

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Tuesday 19 November 2024**

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

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

## *Members*

### **MEMBER FOR CANTERBURY**

**The SPEAKER:** I wish a big happy birthday to the member for Canterbury.

## *Visitors*

### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome to the gallery some special guests of the member for Lake Macquarie. They are visitors from the Morisset Spinners and Weavers club, including Marje Whitbourne, who is 101 years old and is turning 102 in February. I acknowledge my senior electorate officer, Belinda Pevy, and her friend Monique. She does not get out of the office much. I welcome guests of the member for Port Stephens, youth consultants and staff from CREATE Foundation. The foundation represents the voices of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience. Its vision is to provide all children and young people with a care experience to reach their full potential.

I acknowledge guests of the member for Kiama from the Kiama Lions Club. I also acknowledge guests of the member for Wollondilly from the Mittagong Men's Shed, whom I had a conversation with earlier. Metalworkers are to my left and woodworkers are to my right. There is always a demarcation. I welcome guests of the member for Murray, Maya Badami and Betty Nguyen. I welcome guests of the member for Barwon, including Royal Life Saving Society CEO Michael Ilinsky, William Yang, Chloe Osborn and Tim Hodge. I also welcome guests of the member for Upper Hunter, including students and teachers from Vacy Public School. I acknowledge Ayush Pande, a guest of the member for Parramatta. I welcome teachers and students from Ballina Coast High School. Finally, I welcome guests of the member for Kellyville, including the principal of Kellyville Public School, Jenny Walker, and the year 6 leadership group.

**Mr Mark Coure:** And the nurses.

**The SPEAKER:** I cannot miss the Nurses and Midwives' Association or I will be in trouble again. When these matters are resolved, I will be most disappointed if they do not visit every question time. I welcome everybody to the gallery today.

## *Bills*

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (PECUNIARY INTERESTS) BILL 2024**

#### **First Reading**

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

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

## *Question Time*

### **HOUSING SUPPLY**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (12:07):** My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Housing approvals have plummeted after 20 months under the Minister's Government. Will the Minister guarantee that he will ever meet his housing targets at any point in his term as Minister?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (12:08):** If any member in this Chamber should not be seeking guarantees, it is the Leader of the Opposition. I do not think he could even guarantee his position until the end of the week. It is interesting. Off the back of the announcement last week by

the Premier of one of the largest planning reforms in the history of New South Wales, the Housing Delivery Authority, we have the Leader of the Opposition talking down housing again.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** He came in here last week nodding furiously in support of planning reform, "Yes, we need planning reform; we need more homes." I absolutely agree. Within 24 hours, he backflipped. When he and his shadow Minister went on radio to comment on the Housing Delivery Authority, they said, "We don't know what we think of it."

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Everyone else has come out in absolute support of this because they know it will deliver more homes, but the Leader of the Opposition is stuck in his age-old ways.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

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

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Let me guess—129.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** The member for Swansea is 100 per cent correct. My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. I asked the Minister: Can he guarantee that, at any point in his time as Minister, the Government will meet its housing targets?

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I uphold the point of order. The Minister will be directly relevant.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** The Leader of the Opposition needs to understand how housing is delivered in this State. I appreciate that for his entire political career and public life he has dedicated himself to opposing housing, but housing is largely delivered by the private sector. That is why the New South Wales Government has set up a planning system to ensure that that sector can continue to deliver. We are backing that in with the largest ever commitment to social housing in one budget in this State's history. We are backing that up with equity investments in Landcom to make sure it is in the housing game again. I noticed a media release came out earlier today—

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order—

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** The member for Dubbo does not like to hear about housing.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** I am still wondering about the relevance of the Minister's answer to housing targets. The Minister has not addressed that. He does have housing targets.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Dubbo will resume his seat. I uphold the point of order. The Minister will be directly relevant.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Since coming to office, more than 58,000 houses have been completed under this Government, and there are more on the way with nearly 72,000 under construction. Opposition members may not like it, but they are going to love the new houses.

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

**The SPEAKER:** The request is denied. The Minister had ample opportunity to answer the question and failed to do so. I will not entertain an extension of time. The member for Port Macquarie will come to order. The member for Goulburn will cease interjecting or she will be removed from the Chamber.

#### HOUSING SUPPLY

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (12:12):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on the New South Wales Government's work to address the housing availability and affordability crisis?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:12):** I thank the member for Strathfield for his question. It is an important question for the people of New South Wales.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** We need to confront that question to deal with the housing crisis in this State. There is no doubt about it, if we look at the statistics, particularly for young people. We are losing twice as many young people to other States as we are gaining. When we take into consideration that New South Wales takes 37 per cent of inbound migration across the country, that is an enormous number. We have had intrastate migration in the past, but that has generally been older Australians. Now we are losing young people—people we want to start

firms and businesses, and coach football and cricket teams. Big pillars of our community are leaving. As a result of that, the Government has made a decision to establish the Housing Delivery Authority in New South Wales. That authority will have the power to reach into development and zoning applications that would currently be with local government to make decisions to get housing going in the State.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** This is particularly acute when we consider that in New South Wales we build six houses per 1,000 people every 12 months. In Victoria they produce eight and in Queensland they produce nine. Those other jurisdictions have far more reach-in powers to get quicker approvals for the people of their States. I am pleased to say that the decision has been met with positive coverage by members of that marketplace.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Not councils.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** That's right, not councils. We have made the decision that the councils are too slow. What do you think about that?

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Are they happy with that?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** No, they are not happy.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier and the member for Dubbo will direct their remarks through the Chair.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** That is the Opposition's plan—back to the councils! Opposition members say, "The councils aren't happy." What, we cannot build anything if the councils are not happy? That is the Opposition's plan for the next four years if it is elected to government. The Urban Development Institute of Australia said:

Today's announcement of a Housing Delivery Authority has the potential to support a challenging housing delivery market by fast-tracking projects.

They support it. The Property Council of NSW said that the announcement responded to the Property Council's calls for faster approval pathways right across the State. They support it. The Business Council of Australia said this "will get homes built quicker and help address the national housing supply shortage." That is positive for the State. The Urban Taskforce of Australia said, "This is a massive step forward and has the potential to potentially reverse the hand-it-all-over-to-council philosophy of the former Government, which"—according to the Urban Taskforce—"delivered this crisis." We are looking closely at it. These are commonsense changes. [*Extension of time*]

We will accept expressions of interest for proposals over \$60 million in greater metropolitan Sydney and \$30 million in the regions. That comes on top of changes the Government has made to rental policy in this State, the largest public housing investment in the State's history in the recent budget, changes for homelessness services—and we are open to further ideas. We will not shut the door on a good idea. I draw the attention of the House to the Ryde October review by the member for Ryde. He is interested in homelessness too. He is calling for a New South Wales homeless cat inquiry. It is all here; the member for Ryde has put it in a pamphlet.

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

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. I will hear the point of order from the Manager of Opposition Business.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** The question was about housing; it had nothing to do with cats.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The Premier has the call.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The member for Ryde is interested in exploring ideas, and one of them is to establish a desexing voucher for cat owners from low-income households. That is the very first mention of housing support we have had from the New South Wales Opposition—and it is for desexing cats!

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

[*Interruption*]

I direct the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Ryde from the Chamber under Standing Order 249 and to escort him from the building.

[*The member for Ryde left the Chamber at 12:16 accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.*]

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The member for Ryde also wants to trial curfews for outdoor cats in key local government areas, but only in local government areas of concern. They tried to do that with people during COVID

and now they want to try it with cats. We are getting on with addressing the housing crisis in New South Wales and the Liberal Party—

**Mrs Wendy Tuckerman:** Point of order—

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Well, look what the cat dragged in!

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier has concluded his answer. Members will come to order before we hear the question from the member for Miranda.

#### STATE BUDGET

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (12:17):** My question is directed to the Minister representing the Treasurer. The budget papers forecast an 86 per cent increase in the State's net debt by 2028 compared with 2023. After 20 months of this Government, is it just debt and deficit as far as the eye can see?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (12:18):** I will be up-front. Yes, there is debt—because they left it to us!

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I appreciate that the member for Miranda is having a good go, but she has obviously not realised that when a government comes in, it inherits the books of the previous government. What did this Government inherit when it inherited the books of the previous Government?

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** It inherited the largest debt ever passed from one government to any incoming government in the history of New South Wales.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** What has happened with the debt?

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** In two budgets we have addressed that. The only way we can go about the task of rebuilding essential services, of making sure that the pressure on inflation is reduced and of making sure that we get things back on track so that we can make the investments we need in the future is to start to address the debt that was left behind by the Perrottet Government. What have members opposite done to support this cause?

**Ms Eleni Petinos:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume his seat. The member for Miranda rises on a point of order.

