high school students still attending school at temporary premises due to the 2022 regional floods and \$72,383 was spent directly on young people in need of material support. That is not a lot of money to share amongst those young people to help get them back into education. We need to continue to support these programs and enhance them where we can.

The Indigenous students participating in the Future Tracks program were still engaged in education at the end of the program. That is 100 per cent. That does not happen very often in any program so 100 per cent is hugely significant. Nine Indigenous school-based trainees successfully completed their traineeship, 25 students started part-time employment while finishing their HSC as part of the Indigenous Employment Program, and 2,223 young

people connected to employers through the program. It is up to us to do everything we can do to continue, and perhaps enhance, those programs so we help our young people who are disengaged from education and disengaged from life, in a sense. I have talked about them in this place before, but they are worth talking about again—and giving support to. I congratulate Connect Northern Rivers.

### **ST THOMAS ANGLICAN CHURCH PORT MACQUARIE**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (19:07):** The St Thomas Anglican Church in Port Macquarie is celebrating its 200th anniversary in December, marking a significant milestone of Christian faith and dedicated service to our community. During Heritage NSW month, St Thomas is opening its doors in a wonderful showcase of 18th century history, with parishioners reflecting on the past as they dress as early settlers and convicts of that generation did some 200 years ago. The open day features a tour of the church, bell tower, the 1822 cellar and the chapel. The family history group will also be discussing the penal settlement and the convicts that arrived in Australia to serve their sentence for crimes committed in the mother country.

St Thomas Anglican Church is located on a hill that overlooks the town centre of Port Macquarie. That was by no means an accident. It is said that in 1824 the church was constructed so that it could be seen by all who ventured into town as a constant reminder of God's presence. The heritage on church hill dates back to the era of Governor Macquarie when St Thomas was constructed by convicts in a labour-intensive exercise from approximately 350,000 bricks. Completed on 8 December 1824 under the supervision of Lieutenant G. R. Carmac, St Thomas commenced open-air services in 1825 led by Reverend Thomas Hassall before it was officially opened by Reverend John Cross on 24 February 1828. The church was said to be built to accommodate 700 men, women and children, and would serve as a general-purpose building on its closure. How astonished and proud would the early parishioners feel if they knew that their church was still in ministry today.

The existence and timeline of the church was a special directive by Governor Macquarie, because he saw establishing a church as a priority above all, including the jail, to enable the opportunity of "saving souls" in a penal settlement. It even predated the planning of the township by six years. Port Macquarie's history of colonialism recognises hardships, triumphs and prosperity, shadowed by the pain and suffering of our First Nations people. Not even the church shies away from those facts. Moreover, today it is part of the reconciliation movement of healing through the love and service that it provides to the Indigenous community. St Thomas is the fifth oldest Anglican church in New South Wales and still remains active in service and worship to this very day, led by senior minister Reverend Daniel Berris. Reverend Berris relocated with his family to Port Macquarie two years ago and has been faithfully serving the mission of the church. He sees his role as encouraging the spiritual lives of members to ask better questions about faith and appreciate the unique individuals that God has made them all to be.

St Thomas Anglican Church continues to cater for the wider community. It holds weekly traditional and contemporary services on a Sunday, including a fun and engaging ministry for children at its 10.00 a.m. service. Known and admired for its outreach, through its Wednesday soup kitchen, St Thomas offers cooked meals, fresh produce and groceries for people facing financial hardship. That incredible service complements the Orange Sky laundry van, which parks on the grass of the church to offer our homeless a place to wash their clothes. St Thomas Anglican Church also offers youth, men and women's ministries through weekly catch-ups in the church hall and cafe. The youth ministry focuses on worship, talks about life, games, food and just simply hanging out with friends. The men and women's ministries feature social gatherings in a relaxed environment that centre on building and fostering connections in a family-oriented church community.

Through 200 years of existence, the congregation at St Thomas Anglican Church still lives by its core values of generosity, compassion, faithfulness and hopefulness through the sharing of Christ's love, faith, gifts, talents, finances and spiritual growth, given by God and nurtured by the church. I congratulate Reverend Daniel Berris and all the members that make up St Thomas Anglican Church on reaching this outstanding milestone. I wish them all the best in their celebrations.

### **SCHOOLS AND ROAD SAFETY**

**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) (19:12):** There is nothing more important in our communities than safety around schools. I note that the Minister for Youth Justice is in the Chamber, who also was a former principal.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Like yourself.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** Been there, done that. Traffic can be really dangerous before school starts or in the afternoon. It is an issue at many schools, where, unfortunately, some parents take risks in how they drive their vehicles, and young children do not have the necessary skills to understand how to safely cross the road. Kids see

their parents on the other side of the road, dash across and put themselves in a dangerous position. I was recently invited to MacKillop Catholic College by the school's principal, Tanya Appleby. She invited members of Central Coast Council and me to discuss important traffic issues around the school. MacKillop Catholic College is a kindergarten to year 12 school, so it has very young children through to year 12. They had a fantastic presentation for us, which included not only photographs but videos of some near misses and some of the issues to do with traffic and congestion around the school.

I was pleased that Central Coast Council sent their senior director, Boris Bolgoff, to also listen to the concerns of the community, which included parents and school leaders talking about how concerned they are about the issues. One of the things that seems to have happened at MacKillop is that the housing estate that is behind the school, off Mataram Road, was built and received development applications not as one total development but as several smaller developments. Traffic islands, pedestrian crossings and signage all seemed to slip through the cracks. Normally, if a school is built from scratch, all of that work is done as part of developing the school. When the school already exists and those smaller developments occur later, unfortunately that same work does not happen. Boris made a commitment to look at some of the issues. I was also happy to say that I would make representations on the community's behalf, because their concerns are serious.

After the meeting finished, two council officers and I, together with several parents and the principal, were able to witness some of the issues for ourselves as school was finishing for the day. Unfortunately, there is a hierarchy of responses, so the school has to put in a submission. It then has to go through the processes to get a school crossing. When the school gets the school crossing, all of the signage and things will get put in place. It is a little bit frustrating knowing that is how bureaucracy works, but the school understands that we need to go through that process. We want to support the school in putting forward those applications. The work needs to be done sooner rather than later, because every day that there is no designated school crossing, the lives of young children are put at risk. That is not good enough.

The other issue is Sparks Road, which is a major four-lane highway that only has one way in and out. There is one set of lights. Particularly where cars are turning left, young children and older children are being put at risk because they are still crossing the road when the walking man is flashing red. A lot of cars do not see the red signal; they just see the green signal and immediately start to turn. We need an education program for people who travel in that area to make sure they understand that it is a 40-kilometre zone and that they need to slow down. I am hoping that next week I will be able to read into *Hansard* a letter from the school leaders about the issue. I invited them to write to me and I committed to do that because I think their input is important in the process. There is more to work on, but it was a great meeting. We will hopefully get some good outcomes from it.

### BATHURST ELECTORATE COMMUNITY EVENTS

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (19:17):** I speak about a number of initiatives and activities that are happening in my electorate of Bathurst at the moment that show the resilience and strength of regional communities. I begin by speaking about Lifeline Book Fair, which was held over four days last week and the weekend. Lifeline deals with issues around mental health. One in three people will deal with a mental illness in their lifetime, so it is important that we have organisations that provide support and services that people need. Lifeline provides a phone counselling service that people can call to receive the appropriate support that they need. Those who man the phones are volunteers from the local community. They do an incredible job in the work that they do.

The book fair, which has been running for a number of years, allows all types of books to be displayed. They are set up on the Wednesday, and over 4,000 books are on show. The book fair allows the community to purchase books throughout that time and prices range from 50¢ through to around \$8. The money goes back into the organisation. The event raises around \$60,000 annually, which goes towards supporting the services that are provided by Lifeline in the Central West area.

I will talk about the Neville and Carcoar shows in the Blayney region. This is a time of the year when a lot of the country shows operate in regional communities. It is great to see communities coming together. The shows at Carcoar and Neville may be the largest community events to take place in those communities. They also remind us of the importance of communities and what it is to actually live in regional New South Wales. It showcases the best of the country. It reminds people where our fibre and our produce come from. The incredible volunteers who put on these shows do an amazing job.

The Carcoar Show is like no other. Highlights from the show included the blokes chocolate cake cooking competition, the longest gum leaf competition, the kids' rides, the school dance groups, the livestock and the shearing—everything that reminds people of life in regional New South Wales. The Neville Show is very much the same. I give a shout-out to the committee, who do an incredible job on the day. These events take place only

because of the hard work of the committee. I especially acknowledge Kate and Michelle of the Neville community. They were the driving force behind ensuring that the Neville Show was up and running once again this year.

I will quickly talk about the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc, which is another incredible group of volunteers in the community. They have completed rebuilding the line between Oberon and Hazelgrove, which is about six kilometres in length. They want to get a tourist train back on the railway line there for not only locals but also visitors to that community. The first stage has been completed, which had the support of the former State Government and the former Federal Government, both of which invested in that line. The group now has the important process of going through the accreditation so that a train can operate in the community, which is important in helping drive the visitor economy in that area.

Last, but not least, I give a shout-out to the Lithgow City Council and also the wider community for their Lithgow Halloween event. The main street of Lithgow was shut down on the evening, allowing the community to come together to see the decorated windows of all the shops and businesses, the various character dress-ups, and the entertainment that was on display. The event certainly showed there is a lot of community spirit. It also helped to drive the local economy by bringing visitors into the area.

### **EASTERN SUBURBS BEACH CONTAMINATION**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (19:22):** Tonight I thank the different agencies and institutions that have been involved in clearing up something quite strange and unusual in the electorate of Coogee and across the eastern suburbs: the mysterious black, furry balls that washed up on Coogee Beach and across beaches of the eastern suburbs. They are incredibly strange. Something like this has happened in only one other place in the world. People asked, "What are they? Where did they come from?", but because it is so under-studied and under-researched, and it is such a rare and unusual phenomenon, we could not get the answers. I will get to some of the detail about these gross and unusual things.

To those in my community and everyone else out there asking why do we not know what they are and where they have come from, I say that the reality is it is such an unusual occurrence that we could not get the answers immediately. Not enough research has been done because it has happened so rarely. I thank Randwick City Council, the Environment Protection Authority [EPA], as well as UNSW for the work they have all done in cleaning up our beaches, in providing regulatory frameworks and for doing the research to find out what these black, furry, gross balls are.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Get to the nub of it.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL:** We have gotten to the heart of it, and it is absolutely gross. I particularly thank Randwick City Council. As I said, such things do not happen very often, so we do not necessarily have the resources or capabilities to deal with them. But Randwick council has been amazing in how it dealt with this. It first happened on Tuesday 15 October and our beaches were able to reopen on the Saturday. The council was able to get everyone out there. That was one of the big concerns that we had: We did not know what these balls were but we were heading into a really hot weekend—were our beaches across Randwick City Council going to remain shut? What could we do? General manager Ray and mayor Dylan Parker were phenomenal during that period. Our beaches were cleaned and reopened.

What do we know about these balls? We know that they are absolutely disgusting—these sticky, round blobs, as they have been described by the researchers at UNSW, that washed up at Coogee, Clovelly, Gordons Bay and Maroubra. A couple started washing up at Bronte as well. It was a phenomenal research team at UNSW, led by Associate Professor Jon Beves, Associate Professor Tim Barrows, Dr Martin Bucknall, Professor William Alexander Donald, Dr Albert Fahrenbach, Dr Sarah Hancock, Dr Christopher Hansen and Ms Lisa Hua. The research team who has been doing this at UNSW has been huge. I am sorry if I have missed anyone's name.

The team at UNSW, which is in the heart of my electorate, has been leading and working hand in hand with the Randwick City Council and the EPA to get to the bottom of these black balls. We now know that they are composed of a wide range of chemicals including diesel, fuel, fatty acids, faecal waste, methamphetamine and cooking oil. The research team has dealt with it and were handling it. I am very happy that the beaches were shut during that period. I give heartfelt thanks to everyone who was involved in cleaning up our beaches and in improving our understanding of the black balls.

### **COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT COVID-19 RESPONSE INQUIRY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (19:27):** On 21 September 2023 Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced an independent inquiry into the Commonwealth Government's response to the COVID pandemic to identify lessons learnt to improve Australia's preparedness for future pandemics. Immediately the inquiry was flawed because the vast majority of actions, decisions, rules and punishments were issued by the

States and Territories. The inquiry avoided any role that the States and Territories played in the nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Australia's vaccine policies were a disaster that cost lives and shattered public trust. The State Government imposed draconian lockdowns and vaccine mandates, tore away freedoms, devastated businesses, left families broken and divided, and allowed the unprecedented bureaucratic interference between the doctor and patient relationship. The inquiry was a waste of time. There was no judicial investigation, so no-one is being held accountable. The report serves as nothing more than a smokescreen.

While the current Federal Labor Government has refused to call a royal commission into the nation's pandemic response, I call on the Federal Leader of the Opposition, Peter Dutton, and his team to announce a wholly encompassing pandemic royal commission as part of their election policy campaign. The response by governments across Australia during the pandemic was the most far-reaching, intrusive, controlling response Australia has experienced since World War II. We deserve a proper examination of the nation's response to identify the lessons that need to be learnt. Let us examine this inquiry into the COVID-19 response in Australia. While the report addresses some of the concerns Australians had about the pandemic restrictions, it mostly expresses dismay at the increasing lack of trust in government departments. It then calls for the establishment of an Australian Centre for Disease Control. More, not less, bureaucratic control is a strong theme of the report. The report rightly notes:

People felt they were unable to criticise or question government decisions and policies. Focus groups described how fear-based, patronising and heavy-handed communication from political leaders added to the perception that restrictions were not up for debate.

That is a welcome acknowledgement of what should be obvious to all. However, that common feedback is attributed to inconsistent government messaging and the prevalence of misinformation on social media. The authors call for:

... partnership between government and trusted organisations, experts, media, and other influencers to pre-bunk and debunk misinformation.

Misinformation simply means whatever the Government wants. Hence, this report essentially suggests increased bureaucratic control and increased censorship over any information that is not government sanctioned. That is why the current Federal Labor Government is trying to pass the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024. What is alarming for Australians is that, if this bill becomes law, it will be the Government that decides what is truth and what is misleading.

The information we all know and freely talk about now, four years on from the pandemic, was shadowbanned on social media and refused airtime on TV and radio. People were persecuted and sacked from their jobs and families were torn apart over differing opinions. What was deemed "misinformation" four years ago is now proving to be the truth. Remember we were all told that COVID-19 would be a pandemic of the unvaccinated? Data shows clearly that the more jabs somebody has, the more likely they are to get the virus. The report fails to discuss how negligible the case fatality rate for COVID-19 was, and is, or that, according to the department of health, most COVID deaths were among the elderly, many of whom had pre-existing illnesses.

The report fails to note that the accepted wisdom prior to COVID was that wearing masks in public to prevent transmission was pointless, and how that suddenly changed during the pandemic. It does not discuss the legitimate concerns about the mRNA vaccines not having adequate long-term safety data and, therefore, validly being considered experimental. It avoided all examinations on vaccine injuries, the compensation scheme and the deaths associated with the jabs. It failed to follow up Moderna and Pfizer, which announced in November 2022 that they will investigate whether their COVID vaccines cause long-term health issues.

The report does not discuss the sudden increase in excess deaths following the vaccine rollout, and whether there could be a possible connection. It does not discuss the absurdity of using polymerase chain reaction tests and rapid antigen tests to detect if one has COVID-19, even if one had no symptoms. Trust in government and the medical profession has certainly been undermined. It is devastating. That is why I reiterate my call for an urgent royal commission into Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, involving all levels of government and all actions by media and influencers, and also an opportunity to examine what other countries have done and learnt when they have conducted their own investigations and reviews.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 19:32 until  
Thursday 14 November 2024 at 10:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

### **GRAFTON CATHEDRAL'S 140TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—It is my honour to recognise the 140th anniversary of one of Clarence Valley's most cherished landmarks, the Grafton Cathedral. Since its foundation in 1884, this iconic building has been more than just a place of worship—it has served as a beacon of faith, community and heritage in our region. For over a century, the Grafton Cathedral has supported generations through times of celebration and challenge, offering spiritual guidance and fostering community spirit. As we celebrate this milestone, the upcoming Gala Dinner will not only celebrate its legacy but also raise crucial funds for heritage maintenance and Ministry support. I extend special recognition to the Dean of Grafton, The Very Reverend Naomi Cooke, for her leadership, and to Bishop Dr Murray Harvey for his spiritual guidance. I also acknowledge The Reverend Canon Camellia Flanagan for her vital role in preserving the Cathedral's historical significance and managing its heritage project. We also honour past leaders, including Dean Peter Catt and Bishop Richard Hurford, whose contributions remain cherished. Congratulations to the Grafton community on this momentous occasion. May the Cathedral continue to stand as a symbol of resilience and unity for many more generations.

### **SERCO – AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS AWARD FOR COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to recognise Serco, a leading provider of services across the justice system. Serco have won the Community Contribution Award at the 2024 Australian Business Awards. This award recognises implementation of initiatives that create positive community impact and generate outcomes with long-term benefits. Serco partnered with SHINE for Kids and Green Fox Studios to produce "The Sun Still Shines," the first book written by incarcerated fathers in their own voices, for their children. The book was created through the Storytime Program at the Clarence Correctional Centre and enabled the fathers to express their comfort, love and support to not only their own children, but thousands of other children affected by parental incarceration. This project helped to strengthen family bonds while supporting the mental and emotional wellbeing of children experiencing parental incarceration. "The Sun Still Shines" is a great example of Serco's commitment to rehabilitation to reduce reoffending, alongside maintaining the safety and wellbeing of those affected by the criminal justice system. Well done to all involved on such a great initiative, and congratulations on the well-deserved award.

### **MR KEN WEEKS - AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST KNOWN LIVING MAN**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to congratulate Mr Ken Weeks on his 111th birthday. Ken recently celebrated this amazing milestone with his family and friends, along with residents and staff from Whiddon, Grafton. The celebration for Ken's birthday on 5 October 2024, marked a momentous occasion which saw loved ones and visitors attend with well wishes on the day. Ken enjoyed "Happy Birthday" played on the bagpipes, what a treat. Ken was born in and grew up in Grafton. He enjoyed the lifestyle in the Clarence Valley with his parents, his two brothers and two sisters. Attending primary school in Carrs Creek and Grafton High School, when World War II broke out, he applied to join the Royal Australian Air Force. Disappointingly, Ken was ineligible to serve due to medical reasons, however he was determined to contribute to the war effort and assisted in the construction of airfields at Evans Head, Coffs Harbour, and Nabiac. In the early 1940s, Ken met and married Jean McPhee in Grafton, and the couple went on to have two sons. Ken, I think you are amazing, I wish you many more happy birthdays in the future.

### **ISABELLE HAYWARD**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate GyMEA Bay's Isabelle Hayward who was recently presented with a NSW Youth Community Service Award by the NSW Governor, Hon Margaret Beazley, at Government House. The prestigious award recognises outstanding community service by year 11 and 12 students, and complements awards made by a student's school for academic, sporting and leadership achievement. Isabelle was one of 26 inspiring young leaders from across all NSW high schools who were chosen on merit by the Order of Australia Association. Isabelle was recognised for her community service and leadership to Port Hacking High School's Duke of Edinburgh Award program, and the school says she has served as a positive role model to younger students and was its first Gold Award participant, which is the final level of the award program. Isabelle is also highly regarded for her commitment to the GyMEA Netball Club where she has volunteered since 2019 in coaching junior teams, umpiring, mentoring younger players, and helping to run the club. The Order of Australia Association says Isabelle is a "beacon of inspiration for others to follow" and I congratulate her on being honoured with this award and for her service to our community.

### **LILLI PILLI FOOTBALL CLUB 18A2 BOYS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Lilli Pilli Football Club's 18A2 team on winning the boys under 17 title in the prestigious Football NSW Champion of Champions competition. Lilli Pilli came up against Belrose Terry Hills in the decider at Valentine Sports Park and it was a close fought encounter with both

sides having scoring opportunities but unable to convert them into goals. It wasn't until three minutes from full time when out of nowhere Liam Sykes blasted the ball from just inside the halfway line, over the Belrose goalkeeper at full stretch to score a spectacular grand final goal. Club president Greg Storey said the one-nil win came off the back of much dedication and training from the start of the year and that the club is very proud of the boys. This is a great achievement by a committed group of young men and I congratulate the 18A2 players and officials in captain Dylan Pisani, Marcus Barsoom, Nicholas Benfield, Ben Bonner, Hugo Cox, William Crowe, Xavier Dinuccio, Lewis Freeman, Solomon Freeman, Jack Lillie, Byron Lynn, Zayne Pisani, Jack Pryor, Jay Robinson, Bailey Smith, Jackson Steege, Liam Sykes, Taine Wihare, coach Scott Freeman and manager Craig Pryor.

### **SYDNEY U3A ENDEAVOUR (SOUTHERN) REGION 35TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—It was inspiring to be a guest of the Endeavour (Southern) region of Sydney u3a as members celebrated the group's 35th anniversary last month. u3a is an international volunteer organisation dedicated to providing intellectually stimulating activities, talks, courses in the arts, sciences, history, leisure, language, fitness and more for mature-aged semi-retired or retired people. It aims to contribute to the fostering of lifelong learning, creativity, exercise, and community interaction so that the third age is the age of reinvention, rejuvenation, renewal, and redirection. As Henry T Ford said "Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at 20 or 80. Anyone who keeps learning stays young". For 35 years the local group of u3a has done great work to bring people together to continue their learning journey and enjoy community. I acknowledge the efforts u3a Endeavour (Southern) Region Committee led by president and secretary Cherie Clover with Victoria Clay, Ray Smith, Judy Breen, Carol Cook, Nilva Martini, Pam Herrick, Peter Day, Denis Paulin, Margaret Wilkes and Christine Riley.

### **CENTENNIAL VINEYARDS**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I'd like to recognise the efforts of the incredible team at Centennial Vineyards for making the recent Challenge Southern Highlands Gala fundraiser such a successful night. Thanks goes to manager Nat, whose meticulous planning and commitment to creating a memorable experience ensured that every detail was in place for a wonderful evening. The food was exceptional, reflecting the vineyard's high standards and showcasing the region's flavours, while the service was attentive, professional, and consistently upbeat. Nat and her team brought a warm, welcoming energy to the event, making all attendees feel comfortable and appreciated. Their passion for providing a seamless, enjoyable experience was evident throughout the night. Nat's leadership and her team's dedication turned the gala into a true celebration, bringing people together for a great cause. Thank you, Nat, and the Centennial Vineyards team for making this event so memorable and uplifting for everyone involved.

### **PCYC SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Congratulations to PCYC Southern Highlands, who are a recipient of a \$10,000 grant from the Southern Highlands Community Foundation. The \$10,000 will go toward the PCYC's 'Youth at Risk Job Ready' program, an early intervention program preparing at-risk youth for sustainable local employment. PCYC Southern Highlands is located in Mittagong and was established in 2015. Since then, it has lived up to their goals of empowering young people to reach their full potential through engagement and partnership with the NSW Police and their local community. PCYC Southern Highlands is a favourite with locals due to their wide range of quality programs, which allows children and young people the opportunity to have fun while encouraging physical and mental health, and building skills and friendships. Programs such as driver education courses, school holiday programs, police run community programs and sports such as gymnastics, boxing and pickleball. It is a safe and welcoming place for all. The Southern Highlands Community Foundation grant is very well deserved, and PCYC's employment program will have a positive impact on local youth.

### **C3 COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—C3 Community Centre works hard to ensure they are able to help as many people in need as they can. They were recently awarded a grant of \$4500 from the Southern Highlands Community Foundation which will enable them to acquire new furniture to make their space even more comfortable and welcoming to the community. Their offerings help the most vulnerable in our community as well as those in crisis. Locals can drop in for an affordable toastie and a good cup of coffee, and more importantly the opportunity to connect and socialise in a caring and supportive environment. C3 has a community pantry, and collects food from Secondbite to hand out to local families that would have otherwise gone to landfill. They hold fundraisers for various initiatives including the ambitious and admirable goal of building a community centre. They give back to local families through their free Cooking with Love course for parents of primary school aged children to easy easy and nutritious meals and snacks to cook, and connect with other charities and community organisations to maximise their impact. Well done C3 on your grant, and keep up the good work.

**BIRTHDAY MESSAGE - DANIEL MARR**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in wishing Daniel Marr a joyous 37th birthday! Daniel's wife, Yolanda, asked me to share these heartfelt words in the Parliament: "Happy birthday Daniel. Hope you have a great day today. Love from your family." It truly is a wonderful thing to celebrate a birthday with the love and support of those closest to you, and I am humbled to be able to play a small role in making Daniel's day a little extra special. May this birthday be filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments that can be taken forward on life's journey. Wishing you continued happiness and prosperity in the years ahead. Happy birthday Daniel!

**BIRTHDAY MESSAGE - HARYANTO WIDJAJA**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in wishing Haryanto Widjaja a joyous 70th birthday! Haryanto's daughter, Fenny, asked me to share these heartfelt words in the Parliament: "Dearest Papa, Happy 70th birthday!! Praying for you to be blessed with good health and abundant joy in many years to come with Mama. Thank you for being the best parent and grandparent for all of us. We all love you so much." It truly is a wonderful thing to celebrate a birthday with the love and support of those closest to you, and I am humbled to be able to play a small role in making Haryanto's day a little extra special. May this birthday be filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments that can be taken forward on life's journey. Wishing you continued happiness and prosperity in the years ahead. Happy birthday Haryanto!

**BIRTHDAY MESSAGE - TALA BARAKAT**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in wishing Tala Barakat a joyous 33rd birthday! Tala's husband, Michael, asked me to share these heartfelt words in the Parliament: "We, the people, wish you, Tala, a Happy Birthday." It truly is a wonderful thing to celebrate a birthday with the love and support of those closest to you, and I am humbled to be able to play a small role in making Tala's day a little extra special. May this birthday be filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments that can be taken forward on life's journey. Wishing you continued happiness and prosperity in the years ahead. Happy birthday Tala!

**CELEBRATING 125 YEARS OF ARIAH PARK CENTRAL SCHOOL**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—On 1 November, the Arianh Park community united in celebrating 125 years of Public Education. Despite the changes in the school's physical appearance, the enduring community connections and foundations that define this beautiful country town have remained steadfast. Arianh Park Central School has seen many children play around the grounds and learn in the classrooms since the first building was erected in 1899 by residents, with Mr Darius Brunt appointed as the first teacher. As the town grew, so did the school. The construction of a new public school for Arianh Park saw the site undergo many changes, from its first building on the present site on 17 October 1908 to again in 1920 and then upgraded to a central school in the late 1940s. Arianh Park Central is not just a school, but a beacon of educational equity, offering access to opportunities from Kindergarten to Year 12, made possible thanks to the dedicated and supportive staff, who ensure that every student feels included and valued. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all who have been part of the story which makes this beautiful school what it is today.

**MY SEAT OF SMALL COMMUNITIES - ARDLETHAN**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—In my "seat of small communities" there is a town called Ardlethan which has a population of 387 people and is situated in the Coolamon Shire some 490 km south west of Sydney. It is a small service town that was established in the 19th century after gold was discovered, but this didn't last and in 1908 the railways came to town. The town became the stopping point between the Temora to Barellan railway line. The passenger trains ceased in 1983 however the line still operates for freight. Ardlethan is the "Home of the Australian Kelpie", a remarkably adaptable breed of sheep dog known for its love of work, endurance, and resilience in harsh conditions. The breed is named after the original dog called "Kelpie" - a black and tan female pup with floppy ears born in 1872 and owned by Jack Gleeson. The town is a small but vibrant community with an interesting environmental and built heritage, nature and heritage walks and the locals and visitors alike enjoy the local eateries.

**DEKOTA HINDMARSH - COWRA SHOW SOCIETY'S 2024 YOUNG WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I wish to offer my congratulations to Miss Dekota Hindmarsh of Cowra. Dekota has capped off a stellar year by being named The Cowra Show Society's 2024 Young Woman of the Year. Dekota's entry was establishing a calf day at the Cowra Show to promote and celebrate youth involvement in agriculture. Growing up on a dairy farm, Dekota's love and passion for cattle was formed early, and her desire to encourage and foster the next generation in agriculture is what prompted her enter the competition. After the competition, a luncheon was held where Dekota got the opportunity to meet and network



with other entrants over the common bond that is the love of their town and the dedication to the country way of life. Dekota was inspired to enter, by Forbes school teacher Ms Racheal Eagles, and it was this inspiration that gave Dekota the confidence to enter. Dekota is excited and looking forward to using her new platform to engage with other young people across Cowra, and with her enthusiasm, and energy, the sky is the limit. Well, done Dekota.

#### **SCOUTS AUSTRALIA, GREATER WESTERN SYDNEY AWARDS, 2024**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I record on 2 November 2024 with the Members for Hawkesbury, Parramatta, and Blacktown I attended the Scouts Australia, Greater Western Sydney Region, Awards. We were able to acknowledge not only the importance of Scouts Australia to the welfare, development, and contribution to our society over more than one hundred years but to acknowledge and commend the contribution by many individual Scout leaders. The contribution by Scout leaders to the wider scout movement enhances skills in leadership, guiding and mentoring youth, teamwork, collaboration with the many volunteers and leaders, and communication skills. From each of the electorates there were many award recipients. I record the names of the award recipients from my own electorate who each received Special Service Awards. I congratulate from 1st Castle Hill Scout Group Phui Leng Chong, Thomas Ross Hegarty, and Belinda Jane Wilson. I congratulate from 2nd Castle Hill Scout Group Keith Tse Chi Lim, and Andrew Theuns. I extend my congratulations to all Scout Award Recipients who received recognition awards. Lastly, I acknowledge the attendance at the Awards of Phil Crutchley, Scouts NSW Assistant Chief Commissioner, Tony Dent Region Commissioner and Craig Kennedy, Region Chair.

#### **INDIA CLUB AND NORTH WEST COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, DIWALI HARBOUR CRUISE.**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—On Saturday, 26 October 2024 I was invited to attend the inaugural Diwali Harbour Cruise organised by the India Club in association with the Community Foundation of North Western Sydney. The event was also attended by The Honourable Mark Buttigieg MLC. Known as the 'Festival of lights', Diwali symbolises the celebration of the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. The Castle Hill Electorate and the wider Hills Shire Council are home to a large and wonderful Indian and South East Asian community with many members from of the community celebrating Diwali on the inaugural India Club Diwali Harbour Cruise. The Harbour Cruise provided the opportunity for members of the community to enjoy our magnificent Sydney Harbour as well as the opportunity for dancing and some wonderful Indian cuisine. I particularly acknowledge Dr Aksheya Kumar and Shuba Kumar from the India Club and Rajiv Chaudhri from the Community Foundation of North Western Sydney for organising what will most likely be the first of many India Club Diwali Harbour Cruises.

#### **HILLS BASKETBALL 40 YEAR ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—The Hills Basketball Association, home of the Hills Hornets will celebrate 40 years on 30 November 2024. The Association, established in 1984, is a not-for-profit organisation and is now one of the largest and most successful associations in NSW. In 1995 a stadium was built and in 2017 additional courts and upgrades were added. The Association now manages courts located at the Dural Recreation Centre and Bernie Mullane Sports Complex. The Association has expanded to include programs for wheelchair basketball, home school students, people with a disability and walking basketball. Hill Hornets provide a pathway for representative players, coaches, referees, score table statisticians and wheelchair athletes. The Association runs the largest domestic competition in NSW, catering for 850 teams, officiated by 300 plus referees, running 7 days per week and over 1,500 children attend Hornets Academy each week. These numbers equate to more than 10,000 registered participants and over 20,000 individuals visiting HBA venues weekly. The greatest challenge moving forward will be to secure more facilities to cater for the increasing waitlist for players, which currently is over 1,000 players. Congratulations to all who have contributed to the Associations success over the last 40 years.

#### **ELISABETH SUARTAMA**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Elisabeth Suartama, Year 8 student at Corpus Christi High School, who represented Corpus Christi in The Orbispace Initiative, as part of a five women team, that won the Pitch for the Planet competition. These five remarkable young women impressed industry officials with their battery swapping innovation called 'GreenBay'. The Orbispace Initiative is to train the next generation of Australian female innovators by equipping them with the skills and mindsets needed to succeed in a rapidly changing physical and digital landscape. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Elisabeth on this this wonderful achievement.