**Ms Eleni Petinos:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The Minister was asked to speak about the State's net debt, comparing 2023 with 2028. He cannot rewrite history. We have asked about the 2028 figures.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Miranda. I do not uphold the point of order. The nature of the question requires a wideranging answer.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I have been talking about debt the whole way through. I have been talking about the debt we inherited from members opposite.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** We have had to go about the task of budget repair. It is a challenging task that every Minister has been engaged in. Those who have not been engaged with that, though, are members opposite. They have done nothing. Actually, they have done worse than nothing; they have opposed initiatives when we have tried to address the budget. Why is that? It is because, when they came out of the COVID pandemic, they were addicted to spending. They spent more in the last nine months of the previous Government than in half the time of the COVID pandemic. I think it was \$29 billion of new spending initiatives in the last nine months. That is what drives up debt. You drive up debt, and you drive up debt, and you drive up debt.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** I don't drive up debt; I'm in racing.

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

## BULLYING

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (12:21):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on the New South Wales Government's work to lift standards of behaviour—in particular, responses to bullying—in schools across New South Wales?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (12:21):** I thank the member for East Hills for a question the answer to which is on all of our minds. It is more than a serious challenge that we face for all of our children. I very much hope that every one of us is scared, for every child in our communities and also for our own children, of what is going on right now for so many of them. There was a time when bullying and teasing, at school or otherwise, was dismissed as part of growing up. That is not acceptable anymore. The pressure on our young people is ever mounting and at an all-time high. The truth is that that pressure on our young people often results in bullying both at school and also when outside of school hours, in the middle of the night, on handheld devices and on their computers.

I say this with a lot of respect for the people who work every day for our kids in our schools: Schools cannot be the panacea for all of society's challenges. It is important for me as the Minister to say that to our educators. But the truth is that so many of our challenges in society walk through the school gates each and every day. The people with a duty of care for those kids—the teachers and the support staff members from all of our schools across all the sectors—do everything possible each and every day to exercise that duty of care to keep those kids safe. But, as a government, we want to make sure that we are pulling out all the stops to support people who work in the schools, to ensure that, when those kids come to whatever school they are enrolled in—it does not matter whether it is a government school, a Catholic school or an independent school—we have a consistent framework to keep them safe from any type of bullying they are subject to, whether in the school grounds or outside the school grounds.

This is new territory for us, and it is difficult, but it is something that the government sector and the Catholic and independent sectors are really willing and able to work together on. I am proud to have asked the NSW Education Standards Authority [NESA], as the regulator, to do some work with all three sectors to oversee a framework of anti-bullying policies and procedures. [*Extension of time*]

We do it with the curriculum, and members would be well aware of that. We oversee a curriculum across the 3,000 schools that make up every type of school in New South Wales. There is absolutely no reason we cannot do it for something as important as keeping our kids safe. At the end of the day, we talk a lot about educating those kids when they walk through the school gates, but our first and biggest priority and the contract we have with their caregivers and their parents is that we keep them safe. The teachers, principals and support staff members are often those trusted people who can notice that something is not quite right—that there is something going on with that child in that class.

We will be convening what is legislatively required under the Act, the Schools Advisory Council, which is how all sector heads come together through the Minister. For the first time ever we will actually be looking at an overarching framework across all sectors, which I will ask NESA to oversee. It is a bit ridiculous that this has not existed before. When we look at international reports, even the Positive Education Schools Association tells us that Australian children experience more bullying than almost any other OECD country.

**Mrs Sally Quinell:** Shame.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That is shameful. We have to act. The Premier is calling for a national approach. We will do what we can at a State level. But those statistics are not the most important thing. The statistics belie the fact that the impact is on each one of those families who have been tragically impacted by something that started with bullying online. I do not know a teacher or a principal or a worker in a school who does not want to do everything possible to stop this. We will work together across all sectors to keep all our kids safe, no matter where they go to school.

## MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (12:26):** My question is directed to the Premier. I thank the Premier for agreeing to support my short, sharp inquiry into the socio-economic impacts of the Federal Government's Murray-Darling Basin policies. Does the Premier empathise with the people of rural New South Wales who say they have reached breaking point? Will the Premier work to ensure that the people of rural New South Wales are heard and properly supported by the New South Wales Government in 2025?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:27):** I thank the member for Murray for her question. The answer is, absolutely, of course we will. The New South Wales Government has worked closely with the member

for Murray, the member for Orange, the member for Barwon, other regional MPs and any Nationals who are prepared to walk through the door and offer a creative solution. We do not hear a lot from The Nationals—they are asleep most of the time—but they have some strong MPs who have come up with practical ideas to try to fix issues of concern in their communities. I will give some examples: 500 paramedics for regional and rural New South Wales. We have doubled the subsidy to get regional health workers into the bush so that they can create careers, join communities and start families in regional New South Wales.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** We can announce that we have reduced the vacancy rate in public schools in regional communities in New South Wales by 25 per cent. We are building almost 50 preschools in regional New South Wales. There is a massive amount of road funding for the bush, particularly around the Central West, which has been hit hard by natural disasters in recent years, and close to \$1 billion to combat biosecurity threats in our agricultural sector because we recognise that agriculture and primary industries will be a key part of export-led industries in the future. Australian and New South Wales produce is the best in the world.

We have a conflict with the Commonwealth Government in a few key areas in regional New South Wales, and we have not been shy about highlighting them. The first one is about water buybacks. We do not support them. We do not want the Federal Government to do it. Previously, I made the point to the member for Murray that whether or not the State signs up to Federal-State agreements on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, the Commonwealth can still intervene with water buybacks at its own discretion. I hope and wish it does not, but it can.

The second point is about what we regard as Commonwealth Government overreach regarding mineral extraction in key parts of the State. The extraction of those minerals is crucial for boosting economic performance and giving the State some kind of resilience and diversification for export industries when foreign buyers of coal inevitably start to wind down those purchases in the years ahead. We want to make sure we export services-led industries, primary industries and critical minerals to the rest of the world. New South Wales has been very good at being an export-led economy for many years. But for the State's prosperity and success we have to be cognisant of the future, which undeniably lies in regional New South Wales.

#### TOBACCO AND E-CIGARETTE RETAIL

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (12:30):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's plan to crack down on the sale of illegal vapes across New South Wales?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:30):** I thank the member for Fairfield. Along with other members from that region, he advocated very strongly for the biggest investment in the local hospital for 35 years. It is a \$550 million investment, with the local design planning team recently announced. I thank him and those other MPs from surrounding areas for their advocacy. Vapes are a significant issue. I acknowledge the members of the Nurses and Midwives' Association in the public gallery today and the work they do across the health system. Vapes are a particularly concerning health issue for young people. Arguably, it is one of the biggest public health challenges facing young people in society today.

This week the Government will continue to engage in reform around vaping, particularly around penalties and jail terms. We have seized around 300,000 vapes over the course of the past 12 months, but the penalties in relation to vaping are simply out of kilter with the expectations of parents and families. I have a 14-year-old; many members have teenagers and know this conversation very well. It is a conversation happening around family dinner tables, in schools and at local sporting events. As health Minister, I cannot go a week without someone talking to me about concerns they have around vaping. About 19 months ago, in week one, I met with Dr Chant and told her very clearly that I thought this was an area of reform that we needed to lean into. Over the past 18 months, we have done exactly that.

We are considerably increasing the fines that offenders can receive for the supply of vapes across the board, but particularly to young people, from \$1,650 to \$1.6 million to align with the Commonwealth penalties. At the moment we have a ludicrous situation where Commonwealth law enforcement can go in and fine a person a lot more than what New South Wales officials can. We are increasing those penalties. We are increasing the jail terms from the current six months to seven years. We are determined to reduce the supply of this product to young people across our communities. Yesterday at the Youth Summit the issue of vaping came up loud and clear. This is an issue that young people are concerned about. It is an issue that parents are concerned about. It is an issue that teachers and schools are concerned about. As a society, we have to do more. [*Extension of time*]

If we are being honest with one another, the reality is that big tobacco has hoodwinked legislators for a long time around vapes being exclusively outlined for people who are trying to quit smoking, when the reality could not be further from that. The marketing of vapes is aimed directly at young people. The statistics do not lie. Young people aged 12 to 17 who vape are five times more likely to take up cigarette smoking. That should be a concern for every one of us. It took 75 years to bring down the level of tobacco use in this country. The human, individual and societal costs over that time were astronomical. We cannot afford to miss this opportunity. We are coming from behind, but we are determined to catch up. We are working extremely closely with the Federal Government to try to reduce supply.

This time three months ago we seized approximately 40,000 vapes. At the same time last year we seized approximately 156,000 vapes. On the surface, that looks like a concern. In fact, it might be that supply is starting to get harder and harder, with the ability of the Federal Government to stop more at the border. We are not saying that yet—I am far from convinced that is the case—but we are starting to see some positive green shoots. I say to young people that they are not going to get off cigarettes by using vapes. In fact, they are five times more likely to start smoking cigarettes. That is a big concern. The Government is ready and willing to try to help young people get off this product. We have a role, as a government and as legislators, to move fast. That is exactly what we are doing to address what is one of the biggest public health issues facing our young people in New South Wales.