**GINGER SIASAT**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Ginger Siasat, Year 8 student at Corpus Christi High School, who represented Corpus Christi in The Orbispace Initiative, as part of a five women team, that won the Pitch for the Planet competition. These five remarkable young women impressed industry officials with their battery swapping innovation called 'GreenBay'. The Orbispace Initiative is to train the next generation of Australian female innovators by equipping them with the skills and mindsets needed to succeed in a rapidly changing physical and digital landscape. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Ginger on this this wonderful achievement.

**SHOTARO IWAMOTO**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Shotaro Iwamoto, from the Oak Flats Falcons, for a wonderful 2024 season. Shotaro was awarded First Grade Best and Fairest, Players Player and Highest Goal Scorer at the Oak Flats Falcons Presentation Night held at the Central Hotel on the 12 October 2024. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Shotaro on this this wonderful achievement and wish him all the best in his future sporting endeavours.

**ZEST FEST – ORANGE CITY COUNCIL**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I would like to congratulate Orange City Council on the success of Zest Fest, held in city's beautiful Robertston Park in early November. Zest Fest was about celebrating the city of Orange and what it has to offer – great food, marvellous wine, beautiful spring weather and a wonderful sense of community, all with a backdrop of great music from local and nationally-recognized bands. This was the inaugural Zest Fest, and the volume of support was a testimony to the Orange community's craving for such an event. Tickets for Zest Fest were free, with Orange City Council receiving funding through an initiative delivered by the NSW Government, the Open Streets Program. It was designed to create a vibrant atmosphere within local streets, while supporting small local businesses. From all reports, Orange's event ticked all the boxes with people from all walks of the community coming together for a great afternoon and evening of music and fun. A huge round of applause to Orange City Council for planning and delivering such a wonderful event that reminded us why this is such an incredible community to be a part of.

**CAROLYN KEEP**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to commend Carolyn Keep for more than a decade of support of the Cancer Council, through her annual Trundle community event, 'Pink Night' Carolyn, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2015, devotes a huge amount of her time to fundraising for the Cancer Council and raising awareness of the disease within the Trundle district and broader Central West. Carolyn's cancer was detected with a free mammogram that she was eligible for after turning 50. The age for a free mammogram has since been dropped to 40, but her message to all women, relayed through fundraising events like Pink Night, is if you find a lump, get it checked ASAP. Carolyn, who runs Trundle's hardware store with her husband Gary, has been organising 'Pink Night' for years, and the event is closing in on the \$200,000 mark. This year's event drew more than 900 people, with one group coming from as far away as Wollongong. In fact, Pink Night is now almost as famous as Trundle's annual Abba Festival! I congratulate Carolyn on another successful event. Her support of the Cancer Council is invaluable.

**JACK BUCKLEY**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I am thrilled to congratulate Forbes' Jack Buckley, on being named Pharmacist of the Year. Jack's dedication to community health was recognised at the Independent Pharmacies of Australia annual Pharmacy Excellence Awards. Jack is a part owner of Flannery's Pharmacy and Life Pharmacy in Forbes and he is also a pilot. During the devastation and despair of the floods that hit the central west in November 2022, Jack combined his love of flying and health, delivering medical supplies and pharmacy staff to towns along the Lachlan River. This act of service highlights Jack's commitment to community health care. The Pharmacist of the Year award acknowledges Jack's creative thinking and dedication to his healthcare career and his local community which is truly commendable. Life Pharmacy Group CEO, Michael Flannery states that Jack "has been a wonderful addition to LPG since joining us 12 years ago". His impact on regional healthcare emphasises the power of an open mind and fresh perspectives, particularly in situations that are uncontrollable, such as the floods. Congratulations Jack.

**52ND WEDDING ANNIVERSARY - MR NGOC QUE NGUYEN AND MRS KIM THI NGUYEN**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—I recognise and acknowledge the NSW Vietnamese Elderly Association for organising the Vietnamese Family Day 2024. On this occasion we also recognise and celebrate the 50th and more wedding anniversaries of a number of the members. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Mr Ngoc Que Nguyen

and Mrs Kim Thi Nguyen on their 52nd anniversary. The first 50 plus years of marriage have truly stood the test of time, as two individuals came together to share responsibilities and build a life as one. This significant period established the foundation upon which everything else was built. The remarkable journey of love, mutual respect, resilience, sacrifice, and countless other virtues demonstrated by our respected seniors serve as a true inspiration to us all. On this special occasion, I wish them all continued happiness, love, health, and fulfilment in the years ahead.

#### **VIETNAM IN MY HEART EVENT**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On the evening of 25 October 2024, I had the pleasure of attending the 'Vietnam in My Heart' Fundraising Banquet and Gala. This event was organised by Viet Tan Sydney, and they dedicate the funds raised towards helping human rights activists and prisoners of conscience. The event showcased moving performances that brought all attendees together in remembrance of their homeland, Vietnam, and the sacrifices made in the struggle for democracy. The program opened with imagery of a gentle, yet resilient, young Vietnamese girl navigating her struggles of life in Vietnam and ended with the song "Mother Vietnam" to reflect and dream of a Vietnam free from authoritarian rule. Viet Tan is an organisation that is dedicated to opposing communism and promoting democracy in Vietnam through non-violent means. Their methods include advocacy, education, and raising international awareness. I commend their work and their continued efforts to ensure their brothers and sisters in Vietnam receive the same opportunities they fortunately have in Australia. I would like to extend my gratitude to Mr Van Kham Chau for the warm invitation and Viet Tan Sydney for organising this wonderful event.

#### **55TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY - MR NGAU NGUY AND MRS THI CAM DEU HANG**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—I recognise and acknowledge the NSW Vietnamese Elderly Association for organising the Vietnamese Family Day 2024. On this occasion we also recognise and celebrate the 50th and more wedding anniversaries of a number of the members. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Mr Ngau Nguy and Mrs Thi Cam Deu Hang on their 55th anniversary. The first 50 plus years of marriage have truly stood the test of time, as two individuals came together to share responsibilities and build a life as one. This significant period established the foundation upon which everything else was built. The remarkable journey of love, mutual respect, resilience, sacrifice, and countless other virtues demonstrated by our respected seniors serve as a true inspiration to us all. On this special occasion, I wish them all continued happiness, love, health, and fulfilment in the years ahead.

#### **MERRYLANDS RSL - REMEMBRANCE DAY 2024**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—This Remembrance Day I had the honour of attending a service organised by the Merrylands RSL at Merrylands Memorial Park. On Remembrance Day we recognise the bravery, sacrifice, and the legacy of those who have lost their lives in service to Australia. Formed in 1921, the Merrylands RSL sub-branch has played an integral role in shaping the community and character of the area. With the RSL itself now boasting well over 30,000 members, it is an institution that engages in all facets of communal life in the area. For years the sub-branch has upheld the importance of recognizing our local servicemen and women in deeply profound and reflective ceremonies. I would like to thank President David Czerkies OAM, Vice President Michael Smith and the rest of the Merrylands RSL Sub-Branch for their efforts to maintain our important traditions in our community on important days such as these. I would also like to acknowledge all the local primary school representatives who were present at the ceremony from Hilltop Road Public, Merrylands East Public, Greystanes Public and St Margaret Mary's Primary. It is heartwarming to see the tradition of reflection and gratitude continuing to thrive in Granville.

#### **TOUKLEY VIEW CLUB**

**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)**—Toukley VIEW Club recently celebrated their 51st birthday with 65 members and guests including VIEW Club members from Gwandalan and Bateau Bay. The celebration theme was Pretty in Pink along with The Ary Toukley event room tables dressed in pink decorations. Guest of Honour was Zone Councillor NA 04, Heather, who updated the members on all things VIEW including the Brisbane Convention and tips on how to encourage new Committee members. They also had a special guest from The Smith Family, Louise who oversees the Saver Plus programme. The Wyong Masonic Group presented a \$6,000 cheque to VIEW President Christine Newell, which will go towards the club's sponsorship of 10 Learning for Life Program for children. The special event including live music, tombola raffle and prizes. Congratulations to the board and VIEW members who have been a part of this journey in sharing friendship and comfort but most importantly supporting children across Australia.

### WYONG FIRE STATION

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Congratulations to Wyong Fire Station for earning second place in the 2024 State Firefighter Championships held at Wagga Wagga. The championships are held every 2 years for firefighters to have the opportunity to hone their skills in a competitive environment, allowing them to further develop their capabilities to take back to their local communities. With events such as rescue, booster valve, ladder and high-rise bag, firefighters put their stamina, attention to detail and cooperation to the test. Wyong Fire Station Captain Jamie Loader lead team Wyong who together have been competing at the Firefighter Championships for the past 10 years and won 6 years in a row including the State Championship in 2022. Wyong team were mindful that there is some fierce competition among this years teams who come from far and wide to compete. The day is beneficial to each firefighter learning new skills and most importantly building stronger relationships within the team. Jamie Loader and his team demonstrate an ongoing commitment to protecting our community. Well done to Wyong Fire Station on your results.

### TUMUT CAN ASSIST

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Congratulations to Tumut's Can Assist whose recent celebration of four decades of helping local people with cancer I was privileged to attend. Over the years, the group has helped hundreds of patients and their families with accommodation, treatment and other costs, making an enormous difference at a time when help is most needed. Supporting patients from Tumut, Adelong, Batlow, Talbingo and Brungle, the group currently has about 90 members, 22 of whom are life members. Helping an average of 30 people a month, Can Assist provided support valued at \$99,000 in the previous financial year alone. These funds are raised locally, and the generous Snowy Valleys community has done much to keep the assistance flowing. The dedicated volunteers are too numerous to mention here, but on behalf of all those who have given their time and energy, I would like to congratulate all the volunteers who have held executive positions over the years and welcome the positive direction of change that the current leadership team is working towards to provide accessible support for the local community. Thank you to everyone at Tumut Can Assist and my best wishes for another 40 wonderful years.

### HEROES

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—The preservation of history is a service to the past and future and last weekend, I was privileged to help launch a remarkable document that will ensure the memory of thousands of brave men and women lives on in perpetuity. Snowy Valleys Heroes – the first in a two-volume book – is a remarkable compilation that records every veteran who was born, lived, worked, enlisted or returned to the Snowy Valleys after conflict between 1854 and 1920. To be followed by the second volume recording all veterans between 1921 and 2025, the combined works will preserve the stories of some 13,000 people. It is the result of two years' work by a dedicated team of editors, researchers and supporters and my congratulations and gratitude goes to Zita Vafiopulous, Phyllis Darragh, Kerry Back, Wayne Vafiopulous, Sue Bulger, OAM, Diana Palmer CF, Catherine Davis, Helen Abric, Dorothy Mulvihill, Anne Back and Allan Tonkin. This is a great service to history and also to the families of those men and women whose stories have now been immortalised for future generations. On behalf of the community, thank you to everyone who has worked so hard to ensure the thousands who served will never be forgotten.

### QUEST SUCCESS

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Congratulations to community champions and close friends Amy Hickey and Maggie Enever, who have respectively been crowned Miss Wagga Wagga and Community Princess, 2025. Their success is a milestone in a learning journey for both women, who along with other entrants, have been busy raising funds and support for the quest's beneficiaries. Deniliquin-born Amy has called Wagga home for ten years since beginning her studies to become a teacher at Henschke Catholic Primary School. Amy is committed to supporting families and children through faith, and as Miss Wagga, hopes to empower the Wagga community to continue to grow, care and achieve. Wagga has always been home to Community Princess Maggie, an early childhood educator, and she is also excited by the opportunity to help make Wagga Wagga an even better place to live, work, play and grow. I was proud to share the stage with both titleholders at the awards ceremony this month and am looking forward to the amazing contribution they will make. The quest has once again celebrated amazing female leaders in Wagga and I also congratulate entrants Belinda Kyatt, Gabby Hewson, Kathryn Dedini and Shauna Lamotte. Well done to all!

**ROSIE STEPHEN**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to take this opportunity to recognise Rosie Stephen for her inspiring commitment to reducing plastic waste on our local beaches, particularly at Mollymook. Rosie, now a Year Eight student at Ulladulla High School, began her initiative a few years ago with the goal of addressing the growing problem of plastic toys being left behind on the beach and eventually polluting the ocean. Her solution was the creation of "Rosie's Beach Borrow Box," a community resource filled with toys for families to use and return, preventing single-use plastic items from being discarded on the beach. With the support of her parents, teachers, and local groups, Rosie's vision has now become a reality, with the Beach Borrow Box located at Mollymook Beach, just down from the surf club. Rosie's dedication to this project, which she started in Year Five, is a testament to her passion for protecting the environment and her strong sense of community responsibility. Congratulations to Rosie Stephen for her hard work and innovation in making our beaches cleaner and more sustainable for everyone!

**JORDAN MAGI AND BAILEY BERGIN**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to acknowledge Jordan Magi and Bailey Bergin for their incredible passion and commitment to raising awareness about mental health. Jordan and fellow Ulladulla High School student Bailey, took on the role of school ambassadors for this year's Push-Up Challenge, a national event aimed at promoting mental health and fitness. Jordan's drive to become a student ambassador was fueled by her desire to make a difference after reading many empowering stories about mental health. Jordan has used this platform to promote mental health awareness throughout her school and is now looking for more ways to continue her advocacy as a member of the Student Representative Council. Through their leadership, Jordan and Bailey inspired their peers to participate in the challenge, completing an impressive 3,249 push-ups and raising \$1,996 for Lifeline. The number of push-ups represents the lives lost to suicide in 2022, a sobering reminder of the importance of mental health advocacy. Congratulations, Jordan and Bailey on your remarkable efforts to bring about positive change!

**2024 REMEMBRANCE DAY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—Remembrance Day marks the anniversary of the Armistice that ended fighting with Germany in World War I.I was pleased to join the community at the St Marys RSL Sub-Branch Remembrance Day Commemorative Service this week to remember and honour the sacrifices of all who have lost their lives in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations in service of our nation. Lest we forget.

**E2 PHYSIO AND PILATES**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I commend and congratulate physiotherapist Megan Gaudry-Weir for the establishment and growth of her business E2 Physio and Pilates, which offers a range of specialised pilates classes designed to support fitness, recovery and wellness, and to help participants move safely and effectively, with a focus on core strength, stability and flexibility. The classes are held each Monday morning in Glenmore Park and cater for all fitness levels, with a particular focus on pre- and post-natal care. Megan values the creation of a welcoming and supportive environment. She has 9 years of experience as a physiotherapist and a background in exercise physiology. I'm pleased that her expertise is being used to improve the health and wellbeing of our local community. On behalf of my Badgerys Creek electorate, I thank and commend Megan for her important work and wish her continued success with her business.

**ST BENEDICT'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE, ORAN PARK**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate and commend St Benedict's Catholic College, Oran Park, on winning a Student Team Award at the inaugural Together for Humanity [TFH] National Awards for Intercultural Excellence, which were held via an online ceremony. TFH's is an education not-for-profit whose mission is to increase cohesion and inclusiveness in society and create a society free of racism and prejudice, where all young people feel belonged. The awards were launched to recognise high school student champions and teachers, teams and schools who demonstrate the qualities of leadership, passion and influence in intercultural and/or interfaith issues. The event included representatives from 16 schools, as well as guest speaker Giridharan Sivaraman, who is the Australian Human Rights Commission Race Discrimination Commissioner. On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I thank St Benedict's Catholic College for their great work and wish them the very best.

**2024 NSW PACIFIC AWARDS**

**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)**—New South Wales is proud to have a strong and diverse Pasifika

community of people from Aotearoa and the Pacific Islands who enrich our social fabric. Pacific Islander Australians contribute so much to the local community through their involvement in the arts, sport, church, charity and small business – just to name a few. Last month I was pleased to attend the annual NSW Pacific Awards at Ottimo House in Denham Court. Now in its seventeenth year, the awards ceremony is hosted by the NSW Council for Pacific Communities [NSWCPC] to celebrate the achievements of Pacific Islander Australians. This year's theme was recognising the navigators in our community – a homage to the wayfinding heritage of Pacific Islanders that carries on to this day in navigating trials and opportunities. I am proud to say that the Macquarie Fields electorate was represented among the award-winners by Gabriel Faatau'uu-Satiu from Minto who won the Open Arts Award. I congratulate all the award-winners and thank the NSWCPC for hosting the 2024 NSW Pacific Awards, in particular its chairperson Mal Fruean, and the executive team.