### BURREN JUNCTION PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands) (12:35):** My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Early Learning. After 20 months in government, is it acceptable that parents at Burren Junction Public School are forced to fundraise to provide the salary of a current teacher at the school after the Minns Government cut its funding?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (12:35):** I will answer that question directly before I provide some really essential background. I advise the member that I will look at what is happening at that particular school for that teacher's wages. But let me be really clear: There is no situation where that should be happening because there is a record amount of funding going into public education under this Government.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** In fact, the focus on driving down teacher vacancies, ensuring that more teachers and support staff are made permanent and giving teachers the biggest pay rise in a generation has meant that regional teacher vacancies are down 24 per cent in regional areas like the one represented by the member for Northern Tablelands. I will go away and look at that particular case at that particular school. But I say to the House that that should not be happening because this Government is committed to public education and has invested more in public schools than the former Government ever even dreamt of investing.

This Government is not only investing in the teachers and support staff—who are running the schools, delivering the lessons and learning the brand-new curriculum that we are rolling out—but also supporting and valuing those teachers. We are respecting those teachers through providing record pay increases and a decrease in their workload. The agreements we make with those teachers ensure that they have more and more access to professional development opportunities. This Government is committed to public school educators like—I am going to say it—no other government before. I look forward to resolving the matter raised by the member.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** But I am proud to be a Minister in this Government, which is delivering more for New South Wales teachers than any other government before it.

**The SPEAKER:** I direct the member for Tamworth to remove himself from the Chamber for 10 minutes under Standing Order 249A.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Tamworth left the Chamber at 12:38.]*

### CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (12:38):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Families and Communities. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to improve support for vulnerable children in out-of-home care?

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (12:38):** I thank the dedicated member for Camden, who is a true champion for children and cares deeply about young people having bright futures. I also welcome the amazing young people from the

CREATE Foundation who are in the gallery today. CREATE gives a voice to children and young people in out-of-home care, and the young people joining us today have bravely shared some of their experiences with me already. They have also shared some ideas and solutions, because they want to help shape a better system for the future.

Some of those young people have also spoken with the Advocate for Children and Young People and contributed their voice to the harrowing report that the advocate produced. I have previously spoken about that report in this place. Young people gave horrifying accounts of their experience of being placed in emergency accommodation, like hotels, motels and caravan parks. Members might remember the stark and awful description provided by one young person in that report of how they felt like a dog being moved from cage to cage.

When we came into government, we were confronted by a broken child protection system where the responsibility for children who were in the care of the State had largely been outsourced to non-government organisations, and the use of those harsh and obscenely expensive arrangements had also become the norm. We recognised that getting vulnerable children out of those awful hotels, motels and caravan parks had to be an important part of our reforms. After meeting with brave young people who had experienced those settings and shared their stories of loneliness, hopelessness and the fear they felt, it became an absolute priority for us as a government.

A year ago I set up a dedicated team in the Department of Communities and Justice to tackle the overuse of high-cost emergency arrangements, with a special focus on the worst type of those arrangements, run by unaccredited providers: alternative care arrangements, or ACAs. The team's hard work has seen the number of children in ACAs plummet by 81 per cent, down to just 27 children in those arrangements today. By March next year, ACAs will be banned from our system altogether. In other high-cost emergency arrangements, we have reduced the number of kids by 33 per cent in just one year. Some of the solutions that we have identified were pretty obvious; it is shocking that they were not done before. Given that the former Government watched foster carer numbers plummet and high-cost emergency accommodation arrangements skyrocket, it made sense to recruit more foster carers, so we have recruited 200 new emergency foster carers. [*Extension of time*]

Those 200 new emergency foster carers have already provided safe homes for 852 kids—kids who might otherwise have gone into hotels and motels. For the first time in over a decade, the New South Wales Government is also recruiting long-term foster carers. That is just the beginning. I am pleased to report to the House that on Monday—just yesterday—we proudly opened the first of five new Waratah Care Cottages in Western Sydney. Those cottages will provide safe, nurturing and stable homes to children who have already endured too much instability and uncertainty in their lives. Kids—in particular, sibling groups—currently living in high-cost emergency arrangements are transitioning into those homes while longer term foster and relative care is sought. The new care cottages, overseen by highly trained and accredited staff, are far more than just a roof over a child's head. Kids will benefit from a compassionate, trauma-informed approach—one that has been sorely lacking in the broken system of the past. The Waratah Care Cottages are a significant step.

Unlike the former Government, which tried to outsource its responsibilities, our Government is stepping in and setting up stable and caring homes for vulnerable children. Every step we take to move away from unsuitable emergency arrangements is one step closer to better outcomes for vulnerable children who desperately need our support. Block by block, we are building the foundations for a more compassionate out-of-home care system where children's voices are heard so that they can thrive, not just survive. The opening of the first Waratah Care Cottage marks another critical step forward, putting kids on safer and more caring paths to brighter futures. I hope the young people in the gallery today can see that their voice does matter and that the New South Wales Government is not only listening but also acting.

### TEACHER WORKFORCE

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (12:43):** My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Early Learning. The Minister says that supervision will be available for students on the additional pupil-free days at public schools next year; the Teachers Federation says otherwise. After 20 months of this Government and with a spiralling cost of living, who is telling the truth?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (12:44):** I am encouraged by the fact that the Opposition is paying attention to the detail of our agreement with the Teachers Federation.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** As part of the agreement that we proudly struck with the teachers of New South Wales, we have delivered another historic pay rise, as well as improved working conditions such as increasing part-time work.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** Job share.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** And job share, the Minister for Industrial Relations reminds me. They will help a lot of our teachers working in our public schools and, in fact, increase numbers of teachers working in our public schools. As part of that agreement, for the term of this consent award over the next three-year period, we agreed on extra staff development days while we roll out a once-in-a-generation reform to the New South Wales curriculum. As the Minister for Education and Early Learning, I am proud to stand by that because the teachers in front of our children absolutely deserve and need those professional development days to get used to a new curriculum that will—

**Mr Michael Kemp:** What about the nurses?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No, we are talking about school development days. That is specific to schools. School development days will help teachers to get used to a curriculum that will be a much more evidence-based and knowledge-based curriculum for our children to learn.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume her seat. The member for Hawkesbury rises on a point of order.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, relevance. We understand that the extra pupil-free days are important.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hawkesbury will resume her seat.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** The question was whether there will be extra supervision for those days.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Hawkesbury to order for the second time. There is no point of order. The Minister has been directly relevant.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** As a result of the award agreement with the Teachers Federation and therefore that multi-year agreement with the teachers of New South Wales, the number of staff development days will increase for teachers to get used to the new curriculum. Unlike members opposite, we value that profession because we know that it is at the heart of improving outcomes for our children.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume her seat. The member for Coffs Harbour rises on a point of order.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** The question was whether there will be supervision available for students on the pupil-free days.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat.

[*Interruption*]

I do not need the question to be repeated. The member for Coffs Harbour was clearly taking a point of order about relevance, and I have already ruled on it. The Minister has the call.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I do not know where the Opposition has been, but staff development days have always happened. They have been around forever. They will operate as they normally do. We are giving teachers more for this period so that they can have professional development. That is the only change. It means that we are actually valuing the profession that starts all others, and that makes members opposite very uncomfortable.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Coffs Harbour to remove himself from the Chamber for 10 minutes under Standing Order 249A.

[*Pursuant to standing order the member for Coffs Harbour left the Chamber at 12:48.*]

**The SPEAKER:** I remind Opposition members that it is my decision as to whether the Minister is in order or is being directly relevant to the question.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** I said my point of order was about relevance, and you put me on a call. How is that a call to order, Mr Speaker?

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** You can't argue with the Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** No member can argue with the Speaker, and I will not entertain that argument now. I reiterate that the Minister was clearly directly relevant throughout her answer.

**NSW HOUSING PATTERN BOOK DESIGN COMPETITION**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (12:48):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister update the House on how the Minns Labor Government's pattern book design competition will help deliver more well-built homes faster?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (12:48):** I thank the member for Liverpool for her question. She is someone who is genuinely interested in advancing more homes in New South Wales, not like members opposite, who are opposed to getting more homes. In that vein, on Friday the Government revealed the much-anticipated designs that were selected as the winners of the New South Wales pattern book design competition. We should remind ourselves of a couple of things. This was announced by the Premier in last year's Bradfield Oration, undertaken by *The Daily Telegraph*, and delivered as part of this year's Bradfield Oration. That is progress. Members opposite would not recognise it.

The pattern book is the only one of its kind in the world. The winning designs, along with the fast-tracked planning pathway that will go with them, will help to deliver more well-designed homes across New South Wales in the years to come. The design competition was established to get the best and brightest, the most innovative and resourceful designers and architects from across the country and around the world engaged in shaping the future of housing in New South Wales. I thank the expert jury who helped the New South Wales Government Architect, Abbie Galvin, select the winners, including Philip Thalys, Jennifer McMaster, Michael Mossman and Paul Karakusevic.

The quality of work produced by the finalists was astounding, particularly those in the student architect category, where we had a lot of homegrown talent. The winning designs include three terrace designs and three mid-rise apartment designs. The winners in the terrace category were Housing is a Verb from New South Wales and Victoria, Officer Woods from Western Australia, and a team of students from the University of Sydney. The winners in the mid-rise apartment category were Andrew Burges Architects from New South Wales, Neeson Murcutt Neille and others from New South Wales and Victoria, and Spacecraft Architects from New Zealand.

While we had an enormous amount of international interest in the design competition, I am pleased that five out of the six winners were from Australia, with a great showing from New South Wales as well, and that is in no small part a result of wanting to be part of shaping the future of the city they live in. The designs were picked because of their accessibility, adaptability to changing lifestyle needs, affordability and environmental sustainability. They respond to the unique Australian climate and desire for indoor and outdoor living, incorporating shade and ventilation. Anyone who uses one of the endorsed pattern book designs will have access to an accelerated planning pathway, meaning builders can get onsite faster and people will be able to move into new homes even sooner.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** And no backyards.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I note the member for Hawkesbury opposes it. That is no surprise. Once again, the Opposition pursues bipartisanship in word but not in action when it comes to housing. [*Extension of time*]

The important thing is that the Opposition and everyone else will have an opportunity to have their say. They will be able to pick their favourite design, and everyone can jump onto the New South Wales Government's website and vote for their favourite. Unlike other votes that are likely to take place in the coming months in New South Wales, we are not asking people to choose between a heritage-listed manor in Wahroonga, a flashy modern design from Manly, a weather-beaten beachside bungalow from somewhere like Cronulla perhaps, or a walled-off mansion in Vaucluse that is open to no-one and just blank. These are houses that would be at home in our streets and suburbs, unlike some of those other designs that we see around the place, with members who are foreigners when they leave their leafy areas and are not at home.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Just like the Minns Government, the designs are a fresh approach and a fresh start for New South Wales. They build on the major reforms that the Government has made to simplify the planning system and unlock housing across New South Wales, including the largest rezoning in New South Wales history under our Transport Oriented Development program, the introduction of a new planning pathway, as the Premier outlined, through the Housing Delivery Authority, multiple millions of dollars to Landcom to build new homes in well-located areas for essential workers, the largest investment in social housing in one budget in this State's history, and the biggest reforms to rental laws in this State for more than a decade. The Government is absolutely

dedicated to making sure there is a better deal on housing, and the Opposition is absolutely opposed to helping us deliver it.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** They talk bipartisanship on one day and backflip the next. The pattern book is just another part of the Government's plan to build a better New South Wales, with more homes and services for young people, and families and workers with somewhere to live—something the Opposition was not capable of delivering in 12 years.

### SMALL BUSINESSES

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (12:53):** My question is directed to the Minister for Small Business. Annual business insolvencies rose 43 per cent between the 2023 and 2024 financial years, and this last September quarter had 30 per cent more insolvencies than last year. After 20 months in government, when will the Minister take action to reduce cost pressures on business?

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. The member for Castle Hill will cease interjecting. That behaviour is most out of character.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (12:54):** I thought the shadow Minister for Small Business was a real fan. It is obvious that it has been a very difficult time for the small business community over the past few years, with interest rates and everything we know they have had to encounter. When the member for Willoughby highlights the insolvency factor, we all know what that is. A big chunk of the insolvencies have been because businesses have been carrying old ATO debt for a very long period. The ATO fast-tracked a lot of the debt recovery, and that has created the situation where a lot have collapsed. That is the reason for that escalated—

**Mr Tim James:** Did you phone Canberra?

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** I am sorry for giving the member the actual reason it has occurred. In the past few years, we have done so much for the small business community in terms of engaging with the community. I can talk about toll relief and energy relief, but the greatest thing the Government has done is provide them with true support and assistance during their times of need. We are helping them through difficult periods, unlike Opposition members. They are offended by assisting small business, and that is a real shame. Little Bo Peep opposite jumped up last week in relation to that and said, "Oh, you offered them support? That's terrible!" That is what they stand for.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** There is always this expectation that the Liberals are in touch with the business community. Absolutely zilch. It is disgraceful. The only positive thing I have seen at events we have been at in the past is the member for Willoughby up the back clapping. I thought he was a real fan. I am really disappointed with the line of questioning.

**Mr Tim James:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has concluded his answer. The member for Manly will come to order. I am unsure why the member for Willoughby is on his feet.

**Mr Tim James:** I was seeking an extension of time.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has concluded his answer. The member for Willoughby will resume his seat. Members will come to order, including the member for Rockdale.

### SPORTING EVENTS

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (12:57):** My question is addressed to the very energetic Minister for Sport. Will the Minister please update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to make New South Wales a world-class destination for sports fans?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (12:58):** A quality member asking a quality question. I thank the member for Penrith. She is a fantastic local member and a big sports fan. What a weekend for sports fans in Sydney's west. On Saturday we got the great news from Minister Scully that Penrith Stadium has the green light from Planning. There is no mucking around on this side. Under those opposite, there was five

years of broken promises. Under the Minns Labor Government, we have delivered designs and planning approval in 18 months. On Sunday we announced with the great member for Riverstone, and his questionable moustache, that full-strength beer will be coming to Western Sydney stadiums. The member is right. It is not fair that one half of the city gets full strength while the other half is treated with less respect, so the Government kicked off a six-month trial to ensure that fans in the west can enjoy the same match day experience as fans in the east.

But that is not all the Government is doing. We have locked in the Sydney test for seven years, we are getting another Ultimate Fighting Championship event in February, we have the paddle world cup in Penrith and the Netball World Cup is on the way. But that is still not all. I know the Hunter caucus, like many others, would have been jumping out of their seats this morning with the news that New South Wales has secured the NRLW Magic Round for the next three years—a great announcement. There is no better place to host it than Newcastle, a city that not only loves sport but especially loves its women's rugby league.

Last year Newcastle had the privilege of hosting the first ever sold-out Women's State of Origin match. McDonald Jones Stadium was jam-packed. I have no doubt that when Magic Round comes around in 2025, Novocastrians will once again pack the stadium to the rafters. An estimated 40,000 fans are expected across the weekend, but I reckon that number can be blown out of the water. The deal is great news for regional New South Wales. Hosting the NRLW Magic Round in our regional centres will inject millions of extra dollars into regional pubs, hotels and restaurants. [*Extension of time*]

It is true that the Government has yet to lock in a location for 2026 and 2027. I know the member for Vaucluse was keen to host the matches in the Far West. Unfortunately for the member for Barwon, she was referring to Parramatta! Funnily enough, I am yet to hear support from the Nats for this announcement. Millions has been injected into regional New South Wales but there has been radio silence from old Dickie Knee, the member for Dubbo. Nothing. Zip. Who knows? Instead of the Central West, we might have to take it to Wagga Wagga. If there is one thing I am confident of it is that Wagga Wagga has a full range of beverage options for every punter. It does not matter if you are a footy fan or the leader of a political party; there is something for everyone—mid-strength for the member for Cronulla; bitter for the member for Oatley; full strength for the member for Bathurst; a sour for the member for Willoughby; and, of course, a zero for the member for Wahroonga.

#### STATE DISASTER SUPPORT

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (13:03):** My question is directed to the Minister for Emergency Services. The recent power outages in the west of the State, which are currently ongoing in Carinda, saw an amazing effort from communities, volunteers and agencies, but they highlighted the need for greater planning and preparation in both the response and recovery phases. How will the Minister ensure that future events are informed by these recent incidents to strengthen any future disaster response?

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (13:03):** I thank the member for Barwon. As I said last week, he is an incredible champion and advocate for his local community, which is the size of Germany, and certainly a member who knows every part of his electorate. I had the great pleasure of spending about a week with him a couple of weeks ago. I had a great time but, more importantly, I got a great understanding of what is unique and diverse in his local community. Barwon constituents have had a pretty rough time of it lately, starting with the storm that brought down seven transmission lines a few weeks ago and then on Sunday, as the member touched on, the storm that hit around the Walgett shire that affected the community of Carinda, a small community of 93 residents.

As I speak, all the customers in the Broken Hill area have been reconnected to mains power. Ongoing is the outreach program in Broken Hill and the mobile service outreach program for more remote communities, coordinated by the NSW Reconstruction Authority and Service NSW via the Kangaroo Bus. The Government announced community support through the recovery assistance points, which have helped 5,000 people, as well as over 4,300 grants of \$200 for individuals and \$400 for businesses to provide power outage support for the local community. The NSW Reconstruction Authority, in partnership with Foodbank, has also delivered around 2,000 hampers. That work continues. I join the member in acknowledging the outstanding efforts not only of volunteers but also of all the agencies and the way they worked together to support the communities, particularly those in remote and isolated areas.