#### **MCHAPPY DAY 2024 AT GORDON MCDONALD'S**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Saturday 16 November 2024, I will be donning an apron and hat at McDonald's in Gordon for McHappy Day. I'll be proudly joining thousands across Australia to help raise funds for Ronald McDonald House Charities [RMHC]. Held annually since 1991, McHappy Day is the largest national fundraiser for RMHC that provides help for seriously ill and injured children and their families through the 18 Ronald McDonald Houses across Australia. These houses enable families and carers to stay close by during the child's time in hospital. I look forward to helping break a new record of fundraising in 2024 by raising more funds than the record \$6.4 million in 2023. Thank you to Gordon McDonald's for their important work in raising funds, that will make a real difference to so many children and their families.

#### **NORTH TURRAMURRA ACTION GROUP: 25 YEARS IN 2025**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I recognise the North Turramurra Action Group [NTAG] for their strong advocacy on behalf of our North Turramurra community. Congratulations on your 25th Anniversary that you will mark in 2025. This is an achievement that should be recognised in the Parliament of NSW. The coming together of individuals on behalf of their community to fight for our community should be celebrated. I recognise President Christine Drake, who leads an energetic team of residents. I finish with an inspirational quote that is relevant to the work the North Turramurra Action Group exemplifies: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world. In fact, it's the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead

#### **STEP**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I recognise the work of STEP, a community lead environmental organisation that brings together more than 550 members from Ku-ring-gai, Hornsby and our surrounding suburbs. Originally known as the South Turramurra Natural Bushland Conservation Society, it was incorporated in 1986 as STEP. Their important work helps protect, preserve and promote our local natural and built environment. The focus of their advocacy includes flora and fauna, such as blue gum forests, owls, bushland tracks and trails, and precincts, including the protection of our beloved St Ives Showground. STEP helps educate our community on the importance of protecting the environment through their regular free "Walks and Talks" along our local world class bushland trails in Sydney's northern suburbs. I recognise and commend the members of STEP led by President Jill Green, Vice President Robin Buchanan, Secretary Helen Wortham, Treasurer Beverley Gwatkin, Assistant Treasurer Jim Wells and committee members Deborah Gray, John Martyn, Margery Street and Greg Taylor. Thank you STEP for all your ongoing work and advocacy.

#### **THE MALTESE WEB - SEAN RICHARDSON**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—With much excitement, I would like to congratulate Sean Richardson, a wonderful author of a new crime thriller novel, *The Maltese Web*. This thrilling novel explores the depths of corruption and the power of redemption. Sean brilliantly interspersed the rich culture, interesting history, unique way of life and stunning architecture of Malta as a backdrop to the story. *The Maltese Web* was so well written with details planned strategically thanks to Sean's 20 years of banking experience, which allows your imagination to run wild while reading it. I had the pleasure of joining Sean at the Umina Library at the local launch of his wonderful book, alongside many from the Maltese community. Our locals had a wonderful time meeting Sean and learnt about the inspiration behind this fabulous novel at his Author Talk event hosted by Umina Library. I was personally surprised to see how many members of the local community were there to support, and what a wonderful grapevine exists within this section of our multicultural community on the Central Coast. Congratulations to Sean!

#### **MR. PERFECT**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—Being the Member for Gosford, I am frequently in awe of our community, and Mr. Perfect is a great addition to our beautiful community. Who is Mr. Perfect? If you asked, I'm happy to share that you can become Mr. Perfect yourself! Mr. Perfect is a marvellous community organisation

connecting men across Australia over a relaxed free BBQ to chat about all things in life. The BBQ event remind us of the importance of having a conversation with others and that listening always helps. On top of that, Mr Perfect's website provides quality resources for the good of men's mental health. Mr. Perfect BBQ events on the Central Coast are hosted by the wonderful Robert Hossary, who has been supporting and connecting men across the Central Coast with one BBQ at a time for 4 years. To Robert, if his BBQ can help just one person, it will still be worth it. I thank Robert for his kindness and generosity towards the men in our community. Mr. Perfect BBQ is a much needed event in our region, and I encourage everyone to look into Mr. Perfect - More than a BBQ to help supporting this amazing cause.

#### **ARE WE THERE YET-THE MUSICAL**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—I'm immensely proud to congratulate Point Clare Public School [PCPS] on their whole school Musical, Are We There Yet. This production involves a cast of almost 500 students, ranging from the age of 5 to 12. This is one of the reasons that I'm so proud of our public education. The Musical took the audience around Australia and showcased our stunning sightseeing, beautiful nature, and unique creatures. The students amazed everyone with their impressive dance routines besides the adorable baby sharks and penguin moves. The audience was well entertained with the adult related comedy lines as well as the angelic choirs. The musical was passionately led by a super star teacher, Mrs. Stacey Cuthbertson, and this masterpiece is truly the product of love, commitment, and creativity from all the staff and students at PCPS. PCPS epitomises the values of our public education and it's obvious that the school is here to inspire every single student to achieve their personal best. We are so lucky to have such a fantastic public school like PCPS in the Gosford electorate.

#### **FRIENDS OF BROWN CREEK**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge the recent unveiling of the 'Ngarra Guri' monument – meaning 'Wise Man' in Gathang – at Wyoming Reserve, a project made possible through the efforts of the Friends of Browns Creek. This sculpture honours the cultural heritage and wisdom of the Biripi people. Led by Pastor Russell Saunders, the event brought together community leaders, elders, local schools, and residents to celebrate this important addition. Overlooking Brown's Creek, a sacred site, 'Ngarra Guri' symbolises Indigenous knowledge and our shared responsibility to care for Biripi Country. I thank the Friends of Browns Creek and everyone who contributed to this project. This monument will serve as a place of reflection and cultural learning for generations to come.

#### **DARCY ELBOURNE**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Mr. Darcy Elbourne, a 74-year-old from Taree, who has spent the past six years participating in the Great Cycle Challenge to help fight children's cancer. Each October, Darcy rides 1,000 kilometres to raise funds for the Children's Medical Research Institute, and he has now surpassed \$11,000 in total donations and a total of over 5,000km ridden. Darcy's motivation comes from his own experience as a cancer patient following his retirement from Manning Base Hospital, where he worked for 42 years. Darcy's time as a patient gave him new insight into the challenges faced by young children with cancer, and he was inspired to make a difference. In addition to his cycling challenge, Darcy regularly donates blood and plasma at the Taree Lifeblood Donation Centre, seeing this as another way to "pay it forward." Thank you, Darcy, for your incredible efforts and ongoing contribution to a cause that affects so many.

#### **CAN ASSIST**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise the incredible impact of the Manning Valley Branch of Can Assist, which has supported families dealing with cancer across our region since November 2012. Over nearly 12 years, Can Assist has provided crucial financial relief to 870 local families, distributing over \$862,000 - all funded by our community's generous contributions. This group of volunteers offers direct assistance to those in need, connecting with families from Bulahdelah to Moorland, based on referrals from medical professionals. Can Assist's support is needs-based, ensuring that every dollar raised locally stays within our community to aid local cancer patients. The branch's commitment to "locals helping locals" is deeply appreciated. I acknowledge and thank all who contribute to this compassionate network, which continues to make a difference for those facing cancer in our community.

#### **MELITA CHILCOTT**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to Melita Chilcott on your outstanding volunteer work at Maitland Hospital. For two years, Melita has dedicated her time and skills to brighten the days of patients, visiting weekly to provide haircuts and shaves. Melita's selfless efforts not only improve patients' appearance but also boost their morale during challenging times. Her work has touched countless lives, including patients who are unable to communicate. Demand for this service is so high that Melita recently put the call out for additional volunteer hairdressers to also contribute to this valuable

community service. Deservingly Melita was named Maitland Citizen of the Year in 2022 and Local Woman of the Year in 2021. Congratulations Melita Chilcott on your inspiring dedication to improving the lives of hospital patients at Maitland Hospital.

#### **PREMIERS SPELLING BEE FINALISTS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to Maitland students, Marley Hodgson and Kynan Levey, who joined dozens of the State's top primary school spellers in a competition earlier this month, as they went head to head, hoping to be crowned best speller at the NSW Premier's Spelling Bee finals. To make their way into this year's finals, Marley and Kynan, were required to spell words such as 'fascinate', 'anemometer', 'allegory' and 'sovereign'. Only 30 students in Years 3 and 4 (junior) and 30 students in Years 5 and 6 (senior), made the state finals, beating out 1,800 students in regional heats. Nearly two-thirds of NSW public primary schools competed to make the finals and 2 of the 60 finalists were from Maitland, a fabulous results. Marley is in Year 4 at Thornton Public School and Kynan in Year 5 at Rutherford Public School. Congratulations on your amazing spelling efforts Marley and Kynan and good luck again next year!

#### **REMEMBRANCE DAY 2024**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I was honoured to attend the 106th Remembrance Day Commemoration held in Maitland Park on November 11, 2024. Thank you to the Maitland RSL Sub-Branch for their tireless work, and in particular that of President, Mr. Fred Goode OAM JP, Vice-President Nigel Cox, Treasurer Henry Meskauskas JP, and Secretary Kristy Cox JP. I'd like to thank the Women's Auxiliary for fundraising, the Maitland Community Corrections Team for the hand-crocheted poppies and sprigs of rosemary, 2 Squadron RAAF Williamtown and Squadron Leader Daniel Dobbin, the Catafalque Party commanded by Flight Lieutenant Simon Higgs, Miss Maitland Caylin King, and Maitland City Council. As always, the Maitland Salvation Army Band and the City of Maitland Pipes and Drums gave an excellent performance. The National Anthem of New Zealand was performed by the Te Ukaipo Māori Club Newcastle Choir, joining with Angie Ussher for the singing of 'Advance Australia Fair'. I would also like to acknowledge Ms. Christine Berry OAM, founder of Donkey Welfare With Heart, who provided donkeys and led the procession to commemorate the sacrifice of all animals in service, as well as Bill Haddon and his Second World War-era Jeep on display. Lest We Forget.

#### **KERRY ROWLESON**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—Congratulations to Kerry Rowleson of Copacabana, who recently received the St John Ambulance Service Medal at the 2024 St John Ambulance Annual Awards. This prestigious award, presented by the Governor of NSW, Margaret Beazley, is a tribute to Kerry's 15 years of dedicated service with St John – a remarkable achievement that reflects a long-standing commitment to our community. Kerry's journey began with a belief in giving back and helping others, values she's upheld from a young age. Her dedication exemplifies the incredible spirit of volunteerism that strengthens our community. Volunteers like Kerry are essential to the safety and well-being of everyone around them, providing critical support when it's needed most. Each year, more than 2,000 St John volunteers dedicate over 270,000 hours of service across NSW. They are the unsung heroes at sporting events, community gatherings, and festivals, providing first aid and lifesaving support in those vital moments before emergency services arrive. Kerry, thank you for your years of service, compassion, and unwavering commitment. This award is a well-deserved recognition of your dedication, and we are all deeply grateful for the positive impact you continue to make in our community.

#### **TERRIGAL BEACH HOUSE**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It's a pleasure to congratulate Terrigal Beach House on winning the coveted People's Choice award at the recent Australian Hotels Association NSW Awards for Excellence. This achievement is a testament to the warm and lively atmosphere, exceptional service, and memorable experiences Terrigal Beach House creates for all its patrons. The AHA NSW Awards are the pinnacle of recognition in our hospitality industry, celebrating the best in dining, entertainment, community service, and beyond. Being selected by the people, Terrigal Beach House has earned this award through its commitment to quality and community, situated beautifully in the heart of Terrigal. To receive such an honor in front of over 1,350 esteemed industry, political, and business leaders at Royal Randwick Racecourse is no small feat. This award is truly a reflection of the loyalty and appreciation from customers who value the stunning beach views, fresh ocean breezes, and the vibrant atmosphere Terrigal Beach House offers. Congratulations to the entire team at Terrigal Beach House – thank you for creating such an extraordinary place for all to enjoy here on the Central Coast!



### **TERRIGAL HOTEL**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It's a privilege to congratulate Terrigal Hotel on winning the prestigious Best Outdoor Experience award at the recent Australian Hotels Association NSW Awards for Excellence. This accolade highlights Terrigal Hotel's dedication to creating an unforgettable outdoor setting that combines atmosphere, comfort, and community. The AHA NSW Awards represent the highest level of recognition in our hospitality industry, celebrating exceptional achievements in accommodation, dining, entertainment, and more. Winning this award at Royal Randwick Racecourse, in front of an audience of over 1,350 esteemed industry, political, and business leaders, is a remarkable accomplishment. Terrigal Hotel has truly set a standard for vibrant, welcoming outdoor spaces here on the Central Coast, where guests can enjoy good times and great company in a setting that perfectly captures the relaxed, coastal vibe of our community. Congratulations once again to the entire team at Terrigal Hotel for this well-deserved recognition. Thank you also to the loyal patrons who support our local venues and help make achievements like this possible. Best of luck at the upcoming National Awards – we're cheering for you!

### **NURSE NEXT DOOR**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)**—I would like to recognize the outstanding work of Penrith's Nurse Next Door team and their invaluable contributions to our community. Since their launch in July, the dedicated team of 25 registered nurses and caregivers has been working tirelessly to help clients live independently and maintain vital connections with family and friends. Nurse Next Door offers a unique blend of clinical nursing and caregiving services that are both flexible and transparent, adapting to meet each client's individual needs. Whether it's skilled nursing care or compassionate day-to-day assistance, their services ensure that people can remain in the comfort of their homes while receiving the highest level of care. The commitment of Penrith's Nurse Next Door staff truly shines in their mission to make care accessible and meaningful. These dedicated professionals support the wellbeing, dignity, and independence of their clients, helping them feel empowered and connected within the community. To all the nurses and caregivers at Penrith's Nurse Next Door, thank you for your compassion, professionalism, and dedication. You are making a significant difference in the lives of countless individuals and families, and our community is stronger and healthier because of your efforts.

### **PCYC - TRANSURBAN**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)**—I would like to take a moment to commend the outstanding work of PCYC Penrith in promoting driver safety through its Safe Drivers Course for Learner Drivers. PCYC's dedication to educating new drivers is instrumental in creating safer roads and more responsible driving habits within our community. Thanks to a \$9,800 community grant from Transurban, PCYC will now be able to expand access to its valuable Safe Drivers Course, allowing 70 young people across Penrith and Blacktown to participate in this life-saving training at no cost. This funding will ensure that more learner drivers receive the guidance they need to make safer choices on the road, helping them develop essential skills that can prevent accidents and ultimately save lives. PCYC has long been a pillar of our community, not only for its driver safety initiatives but for its wider commitment to empowering young people and creating positive pathways. I want to express my gratitude to PCYC for championing road safety, keeping our learner drivers safe, and giving them the confidence to make it home safely to their loved ones. Education around driver safety remains a priority, and organizations like PCYC play a crucial role in this mission.

### **MOOBALL SEAWALL**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—Exciting progress has been made on the restoration of the training walls at Mooball Creek in Pottsville, with work now underway. The Mooball Creek Seawalls Repair Project will see the north and south walls topped up with rock to bring them back to original levels and provide the necessary protection for the creek entrance. The work, undertaken by contractor MGN Civil Pty Ltd, will take place on the southern wall before shifting to the northern wall. Each wall will take around four weeks to complete. The walls were first built in the 1960s to keep the creek mouth open and have eroded over time. The erosion has been accelerated by repeated cyclonic weather events in recent years. I'm very pleased to see work underway. Thank you to Pottsville local David Cranwell who advocated tirelessly for these works.

### **PREMIERS AWARDS – TWEED SCHOOLS**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—Three Tweed schools have been recognised as finalists in the NSW Premier's Awards for world class education and training. Condong Public School, Tumbulgum Public School and Crabbes Creek Public School are among 12 flood-affected Northern Rivers schools recognised for the way in which they responded to the floods of early 2022. The schools worked together to address student wellbeing needs to provide support during the disaster response and recovery. Specialised programs were implemented across the schools to promote a strong sense of belonging and increase school attendance. Together the schools took a

flexible, innovative and collaborative approach to build strong community relationships and ensure every child had access to quality education during a very challenging time. Well done to the staff, students and broader school communities at all of the schools recognised. It is pleasing to see a positive outcome grow from what was such a devastating and overwhelming natural disaster for so many people in the Tweed. I wish the schools all the best ahead of the announcement of the Award winners later this year.