There was another part to the question. Many of my colleagues would know that I often speak about Kaizen, the Japanese philosophy of continuous improvement, which I like to use in my life. The member for Barwon is a member of the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority, which is currently undertaking an after-action program that will be reported to the committee. The Government needs to look at not only what it did but also what it needs to do better and whether the support provided was appropriate for the community. This goes to the important sense of continuous improvement. As I said, a severe storm hit the Walgett

area late afternoon/early evening on Sunday that did some real damage around the very small community of Carinda. [*Extension of time*]

The great member for Barwon got straight onto the telephone and asked for support and assistance, and he made sure the Government delivered it. The storm brought down powerlines, which, again, interrupted power transmission. Our amazing State Emergency Service arrived really quickly but the community received reinforcements and support from different units, including from Walgett, Nyngan and other areas nearby. Not only was the SES first to make sure the community was protected but it also secured the area. The SES was supported by the RFS and the New South Wales police. The safety of residents is always the Government's absolute priority, followed by getting on with the clean-up.

I am advised that Walgett Shire Council has convened its local emergency management committee and Essential Energy is working towards restoring power. The Government will also continue with its assistance point. These arrangements are one part of the assessment. The next step is about making sure we can qualify for a natural disaster declaration. I commend the member for Barwon—who did something that good members do—for working with the community rather than politicising the disaster.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Except now you're politicising it.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Members opposite put out a press release saying that something should have been done well before. Opposition members know the process. The member for Dubbo knows the process after a natural disaster. The clean-up needs to be done, followed by the assessment, and then a disaster funding application is made. This funding is a federally funded Commonwealth initiative, and the New South Wales Government will go through that process. The member for Barwon is working to support his community, not playing cheap politics when people are feeling vulnerable and need support. I am very disappointed with the member for Dubbo because I thought better of him than that. Maybe Opposition members can take a leaf out of the member for Barwon's book and learn how to be proper MPs and representatives.

#### TAFE NSW

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (13:08):** My question is addressed to Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's plan to rebuild TAFE in New South Wales?

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (13:09):** I thank the member for Heathcote for her question. I also thank her for her role as one of the co-convenors of the Parliamentary Friends of TAFE, which is an important parliamentary friends group. In a time of critical skills shortage across industry, we need a strong vocational education sector to deliver a skilled workforce to meet our commitments. Last week in this place I had the pleasure of outlining the increase in TAFE teachers, including the substantial number of casual teachers who have had their positions converted to a permanent status to make sure they have secure jobs for the future providing training for our young people. I am pleased to inform the House that next week I will launch the NSW Skills Plan. As all members know, one thing we need to rebuild a sector is a plan. Having a skills plan is an important part of the process. It is interesting to note that when I was appointed Minister I looked into a skills plan. The VET review stated that we should have a skills plan. I thought that meant we must be updating something that happened a few years ago. As it turns out, the last New South Wales skills plan was in 2008!

**Mr Jihad Dib:** What?

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** That is right, 2008. Can members believe it? Last week the member for Wairoa was speaking about his record as Minister, but it apparently did not include a skills plan.

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

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** As the old saying goes, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." Opposition members did that spectacularly when it came to delivering skills in New South Wales.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** That's rubbish.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** Members opposite say it is rubbish. Let us face the reality. The skills shortage in New South Wales did not start 20 months ago; it started under the term of the previous Government. The Opposition cut teaching positions in TAFE. A huge number of TAFE teaching positions were casualised. Under the previous Government we saw a huge number of redundancies—over 400 redundancies under the member for Wairoa. And because members opposite converted so much of the workforce to casual, that meant redundancies did not need to be offered. The previous Government could just put them off. The member for

Wahroonga was talking a bit about this on his podcast. I am pleased to tell the House that he has also been talking about me on his podcast! Is that not interesting? My staff listen to it; I am not one of his frequent listeners.

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

**Ms Maryanne Stuart:** I seek further information. We are waiting with bated breath to hear more.

**The SPEAKER:** I am sure that is the case. I grant an additional two minutes.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** On the podcast, it was said—apparently with some shock—"The shadow Minister asked a question of the Minister, and we could not believe it; he answered it!" The response was, "Well, yes, that is because this Government actually does provide the information required." I am pleased to confirm that this Government has provided two consecutive record TAFE budgets; the largest pay increase in two decades for TAFE NSW teachers; a 10 per cent reduction in casual teachers—500 already converted and I expect over a thousand as we move forward; two centres of excellence, promised before the election, and announced; and 79 per cent of the skills budget in New South Wales going to TAFE.

The Skills Plan that is coming out next week is another piece in the jigsaw puzzle. It is putting together a network to develop skills in New South Wales. This Government will continue that work along with a revised operating model to make sure that communities are at the centre, which will come into effect from day one of term 1 next year. In conjunction with the Federal Labor Government we are delivering fee-free TAFE courses to make sure courses are affordable for people in New South Wales.

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

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** The member for Wahroonga is interjecting across the Chamber. We know he has a plan for one thing, and that is undermining the Leader of the Opposition. This bloke's only plan was to message Ray Hadley to say that his leader's comments "could not be further from the truth". We know where the planning comes from in the Opposition. The nurses and midwives have been in the gallery a few times in the past weeks. I put on record my thanks to the midwives at Queanbeyan hospital who recently looked after my daughter very well and delivered us a beautiful little granddaughter. I thank them.

#### *Documents*

### **INDEPENDENT PRICING AND REGULATORY TRIBUNAL**

#### **Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with the Water Industry Competition Act 2006, I announce receipt of the report of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal entitled *Licence compliance under the Water Industry Competition Act 2006 (NSW): Annual Compliance Report to the Minister*, dated October 2024, received out of session on 18 November 2024 and authorised to be printed.

#### *Business of the House*

### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: COMMITTEES**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the moving of a motion of which notice has not been given regarding the appointment of a Committee on Ageing and Disability.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Committees*

### **COMMITTEE ON AGEING AND DISABILITY**

#### **Establishment and Membership**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I move:

That:

- (1) In accordance with section 28C of the Ageing and Disability Commissioner Act 2019, the following members of the Legislative Assembly be appointed to serve on the Committee on Ageing and Disability: Mr Nathan Hagerty, Ms Sonia Hornery, Mr Tri Vo, and Mr Geoff Provest.
- (2) The committee have leave to make visits of inspection within the State of New South Wales and other States and Territories of Australia.
- (3) A message be sent acquainting the Legislative Council with the resolution and requesting the Legislative Council appoint three of its members to serve on the committee.

**Motion agreed to.***Motions***DAYS OF MEETING 2025****Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (13:17):** I move:

That unless otherwise ordered, the House meet during the 2025 autumn and spring sessions as follows:

Autumn sittings: February 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20; March 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27, 28; May 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 27, 28, 29; and June 3, 4, 5, 24, 25, 26, 27.

Spring sittings: August 5, 6, 7, 8; September 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18; October 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 24; November 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21; and November 25, 26 and 27 as a reserve week.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (13:17):** I move:

That the motion be amended by:

- (1) Inserting the following six additional sitting dates with question times: April 8, 9, 10; and August 12, 13, 14.
- (2) Omitting the following six sitting Fridays without question times: March 28, June 27, June, August 8, October 24; November 14 and 21. The reality is that what is proposed by the Government will only provide for 48 sitting days with question time. What I am seeking to do with my amendments is restore that to 54 sitting days with question time. I will put what is proposed by the Government in context. In 2012 this House had 63 sitting days with question time. In 2013 it had 60 and in 2014 it had 53. In 2016, 2017 and 2018 it had 54 sitting days with question time, which is what my amendments propose—up from the 48 sitting days with question time proposed by the Government. The reality is that the numbers of sitting days with question time proposed for both next year and this year, which only had 45, are the lowest numbers of sitting days with question time outside of a COVID-impacted or election-impacted year since 2011.

It is an absolute affront to democracy to have such little scrutiny of Executive Government by this Parliament. This Chamber creates government. It ought to have proper scrutiny of the Executive Government. The Government is afraid of transparency and of subjecting itself to proper scrutiny. We have seen the complete abolition of the transparency within the budget that was within *Budget Paper No. 1* of the former Government. It has completely disappeared. There are no metrics. There is no measurement within the budget papers of Government programs, expenditure and outcomes. The Government is further taking away transparency through the low number of sitting days with question time that are proposed.

Friday sitting days are a complete and utter waste of time if they do not have question time. Yet the Government refused our proposals to add question time to Friday sitting days. That is an absolute disgrace to democracy and a disgrace to the standard Westminster system of government, which has question time and accountability of the Executive to Parliament. I ask all members to support my changes, which will take away the unaccountable Friday sitting days with no question time and replace them with six Tuesday to Thursday sitting days additional to what is proposed. It will be a way to restore greater accountability of the Executive to the Parliament. It will be in alignment with the number of sitting days each year since 2011 that have not been COVID impacted or impacted by election years, when Parliament does not sit until May.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (13:22):** I respond with some statistics that I have taken from the 2019 Berejiklian Government—before COVID—and the 2023 Minns Government for similar periods.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** COVID impacted.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** No, this is not COVID impacted. It is from before the COVID impact. These are straight after the election periods of 2023 and 2019.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** And 2019 was an election year.**Mr RON HOENIG:** I know, and so was 2023. Stop interjecting.**Mr Alister Henskens:** And COVID—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wahroonga has made his argument. He will listen in silence to the Leader of the House.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** Just listen to the numbers, which I have taken from similar periods: the number of sitting weeks for the Minns Government, 13, and the number of sitting weeks for the Berejiklian Government, 13; the number of Government bills introduced by the Minns Government, 67, and the Berejiklian Government, 30.

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

**Mr RON HOENIG:** The number of bills introduced by the Minns Government was 5.2 per sitting week; by the Berejiklian Government, 2.3 per sitting week. The number of Government bills passed by the Parliament

during the Minns Government was 56; during the Berejiklian Government, 24. The average number of bills passed during a parliamentary sitting week of the Minns Government was 4.3. During the Berejiklian Government, the average number was 1.8. I also have statistics from the 2024 Minns Government and the 2022 Perrottet Government if the House requires me to refer to them. Whilst the Manager of Opposition Business raised concerns about question time, he had no problem last week getting rid of the third week of sittings this month and making it a reserve week, giving up three question times. It seems to me to be quite hypocritical for him to be asserting desperation.

He may well recall another matter from last week. While he thinks Friday is a waste of time, Fridays have been used and needed and found to be valuable to the Government in order for it to utilise the time for Government business. Only last Friday—despite the member for Coffs Harbour complaining that he would have to get a later plane—Government business time was extended to enable bills that were returned from the Legislative Council to be passed. One would have thought that that bill in relation to animal welfare had dragged on for so long that the ability for the Government to pass it and get it to Government House was essential.

The crossbench asked for additional private members' business sitting times. Those in Parliament under the O'Farrell and Berejiklian governments understood that private members and Opposition members had virtually no opportunity to represent their constituents and bring matters before the House. It was the crossbench that insisted on additional time. Mr Speaker, last Friday you spent the weekend looking at the sitting calendar. Whilst the upper House requires effectively six weeks plus even more weeks for estimates, when we add school holidays and other periods—for example, public holiday weeks, when we are not able to sit—the ability to extend the number of sitting days in a workable way is extremely limited. We will need to sit Friday of this week because we have been advised that the Legislative Council will be sitting late on Thursday. Members will recall having to be in Parliament all night waiting for that House only a year ago.

If members want to leave early during the week or have shortened hours during the week so that there are not late nights, then the Government needs Friday for Government business time. The crossbench requires additional time for notices of motions, which are not a waste of time. The crossbench members have requested them. If the member for Wahroonga wants question time at 2.30 p.m. on Friday, I suppose we can consider that in place of private members' statements and community recognition statements, but I am sure he does not want that and I am sure members do not want it either. The calendar has been reviewed. The Government requires Friday. I commend the sitting calendar to the House.

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (13:27):** I have a few observations and comments on this entire process. To put it into context, when I was elected in 2007, there were 15 sitting weeks. The following year had 19 sitting weeks. Then the years that followed had 21, 21, 20 and 20 sitting weeks. That seemed to be a fairly typical number of sitting weeks and one that I would have thought was consistent with the desires of the House and the expectations of the community. Things certainly changed around the COVID period. I agree with the observations of the Leader of the House on when the number of sitting dates changed. In 2016, 2017 and 2018 we sat 18 weeks. I understand that the amendment moved by the member for Wahroonga is probably based on an alternate proposal that I put forward to the Government that would reinstate 18 full weeks and dispense with the Fridays. That was not acceptable to the Government. The Leader of the House and I had significant discussions about it.

In the Speaker's Square last Friday we also had a somewhat broader discussion with other members. From that discussion, I was given some leeway by the Leader of the House to see if I could come up with something better. On that basis, at the request of the Leader of the House, I undertook to speak to the leaders in the other place, the Hon. John Graham and the Hon. Penny Sharpe. I had extensive conversations with them about the logistics of the Legislative Council. Why are we speaking about the Legislative Council? We are speaking about the Legislative Council because the tail in that place is wagging the dog in this place. I know that members of the Legislative Assembly do not support that, nor does the Government particularly appreciate the bind that it is in.

I went through the options that are available and, in discussion with the Leader of the House, we settled on—and I was made fully aware of that yesterday afternoon—an amendment that would take the sitting schedule to 16 weeks and only six days, removing three Friday sittings. I agree with the vast majority of members that the Friday sittings are not fully productive. I do not believe that they are value for money for the institution that has to pay the overheads to hold them. But I understand there is some utility for the Government in having them, particularly when bills are returned from the Legislative Council.

I drafted the amendment that the Manager of Opposition Business has moved. I would dearly love for the Legislative Assembly to reclaim primacy in the Parliament of New South Wales over the Legislative Council, which is presuming to dictate the terms of how the Legislative Assembly sits. Government is formed in this House. We need to restate that primacy. I understand that is also the position of the vast majority of Government members in this House, including the Premier, who I have also discussed this with. We need to exercise our minds as to

how we do that. Having had discussions with the Hon. John Graham and the Hon. Penny Sharpe, I concur with the Leader of the House that it is not likely to be done easily in the short term. Therefore, having drawn up some similar options to the motion moved by the Leader of the House, I am in a position that I could not do anything other than support the motion of the Leader of the House.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (13:33):** By leave: I fully support the amendment put forward by the Manager of Opposition Business. I thank the Speaker for his contribution. The point of this debate is that we all want to come to a solution where we can get on with things. Fridays have no accountability and, to be honest, are perceived as being a waste of time trying to mop up things that may or may not happen in the Legislative Council. That is also the point the Speaker was making. It is not just that; it is so many other things. We talked about this when the matter came before the House last year as we were heading towards this year's number of sitting weeks. The move is to go to 18 sitting weeks and reduce the number of Fridays because the Friday sittings end up being a drain on our resources in our electorates. That is what matters.

For regional members like me, it makes a massive difference if we cannot get back to our electorates until late on Friday night. We miss the entire day of doing things in our electorates that we would normally be doing on a Friday. Last week was an example of things not working. We finished before 5.00 p.m. every day last week. If there was more legislation to introduce, we could have done that on those days. If members want question time on a Friday, we could punt the take-note debates. We could do question time instead of those debates. Do those debates really achieve anything? Part of what the crossbench members supported was the ability to do more private members' business. We should schedule the day properly so that is fitted in. If Government members insist on Friday sittings rather than three extra sitting weeks, then have question time. Make it a fair dinkum sitting day so that we are all invested in it.

We spoke about the impact of Fridays when we were not quite sure if there would be a Friday sitting or not—will it be the first week or will it be the second week? That affects day care and preschool pick-ups that mums and dads have to do. Whole routines have to be changed based around that. Members are used to sitting weeks from Tuesday to Thursday. We want to embrace that. Increasing the number of sitting weeks to 18 does not require a massive change. The dates that will work for all members have already been put forward. We simply need a way to support all members in the House, including regional members and their communities. That is my concern. The scenario being put forward does not make it any easier or better for regional members or their constituents. That is what I care about. I ask the House to consider how this motion impacts regional members and the work that we do in our electorates as well as in this House.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (13:36):** By leave: I make a brief contribution. I thank the Government for working with us in good faith and extending the sitting weeks for next year. The Greens wish to put on record that we would like to see question time on Friday sitting days. That is an important opportunity for democracy.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (13:36):** In reply: I inform the House that not everything can fit in. I cannot get members out of here at a reasonable hour during the week if there is a big legislative program, and this Government has, rightly or wrongly, a massive legislative program.

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

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I cannot time when bills are returned from the other place. For example, if I did not decide to sit on Friday this sitting week, we would be coming back next week. The issue becomes one of practicalities. Members do not want to start at 9.30 a.m. as the previous Government did. They want to start at 10.00 a.m., which shortens the day. Members want more private members' business on Thursdays. I have to say, having served on important committees, the take-note debates on committee reports are vitally important to those who serve on the committees. Those take-note debates have been moved from Thursday to Friday to free up Thursday. As I said, without being political, last week a significant bill on animal welfare came back from the other House that we wanted out of this House. There are time constraints.

I get that members do not want to sit a full week in the third week. There is certainly enough business to sit next week. But everybody was quite happy to give up sitting days with question time next week to get back to their electorates. We cannot do it all. I am seized with what the House wants. There are considerable constraints by the number of upper House estimates hearings, which we created in opposition and which are continuing. All year we have been genuinely asking a variety of parties to try to restrict that burden, if possible. Effectively, the Legislative Council members are running out of questions to ask at estimates hearings and they are burdening the House.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** No, they're not. They have got plenty.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I am not being political; I am talking about a practical way of solving the problem. We have been trying to resolve the issue. In any event, if members want to work productively and cooperatively

during 2025, then perhaps we can restore the primacy of this House. We all agree with the philosophy that the Speaker advocates on our behalf—and over the centuries some have lost their heads for doing that. It is a bicameral system. The other place is exceeding its constitutional authority, and we have to deal with that.

**Mr MARK COURE:** I seek leave to make a contribution to the debate.

**Leave not granted.**

[*Interruption*]

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I call the member for Oatley to order for the second time.