#### **NSW TOURISM AWARD FINALISTS**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—It's no secret tourism in the Tweed is top notch and this has been recognised by the 2024 NSW Tourism Awards. Several Tweed Electorate businesses have been named as finalists in the Awards across a number of categories: Hirehood has been recognised in the Tourism Services category, and so too has The Tweed Tourism Company. Husk Farm Distillery in North Tumbulgum is a finalist in the Food Tourism category, alongside Pipit in Pottsville, and Potager – A Kitchen Garden in Carool. And the Northern Rivers Rail Trail has been named a finalist in the Tourism Experience category. Winners will be announced at the Awards Gala in Sydney on 28 November. Good luck to all the finalists, the Tweed will be cheering you on.

#### **MURRUMBATEMAN FIELD DAYS 2024**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise the Murrumbateman Field Days 2024. It is with sincere appreciation that I again praise the amazing success of the Murrumbateman Field Days which was held over the 19th – 20th October. The Field Days continue to grow, welcoming over 15,000 visitors, combining 2000 volunteers and exhibitors, accumulating to over 17,000 people on site. The event is renowned for the relaxed and friendly atmosphere, whilst providing a truly informative, educational, and interesting array of demonstrations and displays. New events Noah's Racing Pigs and the Hawkesbury Working Sheep Dogs were more entertainment for the whole family - not to mention the Golden Gumboot throw of 34 metres taking out the winning position for best pitch. I commend the tireless work of Tom White, Manager of the Field Days, Iain McCall, President of the Murrumbateman Community Association, Jo Shipley, Promotions Manager, and the extraordinary work of all the volunteers, exhibitors and community organisations who make the days a resounding success and providing significant impact to the local economy. I wish nothing but longevity and more success for this amazing regional event.

#### **PITTWATER CHILLIES TEAM**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—Congratulations to the women soccer players from Pittwater who won medals at the Pan Pacific Masters games in Queensland in November and proved that sporting endeavour is not confined by age and sporting prowess extends across the whole community. The Pittwater Chillies team, made up of 11 past and present Pittwater RSL Football Club players, won a silver medal in the Over 50s women's competition. The team includes goalie Trudy Haygarth, who has played for Pittwater for 12 years and has been on Pittwater's committee since 2018, currently serving as club Secretary. The Blazing Fury team won gold in Over 45s women's football competition. The Fury was made up of several Belrose and Terrey Hills Raiders FC players and other local residents, and captained by Tiffany Perrin, a primary school teacher from Newport. They all capture something of the spirit of Pittwater in their participation and success

#### **WHALE BEACH SLSC TURTLE RESCUE**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—I want to acknowledge and thank members of the Whale Beach Surf Life Saving Club for recently rescuing a turtle that found itself stuck near the rock pools at Whale Beach on Sunday 3 November. Given the name 'Crush' by those on patrol, they were able to work with NSW National Parks and Wildlife to move Crush on the spinal board out of the rock area. Club Captain Olivia Rees-Ewen noted it took four people and to move Crush, then six people to hoist the turtle onto the vehicle to safely take escort Crush to Taronga Zoo hospital. The public play a vital role in ensuring all species of sea turtles can survive and thrive, particularly around the electorate of Pittwater. This rescue is one example of how proactive you can be to help ensure we continue to value our precious and unique wildlife.

#### **WOMEN'S RESILIENCE CENTRE**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—I want to acknowledge the fantastic work done by Simone Allan, Gabrielle Morrissey and the Women's Resilience Centre on the northern beaches. Founded in 2020, it is an invaluable resource for those women who live in Pittwater and around the northern beaches and have experienced or witnessed domestic violence. The centre offers programs such as employment readiness, caring conversations, peer-to-peer mentoring and free legal consultation to help those women in need of help. They also work with housing and real estate groups to support women leaving a shelter and build the confidence and skills they need to move onto the next part of their life. Last weekend I attended a youth self-defence workshop held by Mel Thomas and the KYUP project and joined in with the teenage girls attending to learn techniques to keep safe.

I look forward to seeing the centre continue to grow in the months and years ahead to support so many women in our community, particularly the upcoming opening of their not-for-profit retail clothing and home décor shop.

#### **EAST HILLS SCHOOL LEADERS**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—Congratulations to the newly appointed school leaders across the East Hills electorate. These exceptional students have been selected for their academic achievements, dedication, integrity, and commitment to their school communities. Their roles as school leaders are a reflection of the respect and trust they have earned among their peers and teachers alike. From Mount St Joseph Catholic College, Chloe Roll, Grace Hassarati, Indiana Coorey, and Angelina Jiji. From Condell Park High, Sermad Sami, Amani Pisercha, Yousef Hamad and Susan Chami. Justin Garzaniti and Noah Sawaqed from De La Salle College. Tayseer Mourad and Hamzah Rashid from East Hills Boys High School. Amira Chowdhury and Lana Amin from East Hills Girls High School. Oliver Walker, Talia Kumar, Harry Dunstan and Clara Cho from Picnic Point High School, and David Le and Brianna Da Silva from Sir Joseph Banks High. As well, Ethan Hodge and Sienna Galea, Sol Martinez and Kaylee Foss from Georges River Grammar. These young leaders have the opportunity to foster a positive school environment, champion causes that matter to students, and inspire others through their example. Congratulations again to these promising leaders, and all the best for 2025!

#### **JETS SQUASH GIRLS CAN**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—Congratulations to JETS Squash for launching the Squash Girls Can program at Milperra Squash Centre last month. This initiative is a fantastic way to empower young girls in our community, providing not only squash training but also essential homework assistance. I'm delighted that JETS Squash received support for this program through a Local Sport Grant from the NSW Government. It's heartening to see funding going towards initiatives that create such meaningful opportunities for young girls, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Thank you to Yan Han and everyone involved in Squash Girls Can for your dedication to fostering both sport and education in our community. Your commitment to these young girls' futures is truly commendable. I'm looking forward to visiting Milperra Squash Centre later this month, to see the program firsthand and meet squash legend and former World Champion Michelle Martin. Congratulations once again to everyone at JETS Squash—thank you for making such a positive impact.

#### **INDY AQUILINA**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)**—Mr Speaker, I acknowledge and congratulate our young Hawkesbury resident Indy Aquilina. Indy is 11 years of age and was selected to represent New South Wales at the National Soccer Championships in Perth this year. Indy is a passionate soccer player and will participate in the NSW state team 'Navy' for the 12 years and under championship. Indy has had a stellar sporting career thus far, particularly in soccer athletics and boxing. She has represented Hawkesbury, Sydney West and New South Wales at different levels. I offer Indy a huge congratulations on being selected to represent her state in this competition. I wish her the best of luck for her sporting career and look forward to hearing of her future achievements. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

#### **DANIELLE AYLETT SMITH**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the dedication of Danielle Aylett Smith, a midwife of Hawkesbury District Hospital. Danielle's career change from nursing to midwifery is both admirable and commendable. Danielle had completed her new graduate nursing year at Hawkesbury District Hospital, prior to having her first baby. It was in this same hospital that she experienced a great antenatal experience thanks to the wonderful support from the midwives. Danielle realised her urge to offer this same care and love to other women, initiating her transfer to midwifery. Offering their first midwifery graduate program, Hawkesbury District allowed Danielle to pursue this career change. Successfully completing the program in March 2023, she now works to support and empower women in the hospital, ensuring to deliver the same incredible experience offered in her own pregnancy. Congratulations to Danielle on making this career change and supporting the women of Hawkesbury so diligently. I thank Danielle for her service, wishing her all the best for her career development. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

#### **WORLD AIDS DAY**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown Electorate, I want to acknowledge World AIDS Day which will be marked on Sunday 1 December. World AIDS Day promotes awareness of HIV, shows support for people who are living with HIV, remembers loved ones lost to AIDS and importantly, helps to raise funds for the cause. To mark the occasion a Sydney World AIDS Day 2024 event will be co-hosted by Positive Life NSW, the largest peer-led and run representative body of all people living with HIV in NSW since 1988; the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation, Australia's longest running HIV charity; and ACON, NSW's leading health organisation specialising in community health, inclusion and HIV response for people of diverse sexualities and

genders; to bring together members of the NSW HIV community, mainstream health, community partners, and supporters. This event carries such an important message of the power of community care, hope and reflection and while I will be sorry to miss it, I know it will be a really special day and send my respect and gratitude to all involved.

#### **KYOGLA MOUNTAIN BIKE CLUB**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I read with interest in The Talking Turkey newspaper of Kyogle Mountain Bike Club's partnership with Kyogle High School in building a shuttle trailer so students can go mountain biking as their Term 4 elective sport. The shuttle trailer is the result of a lot of persistence, boundless enthusiasm, donations in kind, and mostly an optimistic vision from club president Niels Jack, The Talking Turkey reported. What a great opportunity for Kyogle High students to explore the trails in Kyogle's best backyard. Kyogle Mountain Bike Club held its annual general meeting at the Commercial Hotel's Alley Bar recently. I congratulate the committee – President Niels Jack, Vice President Garth Duncan, Secretary Kelly Griffiths, Treasurer Annabelle Jack, Junior Ambassador Angus Joyce, and Trails Adviser Nick Bowman. The club welcomed newly-elected Kyogle Councillor Brett McNamara's enthusiasm for Kyogle's local trails and his experience working at the foundational stages of the highly successful Stromlo Forest Park mountain bike trails in the Australian Capital Territory. This park was opened in the forest in 2006 as a bushfire recovery program and has gone on to host 24-hour events which have generated millions of dollars for that local economy and opportunities for youth.

#### **MOUNTAIN BLUE TRIALS PLASTIC-FREE PACKAGING SOLUTION**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I wish to congratulate Mountain Blue, a national leader in the blueberry industry, on its recent launch of a plastic-free cardboard packaging trial. The Northern Rivers Times newspaper reported that Mountain Blue has partnered with Opal, a packaging and systems solutions company, and Coles supermarkets, to trial the kerbside recyclable, FSC-certified cardboard punnets across 34 Coles stores in Northern New South Wales over a two-month period. This exciting initiative is part of Mountain Blue's overarching commitment to sustainability. Mountain Blue's Managing Director Andrew Bell told The Northern Rivers Times: "We're thrilled to partner with Opal in trialling these kerbside recyclable cardboard punnets. This innovation offers Coles customers a sustainable packaging option for their blueberries." The new punnets, made from responsibly sourced materials, feature a transparent film derived from wood pulp, allowing customers to easily view the fruit while supporting eco-friendly packaging solutions. Opal manufactures the punnets from recycled paper in Australia, providing the strength needed to protect fresh produce throughout the supply chain and freight. I also note that Mountain Blue was among 29 NSW businesses exhibiting their products at the China International Import Expo, that country's premier import-focussed six-day trade show this month.

#### **TRIBUTE TO MEALS ON WHEELS STALWART, THE LATE ALICE THOMPSON**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I WISH to pay tribute to Murwillumbah Meals on Wheels stalwart, the late Alice Thompson, who joined the organisation soon after the essential community service was established in 1968 by the Tweed Christian Men's Club. The Tweed Valley Weekly published an article by Editor Jonathon Howard detailing Alice's long and diligent service with Murwillumbah Meals on Wheels which only ended with her passing in August this year. Alice, along with her parents Dick and Ivy Rice, and her late husband Arthur, played a pivotal role in identifying the need for an extra hot meal for the elderly in Murwillumbah. "Recognising that many seniors were living on little more than 'tea and toast', they rallied together with other community members to provide nourishing meals," Meals on Wheels' Wayne Taggart told The Weekly. The Thompsons kept Murwillumbah Meals on Wheels going in partnership with Murwillumbah District Hospital from 1969, and then from its current premises on Golden Links Drive since 2011. Alice Thompson was recognised in 2007 with the NSW Seniors Week Achievement Award at Sydney Town Hall, highlighting her lifetime of care for her local community, particularly the elderly and vulnerable.

#### **A CELEBRATION OF MUSIC**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Blessed by a long weekend of little rain, the town of Dorriga hosted its 22nd Folk and Bluegrass Festival from October 25 to 27. This vibrant event, a highlight of the Bellingen Shire, welcomed music lovers to the picturesque Dorriga plateau for three days filled with concerts, workshops, dances, and activities for children. The festival beautifully showcased the community spirit of the Bellingen Shire, where attendees and stallholders felt like family, returning year after year to celebrate together. A diverse range of engaging workshops offered something for everyone, from healing harp therapy to arrangements for a pop-up string orchestra. The children's tent was a particular delight, featuring a puppet show by a clown doctor that entertained both kids and adults alike. Musical performances captivated the audience, with artists like Michael Waugh, winner of the Contemporary Album of the Year at the Australian Folk Music Awards, moving attendees with their heartfelt songs. What truly sets this festival apart is its commitment to providing a safe, family-friendly

environment. The Dorriggo Folk and Bluegrass Festival continues to thrive, celebrating music and community in a uniquely memorable way.

#### **A DREAM COME TRUE**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—On a sun-drenched Friday afternoon at Warwick Park, excitement buzzed through the air as the official Kempsey Cup race kicked off. Among the sea of riders was local apprentice Siena Grima, a rising star in the racing world. With her trainer, Tony Ball, by her side, she felt a mixture of nerves and determination. As the race began, Siena guided her horse with a deft hand, her heart racing with every hoofbeat. The crowd erupted in cheers as they surged toward the finish line, crossing it first in a thrilling climax. It was a triumphant moment for the young apprentice, who had poured her heart and soul into her training and had grown up dreaming of this very moment. With the Kempsey Cup trophy gleaming in her hands, the day wasn't finished. In a spectacular finale, Siena and her horse returned to the track to win the last race of the day. With Tony Ball and the TAS Morton team beside her, Siena beamed with pride. This day, filled with triumph and camaraderie, was a dream come true for the young rider and her devoted team.

#### **A HALLOWEEN CELEBRATION TO REMEMBER**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—In the heart of Macksville, the Strickland family has become synonymous with Halloween magic. For three years running, Teagan and Rhys Strickland have transformed their quiet street into a thrilling wonderland, where laughter and spooky surprises await local children. This year was no exception, as they pulled out all the stops for a celebration that would be remembered long after the last trick-or-treaters had gone home. Inspired by his childhood Halloween celebrations in Canada, Rhys wanted to recreate that same excitement for his son Mikael and the children of the Nambucca Valley. Rhys turned their front yard into a playful haunt, where kids dove into buckets filled with jelly and noodles, squealing with delight as they fished for slips of paper revealing either a prize or a sweet treat. Special activities for younger children included sack races and games that ensured everyone could join in the fun. This Halloween celebration was more than just a series of spooky activities; it was a heartfelt effort by a local family to bring joy and cheer to the lives of many children, making the night truly unforgettable for all.

#### **NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the New England Conservatorium of Music (NECOM) on celebrating its 20th anniversary and on its 6th New England Sings spectacular. This is a nationally acclaimed award-winning event, showcasing student performances from over 30 schools throughout the New England and Northern NSW regions, bringing together a celebration of music, community and achievement. I congratulate the NECTOM management, staff and organisers for coordinating, hosting and staging this impressive event, including CEO Corinne Arter, HR & Operations Manager Julie Laughton, DFO Brett Constable, Music Program Coordinator Christine Davidson, Finance Manager Emily Evans and Administration and WHS Coordinator Nicky Price. Thank you to local organisations assisting with project, including the Armidale: Music Teachers Association; Youth Orchestra, Symphony Orchestra, Pipe Band, the Aboriginal Centre and Keeping Place. Special thanks to local and national composers, the team of conductors and accompanists, along with the many sponsors supporting this event. I commend all involved in the success of NECTOM and New England Sings, for giving their expertise, time and effort to ensure the longevity of the organisation and this annual event, for the enjoyment of children and the wider community.