[*Interruption*]

I call the member for Oatley to order for the third time.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH:** I seek leave to make a contribution to the debate.

**Leave not granted.**

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....36  
 Noes .....55  
 Majority.....19

AYES

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

NOES

Aitchison, J	Harris, D	Piper, G
Atalla, E	Harrison, J	Quinnell, S
Bali, S	Haylen, J	Regan, M
Butler, L	Hoenig, R	Saffin, J (teller)
Butler, R	Holland, M	Saliba, D
Car, P	Hornery, S	Scruby, J
Catley, Y	Kaliyanda, C	Scully, P
Chanthivong, A	Kamper, S	Shetty, K
Cotsis, S	Kirby, W	Smith, T
Crakanthorp, T	Leong, J	Stuart, M
Daley, M	Li, J	Tesch, L
Davis, D	McDermott, H	Vo, T
Dib, J	McGirr, J	Voltz, L
Donato, P	McKeown, K	Warren, G
Doyle, T	Mehan, D	Washington, K
Finn, J	Minns, C	Watson, A
Greenwich, A	O'Neill, M	Whan, S
Hagarty, N (teller)	Park, R	Wilkinson, K
Hannan, J		

**Amendment negatived.**

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....55  
 Noes .....36  
 Majority.....19

**AYES**

Aitchison, J	Harris, D	Piper, G
Atalla, E	Harrison, J	Quinnell, S
Bali, S	Haylen, J	Regan, M
Butler, L	Hoenig, R	Saffin, J (teller)
Butler, R	Holland, M	Saliba, D
Car, P	Hornery, S	Scruby, J
Catley, Y	Kaliyanda, C	Scully, P
Chanthivong, A	Kamper, S	Shetty, K
Cotsis, S	Kirby, W	Smith, T
Crakanthorp, T	Leong, J	Stuart, M
Daley, M	Li, J	Tesch, L
Davis, D	McDermott, H	Vo, T
Dib, J	McGirr, J	Voltz, L
Donato, P	McKeown, K	Warren, G
Doyle, T	Mehan, D	Washington, K
Finn, J	Minns, C	Watson, A
Greenwich, A	O'Neill, M	Whan, S
Hagarty, N (teller)	Park, R	Wilkinson, K
Hannan, J		

**NOES**

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Committees*

**LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**Reports**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ:** As Chair: I table the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 23/58*, dated 19 November 2024. I move:

That the report be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Petitions***PETITIONS RECEIVED**

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

**Norco Milk**

ePetition requesting the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to reinstate Norco as the dairy supplier for North Coast hospitals, received from **Ms Janelle Saffin**.

**Byron Bay Bluesfest**

ePetition requesting the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to provide a rescue package for Byron Bay Bluesfest, received from **Ms Tamara Smith**.

*Business of the House***BUSINESS LAPSED**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I advise the House that in accordance with Standing Order 105 general business notices of motions (general notices) Nos 1989 to 2018 and general business order of the day (for bills) Electricity Infrastructure Investment Amendment (Tender Moratorium) Bill 2024 have lapsed.

*Notices***PRESENTATION**

*[During the giving of notices of motions]*

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** Order! Members will come to order. Let us get through notices of motions. They will all be of the theme "us, good; them, bad". Just live with that.

*Later,*

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

*Bills***CRIMES (ADMINISTRATION OF SENTENCES) AMENDMENT BILL 2024****First Reading**

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

**Second Reading Speech**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (14:31):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am proud to introduce the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2024. The bill amends the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 to enhance transparency and integrity in the operations of Corrective Services NSW. The proposed amendments strengthen the offence that prohibits relationships between correctional employees and inmates, in response to a recommendation made by the Special Commission of Inquiry into Offending by Former Corrections Officer Wayne Astill at Dillwynia Correctional Centre. The bill also introduces several miscellaneous amendments to improve clarity and transparency and ensure that provisions in the supporting Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014 are appropriately supported by express regulation-making powers in the Act.

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, found multiple failings in the management and culture 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, either in full or in principle, and is committed to undertaking the reform necessary to lift standards, deliver safer workplaces for staff and better protect inmates. The bill also plays a crucial role in the Government's implementation of the recommendations by amending the

Act to strengthen offence provisions relating to intimate relationships and sexual conduct between correctional employees and inmates.

The reforms proposed in the bill complement a series of immediate and long-term actions the Government is taking in response to the Astill inquiry. Since the findings of the inquiry were handed down in March this year, the Government has made a \$30 million investment to support priority reforms, including installing hundreds of new CCTV cameras and a network-wide capacity to store and access footage for at least 90 days so that serious matters can be reviewed; establishing a new advocacy service to ensure female inmates can voice concerns; implementing new staff misconduct processes and procedures, including improved triaging, allowing faster resolutions; funding a women's strategy that includes mandatory training for all new Corrective Services staff working in female correctional centres; and hiring additional staff to improve misconduct management processes.

The Government also established a sexual misconduct reporting line to provide a free, confidential mechanism of reporting and support for inmates. Further, on 1 October the Government elevated Corrective Services NSW to be a standalone agency directly accountable to me, as the Minister for Corrections, and to the New South Wales Government. What those changes show is that this Government is absolutely committed to undertaking the necessary reform to restore integrity, trust and confidence in Corrective Services NSW. The bill plays a fundamental role in that work.

I now turn to the detail of the bill. The most critical elements of the bill are the proposed amendments to section 236Q and supporting provisions of the Act, which introduce new misconduct offences for relationships between staff and inmates. Currently it is an offence under section 236Q of the Act for a correctional employee to engage in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with an inmate or a person who is subject to a community-based order if that conduct or relationship causes a risk or potential risk to the safety or security, or good order and discipline, of a correctional centre, or compromises the proper administration of a sentence or community-based order. The maximum penalty for the offence is a fine of \$2,200 and/or imprisonment for two years.

Recommendation 4 of the Astill inquiry provides that section 236Q of the Act should be amended so that to prove an offence against a correctional employee who has engaged in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with an inmate, there is no need to further prove risk or potential risk to the safety, security, good order and discipline of a correctional facility. The recommendation also provides that the offence should remain in its current form in relation to a correctional employee who has engaged in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with a person subject to a community-based order. In response to recommendation 4, the bill amends current section 236Q of the Act to split it into three separate misconduct offences. The maximum penalty for each offence remains a fine of \$2,200, imprisonment for two years, or both.

The first offence, in new section 236Q (1), applies where a correctional employee engages in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with an inmate. In line with recommendation 4, in that instance there will no longer be a requirement to prove particular risks to the correctional facility nor a compromise to the proper administration of a sentence to be considered an offence. This avoids any unnecessary barriers to prosecutions of the offence. The second offence, in new section 236Q (1A), applies in cases where there is a pre-existing relationship as a couple between the correctional employee and the inmate who engage in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship.

The bill introduces a consequential definition of a "pre-existing relationship as a couple" to mean a continuing relationship as a couple that existed before the inmate entered into custody or the person subject to a community-based order commenced the order. The types of relationships envisaged include a marital, de facto or long-term relationship that existed before the offender entered custody or began serving their order and that continues to exist while the offender is serving their sentence. The new offence criminalises sexual conduct between a correctional employee and an inmate who are in a pre-existing relationship as a couple, without the need for this conduct to pose any particular risks to the correctional facility nor a compromise to the proper administration of a sentence.

This makes clear the Government's view, informed by the Astill inquiry, that sexual conduct should be entirely prohibited between a correctional employee and an inmate, regardless of whether there is a pre-existing relationship as a couple, because such behaviour constitutes an abuse of the correctional employee's position. However, throughout consultation, the Government has been made aware of the need to differentiate between sexual conduct and an intimate relationship in the proposed amendments. The bill therefore also makes two consequential amendments to the current definitions of "sexual conduct" and "intimate relationship".

A consequential amendment to the current definition of "sexual conduct" clarifies that it captures sexual intercourse and other physical conduct of a sexual nature, which distinguishes it from an "intimate relationship". To accompany this, a consequential amendment to the current definition of "intimate relationship" omits any

reference to "sexual conduct" and further clarifies the distinction between the two terms. In instances where a correctional employee and an inmate have a pre-existing intimate relationship, it will not be an offence to continue their relationship provided it does not involve sexual conduct and does not pose a risk to the safety, security, good order or discipline of a correctional facility, or compromise the proper administration of a sentence.

It is important to note that the bill does not go as far as providing an exemption from the offence where the correctional employee and inmate were in a pre-existing relationship as a couple. It does not, for example, adopt the approach taken in Queensland where the prohibition on engaging in an intimate relationship with an offender, including sexual conduct, does not apply at all in cases where the staff member and the person were in an intimate relationship before the person became an offender. Rather, the bill acknowledges that, in rare cases, there may be a pre-existing relationship as a couple between a correctional employee and an inmate, such as a marital, de facto or long-term relationship, and the correctional employee may continue to engage in an intimate relationship with the inmate, for example by exchanging letters of an intimate nature. That will still be permissible provided it does not involve sexual conduct or meet the additional risk threshold test.