#### **MOREE LIONS CLUB**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the Moree Lions Club on celebrating their 70th anniversary since forming on 11th November 1954. This milestone will be marked with a dinner, celebrating members who have served Lions through community-based programs and initiatives. I congratulate the Moree Lions Club past and present members for their support and contribution to the club and our local area. Thank you to the current committee, President Brett Farlow, Secretary Pauline Gugala and Treasurer Beth Hearn. Special thanks to Barrie Brooks for 54 years of service and a recipient of the prestigious Melvin Jones Award, James D Richardson Award, 50 year Service medal and life member of Lions. Special thanks also to former President and Chair Steve Long, who continues to actively volunteer, working tirelessly behind the scenes. Thanks to each of the member volunteers, as community organisations such as this in regional towns, cannot function without the wonderful support and commitment these volunteers give. I commend the Lions Club for their hard work and devotion to giving back to the community and upholding the true traditions of the Lions. Seventy years is a remarkable effort from such a dedicated group!

#### **OLIVER OVERTON NOMINATED AS BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of Oliver Overton on being nominated as Best Supporting Actor in the feature film, Just A Farmer. Oliver plays cast member Eric, in

the film, which provides authentic portrayal of the challenges and triumphs of farming life in rural Australia. I congratulate Oliver on this wonderful achievement, for taking the opportunity to be part of something bigger, a film that deals with mental health and diversity in a way that relates to people across rural communities. I commend Oliver on this impressive nomination and thank Oliver's family and school, Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School, for enabling and supporting Oliver throughout this journey. We wish Oliver all the best at the upcoming International Film Festival – the Northern Tablelands Electorate is extremely proud of you!

#### **DR VIRGIL CHAN**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—On Tuesday September 3, Newcastle radiologist Dr Virgil Chan B.Med (Hons), was named Business Person of the Year for CLARITY Precise Medical Imaging and Diagnosis, his firm in Waratah, at the Hunter Local Business Awards. As Director, he has immense interest in all facets of radiology but is most valued for his skills in advanced musculoskeletal, sports and spinal imaging intervention. Dr Chan studied at the University of Newcastle, completing specialist training at John Hunter Hospital and in Canada. His progressive, skilled and innovative team consists of one full-time onsite radiologist and associates, as well as twenty staff members, including medical receptionists, healthcare professionals, radiographers and sonographers. CLARITY sets the bar high for services such as X-ray, ultrasound, guided injections, CT, MRI, OPG and dental imaging, making no compromises, and investing in advanced medical technology and supporting vulnerable and anxious patients. Dr Chan has dedicated himself to the public sector as a Diagnostic and Interventional radiologist with Hunter New England Local Health District, where he is currently a Senior Staff Specialist. Thank you, Dr Chan, for your passion, expertise and commitment to our local community.

#### **DR BRAD BITOSS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—On Sunday 15th September, to help celebrate Wallsend's 150th anniversary, Dr Brad Bitossi from the Andrew Nash Clinic in Wallsend gave a talk about the practice's namesake, the history of the clinic and its links to the Wallsend Hospital, illustrated with photos, and with contributions from audience members recalling their experiences, including Dr Nash's great great grand-daughter. Dr Bitossi trained at Sydney University, with experience at Westmead, Prince of Wales/Prince Henry, Royal Newcastle, Calvary Mater and John Hunter Hospitals. Outside of medicine, he is a member of the Newcastle Golf Club, the Hunter Valley Gliding Club, and a glider pilot. He enjoys scuba diving, with a speciality accreditation in wreck diving, as well as snow skiing, gardening and travel. Dr Bitossi has a special interest in chronic disease management. He joined Australia's oldest continuously running general practice in 1993. Dr Andrew Nash, was originally from Ireland and started his clinic in November 1875, working with miners and their families and was killed in a riding accident, crushed when his horse caught its leg and fell. He is buried at Sandgate cemetery. My heartfelt thanks, Dr Bitossi.

#### **WALLSEND DISTRICT CRICKET CLUB - GILMOUR CUP MASTERS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—In its Centenary year, the Wallsend District Cricket Club continues to make great strides forward. On the back of a 22/23 First Grade Premiership win, Ladies and Masters teams claimed the major prizes in the Gilmour Cup competition, the over-35 twilight Twenty20 series, in 2023/24. At Wallsend Park Oval 1 – George Farley Oval – on Wednesday 13 December 2023, the men chased down a strong Cardiff-Boolaroo total of 152 with one ball to spare, finishing at 7/158 (19.5). The team comprised: Peter Spurr, Nigel Deacon, Andrew Pascoe, Scott Telfer, Joel Crosswell, Gary Geise, Neil Brooks, Daniel Flynn, Nathan Holloway, Chris Bushell and Matt Holwell. At No 1 Sportsground, the women's side 4/129 (20) beat Warners Bay 10/84 (16.5). The team comprised: Candice Poulton, Alana Cherry, Tracey Mossman, Helen Page, Madeline Tremain (vc), Seanna Young-Makiiti, Keelin Garry, Lynn Herring (c), Karen Leyshon, Lechelle MacDonald and Melinda Simmons. I look forward to partnering with you again in 2024/25 and to seeing you being competitive on the field and remaining a highly valued contributor to our Wallsend community. The late, great Gary Gilmour would be proud.

#### **BEV TOWLE - 2024 OCEANIA MASTERS LEAGUE CROSSFIT GAMES**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I recognise Bev Towle and highlight her recent impressive physical achievements. Bev is a teacher at Newman Senior Technical College and in September she competed in the 2024 Oceania Masters League CrossFit Games. The Masters categories span five year intervals and include competitors from 35 to 70 years of age. Held in Orange this year the CrossFit Games are the definitive test of fitness. CrossFit is a strength and conditioning program based on measurable outcomes. Participants compete in a range of skills and abilities involving cardio, strength and weightlifting. The workouts are designed to be challenging and are typically completed at high intensity and equates to a gruelling few days of competition. Bev's grit and determination paid off, with her achieving a perfect record of seven wins from seven work out challenges. She now holds first place in NSW for her age category now securing her a well-earned spot in the National competition - what an incredible achievement! I have much admiration for Bev's tenacity, strength and

determination as she trains for the upcoming National competition. She is certainly an inspiration for us all to continue to keep healthy and active!

### LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—A wonderful initiative combating the stigma of mental health through artistic expression and creativity, was showcased at the Port Macquarie Library during the month of October. The annual exhibition titled Let's Talk About It, is open to social housing tenants to display their talented art pieces, with the aim of raising awareness about mental health and the importance of nurturing resilience for the artists involved. Now into its third year, the exhibition is a project designed to encourage collaboration with different tenants through their personal artworks, with results showing an improvement in health and wellbeing amongst participants. The talent displayed from these local artists is simply extraordinary and demonstrates the benefits of putting paint to brush on canvas, as an effective outlet to improve mental health. One of the positive features is establishing social connections, bringing communities together and sharing similar interests and personal experiences. I am pleased to hear this exceptional program is considered for expansion nationally, and is making a difference in breaking the stigma for those living with mental health. I thank Community Housing's Stephen Neale, Josie Payne and Gemma Brown for opening the 2024 'Let's Talk About It' art exhibition.

### VANESSA GRAY

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I acknowledge one of our outstanding local educators - Vanessa Gray from St. Joseph's Regional College Port Macquarie, who recently received the Highly Accomplished Teacher Accreditation honours at New South Wales Parliament House, Sydney. Recognised for her longstanding service and commitment to Catholic Education, Vanessa was honoured during the World Teacher Day celebrations in this House, on 25th October to mark 24 years of preparing our students for future career success. Vanessa is described by her peers as demonstrating exemplary teaching practices and professional leadership in the education sector. Her skills and exceptional work ethic have paved the way for Vanessa to secure roles as the Leader of Sport and Peer2Peer Feedback Teacher. One of Vanessa's passions has been elevating the language program at St Agnes' Parish from French to Japanese, and fostering deeper intercultural connections between the students and Japan, including our Sister City exchange with Handa, Aichi. The criteria for receiving Highly Accomplished Teacher Accreditation are evaluated against the utmost standards set by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. Only a few select teachers across Australia are acknowledged. Congratulations Vanessa on achieving this extraordinary milestone in your teaching career.

### REMEMBRANCE DAY 2024

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I would like to acknowledge and thank the organisers of a range of commemoration ceremonies in the Keira electorate to mark Remembrance Day. RSL Sub-Branches are community-based and offer support, advocacy, and camaraderie to veterans and their families. They provide various services, including welfare assistance, mental health support, social gatherings, and advocacy for veteran issues. Each Sub-Branch is unique, reflecting the community it serves, and often has volunteers or veterans running it. These branches also play a key role in educating the public about military history and fostering appreciation for the sacrifices made by Australian service members. Remembrance Day is a time to honour and remember service personnel who lost their lives in wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations. This year, the local Sub-Branches again paid tribute to those who served our country with the ultimate sacrifice. The red poppy can be worn on this occasion as a symbol of remembrance and gratitude for those who served and gave their lives for our nation. 11 November, at 11am - Lest we forget.

### OUR BIG KITCHEN (OBK)

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—On behalf of the Coogee electorate, I would like to acknowledge that Our Big Kitchen (OBK) is an important part of community support and connectivity in Bondi, New South Wales. OBK is a volunteer-driven group that provides sustenance, optimism, and opportunities to individuals who are experiencing adversity. Each year, OBK cooks and delivers several thousand meals to people in need, including the homeless, families, and people who are vulnerable, through its innovative culinary space. OBK is more than a mere culinary service; it provides a sense of community by facilitating volunteer initiatives that cultivate compassion and collaboration. Additionally, the canteen collaborates with local charities and organisations to provide critical food assistance to the broader Sydney community. OBK conducts educational initiatives, culinary seminars, and advocacy efforts in addition to its meal courses, with the objective of addressing shortages of food while encouraging social inclusion. The commitment of its volunteers and employees is a testament to the influence of collective action and community. OBK's work is a cherished and indispensable

resource in Bondi and beyond, demonstrating the significant, long-lasting impact that small acts of compassion can provide.

#### ONEWAVE

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I would like to acknowledge OneWave, a dynamic, community-driven organisation that is renowned for its effective initiatives in the prevention and awareness of mental health illnesses, on behalf of the Coogee electorate. OneWave, which was established by a group of surfers, cultivates an inclusive and supportive atmosphere by hosting weekly 'Fluro Fridays.' During these events, participants convene to share stories, connect, and provide support to one another, all while commemorating the ocean's therapeutic power. The organisation's emphasis on mental health serves as a source of encouragement for those who are grappling with mental health issues, providing them with an environment in which they can experience empathy, recognition, and acceptance. OneWave has fostered a cascading effect that motivates individuals to prioritise their mental health, embrace vulnerability, and provide mutual support through education, events, and partnerships with mental health organisations. The bond that has been established between participants—be they surfers, residents, or visitors—is a testament to the power of community, connection, and collective healing. OneWave's work serves as a reminder of the significance of mental health and the influence of a supportive community.

#### VRTUS BONDI

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—We are proud to recognise VRTUS Bondi Gym, located at 12 Hall Street, Bondi Beach NSW 2026, for its outstanding community service and commitment to creating an inclusive and dynamic fitness culture. VRTUS's inviting environment has fostered fitness progress for all since its founding. The gym provides creative training regimens adapted to its clients' needs, helping them reach their goals and live healthier. The VRTUS team goes above and above to provide expert assistance and support that boosts confidence and motivation. Their approach promotes a holistic approach to health, including mental and physical fitness. Due to member camaraderie, the gym becomes a community centre where alliances are made, struggles are discussed, and accomplishments are celebrated in addition to being a place to work out. VRTUS Bondi Gym exemplifies community strength and solidarity. We appreciate their dedication and the great impact they have had on many people who have been inspired to live active and fulfilled lives. VRTUS, we recognise your work.

#### REMEMBRANCE DAY 2024

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping)**—On Remembrance Day, I was privileged to attend my first Remembrance Day Service as the Member for Epping. We gathered at the Boronia Park Cenotaph to honour the bravery, sacrifice, and resilience of those who served in times of war. This is a tradition that Epping locals have cherished, with many residents having ancestors amongst the names written on our local war memorials. Remembrance Day is a solemn occasion, but also one that calls on us to reflect on the values that our veterans fought to protect. It was heartening to see many school students in attendance, sharing in this great Australian tradition of paying tribute to those who paid the supreme sacrifice. We have a duty to pass on these traditions to the next generation, to instil within them a virtue of respect and love for our country. The Epping RSL Sub-Branch under the leadership of President Brian Swan AM organised an appropriately reverent service that was well attended by residents. I want to thank the Sub-Branch and its leadership committee for their continued service to the Epping community. Lest we forget.

#### JAMIE BOOTHMAN

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise Jamie Boothman. In October a team of twenty-three shearers from NSW travelled to Katanning, Western Australia to compete in the 2024 National Shearing and Wool Handling Championships, competing against teams from Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, and Tasmania. The championships drew on the skills and talents of individuals competing in shearing and wool handling events. The team from NSW participated in all categories which included Novice Shearing, Novice Wool Handling, Intermediate Shearing, Intermediate Wool Handling, Senior Shearing, Senior Wool Handling, Open Shearing, Open Wool Handling and Open Blade Shearing. The NSW team winning thirteen ribbon placements, being seen as one of the premier states. Jamie competed alongside team members in the NSW team event, securing a second-place finish for the team. Jamie also competed in the Open Shearing, which saw him take out second place, seeing him being selected for the Australian Shearing Team. He will represent Australia in the international competitions being held in New Zealand and Jamestown, South Australia. Congratulations on this wonderful achievement, wishing you

#### ALAN LLOYD

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Alan Lloyd who was recently named Allied Health Assistant of the Year at the Western NSW Local Health District Allied Health



Awards. This award recognises an Allied Health Assistant who consistently provides extraordinary and quality support for Allied Health Professions and services. They demonstrate a commitment to elevating the patient experience by being the backbone of the Allied Health service. Alan is an unsung hero of the health service having worked in a range of areas over his career, providing care and support to patients. Currently he works with the physiotherapy team at Walanmarra (Lourdes Hospital) helping to optimise intensity of practice for patients. He is known for his ability to work collaboratively so he can support the needs of the whole team, particularly playing a pivotal role in the supporting the hydrotherapy service. Alan's hard work in supporting not only the health professionals as well as the patients is commendable and I thank him for all that he does. Congratulations on this well-deserved award.

#### CATHERINE OSBORNE

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Catherine Osborne who was recently named Allied Health Leader of the Year at the Western NSW Local Health District Allied Health Awards. The Allied Health Leader of the Year is presented to someone who is continuously exhibited excellence in leadership, focusing on the values of teamwork, innovation, service, quality, compassion, and integrity. They show exceptional skills to support, mentor, and coach staff. Cath works in Radiation Therapy in the Western Cancer Centre in Dubbo and exemplifies all of these characteristics. A highly regarded leader in Radiation Therapy she demonstrates a passion for rural health. Catherine is highly committed to her role delivering clinical care for patients with cancer. She is known for promoting a culture of collaboration across not only the team, but the broader profession. Cath draws on her knowledge, skills, and professional relationships to advocate for rural services, and continually leads the team, builds the service, team capability and professional networks. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition Cath. Thank you for the empathy, advocacy and support you provide to your patients at such vulnerable times in their lives.

#### DANIEL LOWE

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Daniel Lowe who was recently named Early Career Allied Health Professional of the Year at the Western NSW Local Health District Allied Health Awards. The Early Career Allied Health Professional of the Year is presented to someone has shown exceptional potential during their first two years of practice. They are committed to seeking continuous learning opportunities and are driven to demonstrate emerging clinical excellence for their discipline. Daniel works in Radiation Therapy in the Western Cancer Centre in Dubbo and exemplifies all these characteristics. He has been the lead Radiation Therapist in the implementation of the clinical pathway for Liver Stereotactic Ablative Radiation (SABR) at the Centre and has been part of a district project team involving Radiation Oncology Medical Physicists, Radiation Oncologists and Medical Imaging Technologist. Daniel has also collaborated more broadly with metropolitan departments to ensure best practice procedures and clinical outcomes for our local patients. Congratulations on being awarded this prestigious award Daniel. It is inspiring to see passionate and dedicated upcoming health professionals.

#### BAYSIDE COUNCIL

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate Bayside Council's Innovative AI Flood Detection and Early Warning System which was honoured at the recent Keep Australia Beautiful NSW Sustainable Cities Awards. This award recognises Bayside's commitment to mitigating the effects of climate change and safeguarding our community through the use of cutting-edge technology. I would like to extend my most heartfelt congratulations to Bayside Mayor, Edward McDougall, and the countless hardworking staff members for this well-deserved recognition and thank them for their outstanding contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

#### JENNA MAYHEW

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I am extremely pleased to acknowledge and congratulate Ms Jenna Mayhew who was recently awarded the Charles Sturt Distinguished Alumni of the Year for Professional Excellence for her international impact on mental health and social advocacy. This award recognises outstanding leaders in their industry or profession who have made significant and positive impacts on their communities, their industry or the world. Originally from Carlton, Ms Mayhew has extended her impact all the way to Mexico City, where she founded Hola Therapy, a cross-cultural psychological practice. Jenna leads a talented team of therapists from around the world in delivering ethical, evidence-based and progressive intercultural psychology, creating a safe space for LGBTQI+ and non-traditional relationships. Her passion for addressing social issues has led to the outstanding growth and positive outreach of her services. I wish to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Ms Mayhew for this well-deserved recognition and acknowledge her inspiring and dedicated contributions to the field of cross-cultural psychology and social advocacy.

### DISCOVERY WRITERS

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to recognise and acknowledge Hurstville Discovery Writers for their work in embracing the power of the word, through poetry, plays, memoir and fiction. Since their conception in 2007, Discovery Writers have continually provided creative writing afternoons at Hurstville Library, hosted literacy competitions, workshops with well-known writers and produced regular publications. Discovery Writers organise their own program with a yearly theme inspiring an anthology. A professional development segment features in the group's monthly meetings, where each writer is given the opportunity to present a talk based on a researched literary topic. Many of these incredible writers have published their memoirs and poetry collections. The work of Discovery Writers has transformed Hurstville into a central point of contact for the growth and development of local writers, where age and background are no barrier to success. I wish to express my deepest appreciation for the work of Discovery Writers in not only encouraging creativity but empowering individuals to express themselves through the written word. In this way, Discovery Writers strengthens not just our local community but reaches a world wide web of readers through their works, and for that they have my sincere thanks and admiration.

### JODIE ATTENBOROUGH

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Local Tottenham resident and employee Jodie Attenborough of the Tottenham Central School has been recognised with a top educational award at the 2024 Premier's Prize night for Science and Engineering held on October 30 in Sydney. Mrs Attenborough received the Innovation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Teaching Award. Mrs Attenborough is a dedicated mathematics educator and is passionate about teaching in rural and remote areas. Mrs Attenborough transformed the numeracy course to an online platform for the Western Access Program, which supports HSC students in rural and remote areas by providing teaching and educational resources online. What a great achievement for Mrs Attenborough to be able to do this for our students. Not only has Mrs Attenborough taught in Tottenham, but she has also had the privilege of teaching in Cambridge, England, but nothing compares to being recognised and awarded a top educational award for teaching in a small rural community in the Barwon electorate. I congratulate Mrs Attenborough on receiving this award and I thank her for all her strong efforts and dedication in ensuring our students in rural communities like Tottenham are receiving such great mathematical skills.

### MOVEMBER AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the house the launch of the inaugural NSW Parliament Movember challenge. Movember is a crucial initiative, shining a spotlight on men's health issues such as mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer. Since 2003, Movember has funded more than 1250 men's health projects worldwide, transforming men's health research and the way health services reach and support men. Started by Aussie mates Travis Garone and Luke Slattery, the movement is now in 21 countries and has raised over \$730 million globally. I had the privilege of working for Movember when it was a small team back in 2008. By encouraging men to grow moustaches and engage in conversations, Movember raises awareness, reduces stigma and promotes early detection. At a time when men's health concerns can be under-discussed, Movember fosters positive change and prioritizes the well-being of men around the globe. I thank my Parliamentary colleagues, Warren Kirby MP, Matt Cross MP, and Roy Butler MP, for hosting this important event, and look forward to seeing an abundance of moustaches in the House this month.

### NURSES AND MIDWIVES OF NSW

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House the critical work of the nurses and midwives of NSW, who are taking additional industrial action today. Nurses and midwives are the foundation of our healthcare system, and deserve to be compensated, respected and supported for the essential work they do. In my community and across the state, nurses and midwives provide critical care and support to patients at every stage of life. Their expertise, compassion, and dedication are crucial, particularly in times of crisis such as the recent pandemic. The interstate pay and gender pay disparities hurt our healthcare workers and undermine our ability to maintain a strong public health system in NSW. I want to congratulate the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) General Secretary, Shaye Candish, NSWNMA Assistant General Secretary, Michael Whaites, NSWNMA President O'Bray Smith for their hard work and dedication to advocating within our community for better pay and conditions. I commend also all the healthcare workers striking today. Our community is strengthened by the work that you do both inside and outside the public health system.

### VALE JOHN COLLETT

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Mr John Collett was Wee Waa's last surviving WWII veteran and at the age of 98, on 11th November he passed away peacefully. Mr Collett was part of the Citizen Military Forces from June 30, 1943 to August 4, 1943 and he attended training camps near Albury NSW and Chidlow in Western

Australia. After joining the Australian Imperial Forces in August 5th, 1943, he trained for New Guinea in Queensland. John serviced 403 days overseas in the Aitape-WeWak campaign and since the war ended has lived in Wee Waa, where settled down and was married to his wife for 61 years. They went on to have 3 children, 7 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. Mr John Collett was well known in the Wee Waa community and will be missed greatly. I would like to send my sincere condolences to Mr Collett's family. John's contribution to his country was and still is very much appreciated. May he now rest in peace.

#### **ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF THE HOLY RESURRECTION**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—The Armenian Apostolic Church of the Holy Resurrection is a vital and valued spiritual centre of the Armenian Australian community in Willoughby and beyond. For the past sixty-five years, this beautiful Orthodox church in Chatswood's east has provided worship services, scriptural teaching, spiritual guidance, pastoral care and fellowship for the Armenian community. As the mother church of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Australia, it is the seat of His Eminence Archbishop Haigazoun Najarian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Australia and New Zealand. The parish of the Holy Resurrection itself is led and pastored by a dedicated team of clergy including Reverend Fathers Norayr Patanian, Bartevo Karakashian, and Avetis Hambardzumyan. Under their leadership, the parish is a hive of activity with Sunday services, Sunday schools, bible studies and prayer meetings, as well as running special religious education classes, a child sponsorship program and an Armenian community welfare centre. With its beautiful architecture and ornate interior, the church is also a popular venue for weddings and baptisms. I am so grateful for the immense contribution this church makes to the spiritual life of Willoughby.

#### **INTERNATIONAL NEPAL FELLOWSHIP AUSTRALIA**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—Willoughby is home to a sizeable Nepalese community and it is fortunate to have the Australian branch of the International Nepal Fellowship (INF) based locally in Chatswood. Founded in 1952 by Christian medical missionaries, the INF is Nepal's longest-serving NGO dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of the Nepalese people. From its Australian base in Chatswood, the INF supports community-led projects that increase food and income, improve health, respond to natural disasters and prepare for life in a changing climate. The INF partners with local organisations in Nepal that live and work among disadvantaged communities. It sees them as best placed to lead because they understand the needs of local people and work collaboratively for solutions. Guided by its Christian ethos, the INF is dedicated to serving the poor, the marginalised, and oppressed in Nepal. Eager to engage its Australian supporters with its work on the ground, the INF invites them to join it on its field trips to Nepal so they can witness the Fellowship's aid work firsthand. I warmly commend the work of the INF and all it does to help the people of Nepal.

#### **DOUGHERTY COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I am grateful for the facilities that Willoughby City Council provides to support the rich cultural and social life of the Willoughby community. One of these facilities is the Dougherty Community Centre, located in Chatswood. Available to be hired by community and corporate groups, this multipurpose centre has rooms to cater for groups of all size from 2 to 188 people. Featuring an annexe, an auditorium, a craft room, a function room, a kitchen and more, these rooms are suitable for meetings, seminars, and classes, with amenities available for on-site catering. Each week, the Dougherty Centre hosts a wide range of activities and classes, including healthy lifestyle, spiritual, educational, cultural and hobby groups. The Centre also provides a suitable venue for parties and other social functions. I have always been impressed by the versatility of the Dougherty Community Centre and its capacity to cater for such a diverse range of events and activities that make Willoughby the vibrant cultural community that it is.

#### **ZONTA BOTANY BAY**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I would like to recognize Zonta, an international organization that has championed women's empowerment and advocacy for over a century. Active in 64 countries, Zonta operates on both international and grassroots levels, working to create a better world for women and girls in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5. I commend the NSW and ACT District representative, Margaret McDonald, for Zonta's contributions to enhancing women's safety and support services in the fight against gender-based violence. Based in my electorate of Menai, Zonta exemplifies dedication to this cause through impactful fundraisers and advocacy campaigns that raise awareness, provide resources, and foster community support for survivors. Their efforts not only empower individuals but also inspire broader societal change. I extend my gratitude to the Zonta team in NSW for their exemplary service, advocacy, and fundraising efforts, which make a meaningful difference in the lives of women and girls at the local, national, and international levels.

## 2024 IRAQI FESTIVAL

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—On Sunday 10 November 2024, I had the pleasure of attending the Iraqi Festival in Liverpool, an inspiring event that celebrated Iraq's rich heritage through traditional dances, art exhibitions, literature, and cuisine. This festival offered a beautiful showcase of Iraqi culture and allowed our wider community to appreciate the artistry and legacy that the Iraqi community brings to Australia. The Iraqi community has been an integral part of the multicultural fabric of Southwest Sydney. Their resilience, commitment to family, and active involvement across business, education, and community service have greatly enriched our region, making it a thriving and inclusive place for all. Their traditions are accompanied by strong values of compassion, unity, and respect—values that strengthen our society and reflect the best of the Australian spirit. I would also like to commend the Iraqi community for their sense of compassion and generosity, demonstrated through charitable initiatives and cultural events that bring people together. By lending a helping hand to neighbours and supporting those in need, they embody kindness and unity, inspiring us all. Their contributions make our community a richer, more diverse, and connected place.

## REMEMBRANCE DAY

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—On Monday, November 11th, was Remembrance Day. This is an important day when we reflect on and remember the more than 103,000 Australians who died while serving or as a result of their service in wars, conflicts, and peace operations during both World Wars. Schools within the Chullora Network, including Bankstown North Public School, Banksia Road Public School, Greenacre Public School, Punchbowl Public School and Yagoona Public School, came together to pay their respects at the Bankstown RSL Sub-Branch Remembrance Day ceremony. Commemorating Remembrance Day teaches students the significance of sacrifice, service and peace. It creates awareness among young people about empathy, honours our veterans and instils a sense of responsibility to ensure that history is never forgotten. The ceremony was a meaningful reminder of our collective history and the importance of unity, reflection and gratitude. We are proud to have been part of this commemorative event that reinforces the value of remembrance and community spirit. I want to thank everyone who participated in this special day, and I want to thank the Bankstown RSL-Sub Branch for hosting Remembrance Day and demonstrating its importance. Lest we forget.

## AFTAB MALIK APPOINTED "SPECIAL ENVOY TO COMBAT ISLAMOPHOBIA"

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—Mr Aftab Malik, a British-born migrant to Australia of Pakistani origins, has been named as the Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia for a period of three years. Mr Malik is a Global Expert on Muslim Affairs at the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations. He served for nearly a decade in the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, advising on community engagement, social cohesion and countering violent extremism. Mr Malik was appointed the Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia because of his long-term dedication to advocating for tolerance, understanding, and justice within the community. This appointment comes at a critical time, with Islamophobia, anti-Muslim sentiment, and anti-Palestinian sentiment at unprecedented levels. His tireless efforts to promote dialogue and education have made a significant impact in fostering inclusivity and respect for all. I would like to thank Mr Malik for his leadership and vision, and I stand in support of his mission. His commitment to building bridges and promoting cultural awareness will be instrumental in creating a safer and more harmonious society for everyone. Congratulations, Mr Aftab Malik, on this important appointment, and thank you for all your work.

## MRS VUONG - PUNCHBOWL PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I would like to congratulate Mrs Vuong of Punchbowl Public School for receiving a NSW Department of Education, Chullora Principals Network award. This is a well-deserved award, as Mrs Vuong is a passionate educator who works tirelessly to support our students with their learning goals. Her expertise and dedication help the teachers to create meaningful learning and social goals, consult with parents and regularly review student progress. Mrs Vuong's empathy and patience shine through, always putting the student at the heart of every decision she makes. Her commitment to fostering a love of learning and supporting countless students has made a lasting impact on the community. Over the past three decades, Mrs Vuong has exemplified the qualities of an outstanding educator. Through her innovative approaches, Mrs Vuong has adapted to the ever-changing education landscape, ensuring that every student can thrive. Her dedication to professional growth and community involvement is commendable. Thank you, Mrs Vuong, for your tireless efforts and the positive influence you have on so many lives. Your legacy will continue to shape the future of education within our community. Congratulations on a well-deserved award!

### MARONITE COLLEGE OF THE HOLY FAMILY NEW SCHOOL LEADERS RECOGNITION

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—The Maronite College of the Holy Family in Harris Park is a significant place of religious education in Parramatta, rooted in the history of the Maronite faith in Australia. Congratulations to the new student leadership team at MCHF on their recent appointments. 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. Congratulations to College Captains Charlize Sleiman and Maroun Ters, Vice Captains Emily Farah and Jayden Bazouni, Primary Captains Izabella Abdou and Ethan Azzi, Vice Captains Pierre Hajje and Rebecca Sassine. Congratulations to Tiana El Bazouni, Bianca Ishac, Joseph Yousef as Secondary 'Gratitude, Empathy and Mindfulness', or GEM Leaders, and Raphael Merheb, Charlise Sassine, Mabelle Khoury and Primary GEM Leaders. Congratulations as well to House Captains Mikayla Moussa and Jacob Tawadros for Mackillop - Blue, Olivia Bechara and Ava Melhem for Charbel - Yellow, Charlize Khoury and George Hallal for Rafqa - Green, and Isbella Bourmelhem and Annabella Daher for Maroun - Red.

### MARONITE COLLEGE OF THE HOLY FAMILY HSC MAJOR WORKS NOMINATIONS

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—Parramatta is brimming with creative talent. The HSC gives students a chance to showcase their creativity and draw on this to advance their academic journey. Congratulations to the students from Maronite College of the Holy Family nominated for recognition of their HSC major works and performances. Ella Marie Kalache for her performance of "Take the A train" by Duke Ellington, Encore Nomination. Sienna Mekary, Simon Bazouni, Hannah Habib, Angelina Wehbe for a group drama performance titled "And So Dies the Book...", which laments the reality of society's declining interest in literature, achieving an OnStage Nomination. Hannah Habib for her performance of "Waiting for Gouda", a story about a neglected pet mouse waiting for cheese, achieving an OnStage Nomination. Sienna Mekary for her performance of "Dog Anxiety", a story about a chaotic experience of pet sitting a friend's dog, achieving an OnStage Nomination. Tatijana Tannous for creating an animated short film, utilising 3D and real-world techniques, that follows the mundane, monotonous life of a student, achieving a SHAPE Exhibition Nomination. Congratulations to these students for pursuing and excelling in your creative passions.

### STEVE LAWRENCE

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government)**—I am delighted to acknowledge Steve 'Stevie' Lawrence, Vice President of the Pagewood Botany Football Club, who was recently awarded the prestigious Football NSW State Award. Stevie was proudly nominated by the Eastern Suburbs Football Association for dedicating over a decade of invaluable service to the Pagewood Botany Football Club, transforming its coaching program to embrace all age groups and fostering a sense of inclusivity and growth. Still, Stevie's commitment extends beyond coaching, including not just his role as a board member, but his tireless volunteering efforts, which underpin the Club's remarkable success and promising future. Stevie's passion for football and his unwavering contributions have made a lasting impact on our Eastern Suburbs community. Congratulations, Stevie, and thank you for your dedication to our beautiful game.

### OZHARVEST 20TH ANNIVERSARY

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government)**—Today, I recognise and celebrate the 20th anniversary of OzHarvest, an incredible organisation dedicated to fighting food waste and hunger in Australia. Founded in 2004 by Ronni Kahn, OzHarvest has transformed the way we approach food security, rescuing surplus food from restaurants, supermarkets, and suppliers, and delivering it to people in need across the country. OzHarvest embodies compassion, resilience, and innovation, and their impact continues to be profound. Over two decades, they have redistributed millions of meals, reducing waste and nourishing countless lives. Their work extends beyond food delivery, with education and advocacy programs that inspire sustainable practices in communities nationwide. Recently, OzHarvest held their inspiring and revolutionary 'Unite to Feed Australia' concert on 7 November, hosted by Johanna Griggs and Jimmy Rees, to raise crucial funds to support their ongoing operations. Congratulations on 20 years, and thank you to the Waterloo OzHarvest team, in particular, for your dedication to building a brighter, more sustainable future for all in our community.

### WILLIAM (BILL) PATERSON

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to acknowledge Mr Bill Paterson who has dedicated over 40 years of service to our community. Bill served in the Army Signal Corp in 1969 and 1970 as part of the National Service Programme. He currently serves as a Board Member of the RFBI Concord Community Village and the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway. This memorial welcomes visitors and students to honour the bravery of those who served in the Kokoda and Papua New Guinea campaigns. Bill has served as a member of the Rotary Club of Concord, where he has held numerous committee roles including as President. His recent advocacy on behalf of the club was crucial in securing funding for the refurbishment of the BBQ shelter at Rhodes

Park. Bill was an elected Councillor on Concord Council for 20 years and served as Mayor and Deputy Mayor during this time. Bill's passion for service and dedication to the community is a true testament to his character and commitment in all that he does. On behalf of our community, I sincerely thank him for his many years of service and wish him all the best in the future.

#### **AUSTRALIAN SKIN CANCER FOUNDATION MOBILE SKIN CHECK TRUCK**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to acknowledge the Australian Skin Cancer Foundation's Mobile Skin Check Truck which visited Abbotsford on 26 October 2024. The Mobile Skin Check Truck officially launched in June 2023, providing free skin cancer checks for those who may not be able to access melanoma screening. The service also includes essential educational resources for all visitors to increase awareness, promote preventative measures and support those impacted by melanoma. I acknowledge the work of founder Mr Jay Allen OAM, the Board and staff of the Australian Skin Cancer Foundation. The work of ASCF would not be possible without their tireless efforts and commitment to ensuring all members of the community have access to this essential and life-saving service. I also extend my sincerest gratitude to Franca Rodilosso and her family for giving of their home to host the Skin Check Truck, as well as all members and volunteers of the Inner Wheel Club of Balmain for making this day possible. I know it was gratefully appreciated by our community to have access to this service, especially during a time when times are tough for many. Thank you and well done to all!

#### **KOKODA DAY SERVICE**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I acknowledge the Kokoda Day Memorial Service held at the Kokoda Track Memorial on 3 November 2024. The annual Kokoda Day service pays tribute to the Australian and Papua New Guinean Soldiers who lost their lives during the battle of Kokoda between July and November 1942. The 3rd of November marks the day the Australian flag was raised over Kokoda, signalling the end of fighting in New Guinea. The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway was established in Concord in 1996 and serves as a reminder to future generations of the sacrifice made by our brave servicemen and servicewomen. The site honours their sacrifice and acknowledges the longstanding partnership between Australia and Papua New Guinea. I acknowledge the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway Board of Directors Chair Jennifer Collins AM, Deputy Chair Carole-Anne Priest, Secretary Alice Kang OAM and directors Ray James OAM, Charlie Lynn OAM, Michael Megna, William (Bill) Paterson and Robert Ridge as well as Office Manager Kelly Easton. I sincerely thank all volunteers involved at the Kokoda Track War Memorial, and particularly Jennifer, Alice and Kelly for their dedication to preserving our history and honouring the brave servicemen and women who served in the Kokoda campaign.

#### **ROOKWOOD CEMETERY - UNVEILING OF ARMENIAN KHACHKAR**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Saturday 26th October, I was honoured to address clergy, officials and leaders from our local Armenian-Australian community at the unveiling of the Armenian Khachkar at Rookwood Cemetery. Khachkars have been part of Armenian culture for over a thousand years. The cross, set in stone with intricate patterns, is a symbol of Armenia's Christian faith, their ancient cultural inheritance and their resilience as a people, even in the face of persecution and great hardship. As the Co-Chair of the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Armenia, I am proud to witness the faith and resilience firsthand, both in Armenia and in our local Prospect Electorate. Hosted by the Armenian Apostolic Church of Australia, the unveiling ceremony acknowledged this Khachkar, like the one in the Parliament of NSW, as a symbol of gratitude from the Armenian community, especially those who came to Australia as survivors of genocide and have now been laid to rest in Western Sydney. My sincere thanks go out to His Eminence Archbishop Haigazoun Najarian, Archbishop, Armenian Apostolic Church of Australia, His Grace Bishop Nareg Berberian, Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Brazil, and all our Armenian-Australian community on a moving ceremony.

#### **PEMULWUY COMMUNITY GARDEN**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Happy 1st Birthday to the Pemulwuy Community Garden! It was great to attend the Pemulwuy Community Garden to celebrate this exciting occasion on 27th October, 2024. The Pemulwuy Community Garden is much more than a garden. Founded by the Cumberland City Council last year, the Garden has already united our community. It has become a scenic, local setting for people of all ages and walks of life to garden, grow their own fresh food, relax, meet neighbours, share tips and tricks, and form lasting friendships. Facilitating activities that encourage harmony, inclusion and education, the Garden promotes community spirit whilst helping our residents hone their own green thumb. The birthday celebration showcased the garden's contribution to our Western Sydney community. Featuring fresh, locally grown veggies from the garden, plants and seedlings, morning tea, a cake-cutting and crafts activities, it was an engaging day for the whole family. The thriving hub wouldn't be what it is today, without the commitment of the Pemulwuy Community Group and Garden Board. Thank you to President Shar Zhang, Volunteer President Sharlyn Teo, Secretary Urmi

Talukdar and all the dedicated volunteers, for your efforts to cultivate this vibrant and sustainable space for our community.

### COMMUNITY MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE - CMRC

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On 31st October 2024, I was pleased to address volunteers, staff and supporters for an event hosted by the Community Migrant Resource Centre, celebrating Multicultural Small Business Month at CMRC headquarters, Parramatta. Established in 1996, CMRC is a not-for-profit charitable organisation who do amazing work integrating newly arrived migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants with our proud Western Sydney community, including in our local Prospect Electorate. Their efforts over the past three decades have made a profound impact, helping keep Western Sydney a vibrant and harmonious place to live and work. I was joined by Western Sydney parliamentary colleagues Donna Davis MP and Andrew Charlton MP, as well as the Hon. Steve Kamper Minister for Multiculturalism and Joseph La Posta, CEO, Multicultural NSW, at CMRC headquarters, meeting with community advocates and hard-working staff. Melissa Montiero, CEO, Raj Raman, Business Services Program Manager, Priscella Mabor, Inclusion Strategy & Innovations Manager, CMRC, His Excellency Vasyl Myroshnychenko, Ambassador of Ukraine to Australia, and Cassandra Gibbens, Executive Director, SNSW Business Bureau, addressed attendees on the day. Congratulations again to Melissa Montiero, CEO and the amazing team at CMRC for another great event, celebrating our vibrant Western Sydney community.

### SALLY AND WARWICK BARTLEY

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Today, I'd like to recognise Sally and Warwick "Woz" Bartley, two incredible individuals from Whitebridge who have dedicated themselves to supporting families impacted by cancer through their volunteer work with Camp Quality. This year, Sally and Woz are back in action, gearing up for the 2025 Motocyc ride, where over 100 riders will join them. For the past nine years now, they've been hitting the road on their bikes, setting off from Heatherbrae and traveling through the beautiful Central West and Tablelands before circling back to Newcastle. Along the way, they've helped raise over \$1 million for Camp Quality, with \$92,000 coming from their own pockets and businesses. Thanks to their dedication, more kids and families get a break from the challenges of cancer, enjoying time together at Camp Quality's Camps and Family Retreats. Motocyc isn't just about the ride—it's about unity, joy, and making a real difference. Sally and Woz, thank you for your generosity, your big hearts, and everything you give back to our community.

### ST PAUL'S PRIMARY SCHOOL TINY FOREST

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting St Paul's Primary School and their Tiny Forest—a wonderful initiative that transforms a small space into a thriving native ecosystem. This forest, inspired by a planting method from Japan, is helping restore nature and raise awareness about climate change, all while bringing the school community closer together. As part of this project, students at St Paul's also took part in a Story Pole Workshop, where they created a beautiful Aboriginal story pole centred around their bird totem, the 'Bintelong'—the Blue-faced Honeyeater. Guided by Mrs. Dannielle Peachey and artist Kelly-Ann Lees, the students crafted traditional symbols and narratives that will be displayed in the school's Tiny Forest. This project not only connects students to nature but also honours Aboriginal culture and storytelling, making it a meaningful addition to the school and community. I can't wait to visit again soon and see how this incredible forest continues to grow and thrive.

### MUSIC IN THE PODIUM

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—I'm excited to welcome Music in the Podium back to Warners for the 2024 - 2025 season. This iconic event has become a staple of the Lake Macquarie community for over 25 years. Every Friday night, locals gather by the lake to enjoy a relaxed evening with friends and family, taking in a great mix of live music, from rock and blues to jazz and popular covers. It's the perfect way to unwind after a busy week, especially with the sunset over the water as the backdrop. With around 4,000 people coming together each week, it's no surprise this free, family-friendly event has become so loved. Not only does it celebrate live music, but it also offers an opportunity to support local artists and strengthen our community. A special thanks to Rhonda Campbell, the Event Manager, and Lake Macquarie City Council for their support in keeping this tradition alive. I look forward to seeing many wonderful performances in the upcoming months!

### KARDINIA ENERGY

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—Congratulations to Novocastrian innovators, Kardinia Energy, for powering Coldplay's Sydney Music of the Spheres concerts with innovative solar technology. Located at the Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources and developed by University of Newcastle physicist Paul Dastoor, the solar technology powered all four sold-out Sydney shows. The team printed 500 square metres of solar cell panels that were then placed around the Accor Stadium. The organic solar cells are printed on an ultra-lightweight laminate material that collect the power in battery packs that were then used to power Coldplay's C Stage. Under the objective of 'sustainable energy for all', the team aims to expand into industrial warehouses, disaster relief programs, remote communities, and refugee camps. This is an incredible achievement, and I applaud Kardinia Energy for their commitment to developing innovative and sustainable sources of energy generation for our community.

### ANDREA RUFO

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—I'd like to pay tribute to former Councillor and Deputy Lord Mayor for Newcastle Andrea Rufo, who sadly passed away earlier this month. I was fortunate to work with Andrea as a colleague on the City of Newcastle for four years, and admired his passion, dedication, and tenacity. Andrea has left a strong legacy in Newcastle. In addition to receiving an Order of the Star of Italy, Andrea received an Order of Australia Merit in 2013 for his breast cancer fundraising and outstanding service to our community. I will always have fond memories of Andrea's passion, warmth and integrity. I wish his family well. May he rest in peace.

### CARLOS DUQUE

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—On 30 November, local legend Carlos Duque will attempt to break a Guinness World Record to raise funds for this year's Movember. As the leading charity for men's health, Movember is a global movement that aims to reduce the stigma around men's mental health. Following his own mental health journey, Carlos began advocating for greater mental health awareness, participating in many fundraising campaigns. Since joining Movember in 2012, Carlos has raised an outstanding \$30,413 in donations. Carlos is training to break the record for the farthest distance pushing a lawn mower in 24 hours, aiming to run a total of 160 kilometres with his trusty lawnmower 'Victor' to reach his \$10,000 fundraising target. Carlos' cause has captivated Newcastle, and I can't wait to watch his hard work in action!

### ILLAWONG RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge the outstanding individuals from the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade recognised with National and Long Service Medals at the NSW Rural Fire Service ("NSW RFS") Illawarra Sutherland District Awards Presentation Area Command Medals and Awards Presentation Ceremony on 10 November 2024. The National Medals are presented to members of the NSW RFS in recognition of 15 years diligent service, while the Long Service Medal recognises ten years of service by current members of the NSW RFS, with impellers and clasps awarded for each medal for each subsequent ten-year period of service. I commend the individuals that were recognised. I acknowledge the recipients of National Medals and Clasps namely, Scott Lepre, George Kouroulis, Peter O'Connor, Jennifer Dolden and Peter Ross, along with National Long Service Medal recipients Jake Loseby, James Gallagher, Leslie Derwent and Jason Eshman. Furthermore, I recognise Matthew Angus, Gregor Last, Simon Delander and Garry Ward who each received both the National and Long Service Medals. I was pleased to join members of the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade to celebrate their exceptional achievements and again take this opportunity to thank them for their ongoing dedication and service of our community.

### MENAI BUSHFIRE BRIGADE

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge the outstanding individuals from the Menai Bushfire Brigade recognised with National and Long Service Medals at the NSW Rural Fire Service ("NSW RFS") Illawarra Sutherland District Awards Presentation Area Command Medals and Awards Presentation Ceremony on 10 November 2024. The National Medals are presented to members of the NSW RFS in recognition of 15 years diligent service, while the Long Service Medal recognises ten years of service by current members of the NSW RFS, with impellers and clasps awarded for each medal for each subsequent ten-year period of service. I commend the individuals that were recognised. I acknowledge National Medal recipient Roslyn Daw, Long Service Medal recipients James Ward and Paul Ciacchi, as well as Robin Tuckfield and Gregory Squires who each received both the National Medal and the Long Service Medal. I was pleased to join members of the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade to celebrate their exceptional achievements and again take this opportunity to thank them for their ongoing dedication and service of our community.



**MARRICKVILLE WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL – GARAGE SALE TRAIL**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—Marrickville West Primary School is continuing their annual tradition, kicked off in 2017, of hosting the largest Garage Sale Trail location in the Inner West on Saturday 16 November. The Garage Sale Trail is a nationally coordinated weekend of Garage Sales across Australia during November. It's a fantastic initiative that successfully recycles used goods and creates an avenue for community groups and charities to raise funds for their respective causes. This year, Marrickville West Primary School will boast a whopping 50 plus second-hand stalls. You'll be able to shop for anything from vintage clothes, jewellery and books, to toys, plants, coffee and food. In concurrence with Garage Sale Trail, Marrickville West P&C will be using the money raised from stallholder bookings, food sales, and the P&C stall to fund essential purchases for the students. Thank you, Principal Ruth Ling, the P&C Executive Lisa Hamilton, Sarah Marland, Sharmila Mani, Katherine Jacka and Amanda Williams and to all the team behind this great day. I encourage everyone to come down to Marrickville West Primary School on 16 November to enjoy the Garage Sale Trail.

**HAYLEY SCHUBERT**

**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)**—Central Coast Senior Constable Hayley Schubert from Kanwal has been selected to represent NSW in the Law Enforcement Torch Run at the 2025 World Winter Games for the Special Olympics in Turin, Italy. Ms Schubert will not only be running with the Flame of Hope through Italy, but also will be participating in a polar plunge event to raise funds and awareness for Special Olympics. The Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics is the largest public awareness vehicle and grass-roots fundraiser for Special Olympics. Known as Guardians of the Flame, law enforcement members and Special Olympics athletes carry the Flame of Hope into the opening ceremony of local competitions and into Special Olympics. Ms Schubert joined the NSW Police Force in 2017 and during her last week of police training at the Goulburn Academy, students sat through several presentations from various agencies, including Law Enforcement Torch Run. Ms Schubert is passionate in helping people and is fortunate to be surrounded by senior police officers who are like-minded and kind people who support Ms Schubert through her career. Ms Schubert is honoured with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to support the Special Olympics movement and its athletes.

**LUCAS SHIH**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise Lucas Shih. Lucas is a Year 8 student at Moss Vale High School. Lucas recently competed in the International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS). ICAS is a competition for primary and secondary students and conducted annually in Australia and in over twenty countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, Pacific countries, and America. Lucas competed in the ICAS Mathematics Assessment and achieved a High Distinction, which saw him placed in the top one percentage of participants. This is an incredible achievement in an internationally recognised academic competition. The ICAS Mathematic assessment test students' abilities in logical reasoning, problem solving and critical thinking, which also underpin key learning areas including number and arithmetic, algebra and patterns, measures and units, space and geometry and chance and data. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Lucas' skills in mathematics and his remarkable achievements to date. Lucas, it is without a doubt that your community is extremely proud of your accomplishments. I wish you well in your continuing studies and success.

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