That approach recognises that such behaviour may or may not pose a risk to the safety, security, order or discipline of a correctional facility, or compromise the proper administration of the inmate's sentence, depending on the circumstances of the case. The third offence, in new section 236Q (1B) of the Act, applies where a correctional employee engages in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with a person subject to a community-based order. As per recommendation 4 of the Astill inquiry, there will continue to be a requirement to prove that this behaviour compromised the proper administration of the sentence. This is the case whether or not the correctional employee is in a pre-existing relationship as a couple with the other person.

Finally, the bill also makes a consequential change to section 236Q (2) of the Act. This provision currently provides that a correctional employee is not guilty of an offence if they did not know, while they engaged in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with an inmate or person subject to a community-based order, that the other person was an inmate or subject to the order. The bill amends the exemption so that it applies only in cases where the correctional employee engages in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with a person subject to a community-based order and does not know that the person is subject to the order. The provision will no longer refer to inmates because a correctional employee who engages in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with an inmate in a custodial facility would necessarily know the person is an inmate.

I now turn to another amendment proposed in the bill relating to the definition of "community service work" in the Act. Inmates and offenders subject to a community-based order may be required to undertake community service work as part of their sentence. Community service work is defined in section 3 of the Act as any service or activity approved by the Minister, and includes participation in personal development, educational or other programs. Whilst activities constituting community service work are defined by the Minister's discretion, there is no requirement to publish or otherwise record what programs the Minister has approved. That ambiguity challenges the integrity of Corrective Services NSW operations. The bill therefore amends section 3 to require the relevant service or activity to, first, be approved by the Minister by order and published in the Gazette and, second, be published on a website administered by Corrective Services NSW. The amendment facilitates greater transparency and understanding of the kinds of activities that could be required to be undertaken if a person is required to complete community service work as part of their sentence.

In the spirit of improving clarity and transparency, the bill also amends provisions relating to warrants of commitment. The Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 provides that, as soon as practicable after sentencing an offender to imprisonment, a court must issue a warrant for the committal of the offender to a correctional facility. Section 72 (1) of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 provides that, while held in custody in a correctional centre, an inmate is taken to be in the custody of the governor of the correctional centre to which the inmate has been committed or, if the inmate has been transferred to another correctional centre, the correctional centre to which the inmate has been transferred.

The current drafting assumes that warrants of commitment specify the correctional centre the offender is committed to. However, in practice, warrants of commitment do not specify the correctional centre the offender is committed to. The bill therefore amends section 72 to insert new subsection (2A) to provide that if a warrant of commitment does not identify the correctional centre an offender must be conveyed to, the Commissioner of Corrective Services NSW may direct the inmate to be committed and conveyed to any correctional centre. That reflects best practice, as the commissioner is most appropriately placed to determine the correctional centre where an inmate should be held. This amendment will operate retrospectively to ensure the validity of the custody arrangements for all inmates committed by a warrant which did not specify a correctional centre.

Finally, the bill proposes several miscellaneous amendments to ensure operational clarity of the regulations that support the Act. I now turn to those amendments. It is important to note that the amendments do not grant new powers or functions to Corrective Services NSW. Rather, the amendments seek to provide the greatest

possible clarity to the powers and functions and ensure that provisions in the regulation are appropriately consistent with the regulation-making powers contained in the Act. As the changes are machinery in nature, I will provide examples of the proposed amendments that are more consequential.

Section 79 is the primary source of regulation-making powers in the Act. The regulation-making power under current section 79 (1) (k) allows regulations to be made with respect to the sending and receiving of letters and parcels by inmates, including circumstances in which letters and parcels may be opened for inspection or confiscated. The bill moves key provisions that have been made under this power from the regulation to new part 2, division 7A of the Act, such as those that permit or require correspondence of inmates to be opened and inspected. This reflects the view that it is in the interest of transparency and clarity for provisions that authorise actions with such significant privacy implications to be located in the principal Act.

Further amendments to section 79 (1) (k) will provide clearer guidance as to the types of regulations that can be made regarding inmate correspondence than is currently provided. In another example, the bill introduces clearer powers for regulations to provide for matters such as the persons who may bring inmate property to a correctional centre; the separation, designation and management of inmates; visits to inmates; and the inspection of material taken into a correctional centre by legal practitioners. The amendments also expressly provide that the regulations may authorise persons or bodies to determine, direct, approve or otherwise deal with matters provided for under the regulation-making powers.

The regulation contains numerous provisions made under the regulation-making powers in section 79 that are reliant on an action by a prescribed person or body for their operation. For example, section 79 (1) (i) of the Act allows the regulations to make provision for visits to inmates, and clause 108 of the regulation allows the commissioner to direct that a person be prevented from entering or visiting a correctional centre for reasons including security and the misconduct of a visitor. The amendment to section 79 provides a clear statement that regulations made under the section may include provisions that are dependent on an action by a prescribed person or body for their operation.

Regulation-making powers are beneficial in providing flexibility to respond rapidly to an identified need to adjust the operation of legislation. However, it is important for regulation-making powers to be as clear and precise as possible. The proposed amendments provide greater clarity as to the matters that may be provided for by the regulation in a manner that is consistent with the existing provisions of the Act. The changes provide more transparency as to what the regulations may and may not prescribe, improving confidence in the correctional system. The bill makes important changes as part of the Government's broader commitment to address the concerns that are present in relation to the New South Wales Corrective Services system and improve clarity in the legislation that supports it.

I thank the stakeholders involved for their valuable input on the bill to ensure that the amendments are as effective as they are required to be. Stakeholders include the Public Service Association, Legal Aid NSW, Domestic Violence NSW, the Law Society of NSW and the NSW Bar Association. The amendments proposed are complementary to the wider actions of the Government to restore trust and confidence in the New South Wales corrections system with the urgency and level of commitment required. I am proud to say there is more reform to come. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **CRIMES AMENDMENT (OBSTRUCTING A RAILWAY) BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debated resumed from 12 November 2024.**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (14:49):** I speak on behalf of the Opposition in debate on the Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024. The bill is of the smallest duration in length, occupying a mere 13 lines of text. This is another example of a small piece of legislation that has been broken up by this Government in order to present a metric of legislation passing through Parliament that could more sensibly be consolidated with other legislation. The bill does not actually create a new offence; all it does is change the penalty for an existing offence under section 213 of the Crimes Act. The bill seeks to add to the existing penalty of two years imprisonment for an offence under section 213 the possibility of a penalty being imposed of two years imprisonment or a fine of \$22,000, or both, if the section is infringed.

Laws around obstructing a railway come from ancient legislation, passed at a time when it was normal not to have the possibility of a fine rather than a custody sentence. As acknowledged by the Attorney General in his second reading speech, the bill brings the penalty under section 213 of the Crimes Act in line with the major facility legislation of the former Coalition Government, introduced in 2022, under section 214A of the Crimes

Act and section 144G of the Roads Act. The bill has been brought forward because the Government recognises and endorses the sort of protest management adopted by the Coalition in its 2022 legislation and wishes to apply it to other pieces of criminal law.

The Attorney General also said in his second reading speech that the reason for the bill is that in recent months there has been an increase in the frequency of protests by environmental protesters, in particular, obstructing railway lines for long periods. The Government wishes to change the penalties available to the courts for dealing with those protests. Of course, the Government is correct to do this, and the Coalition will support the bill, but it is important to identify that legislation is not in and of itself enough. It also requires the Executive Government, particularly the police Minister and others like the Mayor of Newcastle, to support laws of this kind. This is best exemplified by the proposed Rising Tide protest this weekend at the Port of Newcastle in Newcastle Harbour, for which the police refused a permit under the Summary Offences Act.

The permit then became the subject of litigation in the Supreme Court, where Justice Fagan found that if the protest were to go ahead, either in its original proposed format of an eight-day protest or a more pared down protest of four days, it would create an unacceptable risk to police officers and protesters. That finding was, in part, based on evidence by the police but also, in part, based on the experience of last year, when Rising Tide protesters were given a permit under the Summary Offences Act but stayed on the harbour longer than their permit allowed. The protesters, in large numbers—in fact, exceeding 100—were then arrested by the police. In terms of the application for permission this year, there has been no appeal of Justice Fagan's decision. Last year, to my knowledge, none of the protesters was charged under section 214A of the Crimes Act, notwithstanding that charges under this section would have been permissible.

In respect of this year, after the decision by Justice Fagan, the new Independent mayor of Newcastle, Dr Ross Kerridge—who I think has been a member of the Labor Party for over 30 years—after the Supreme Court found that it would be dangerous for the protest to go ahead this weekend, unilaterally granted a permit for protesters to occupy a public park, Camp Shortland, which is immediately adjacent to Horseshoe Beach and the point from which protesters would go into the Port of Newcastle's channel and disrupt shipping coming in and out of the port. Mayor Kerridge was told by protesters that they would close the harbour if they were given a permit to occupy the park, so it is extremely difficult to understand why the mayor gave them a permit because they told him that they would only close the harbour for "the briefest possible time". How breathtakingly naïve.

When Dr Kerridge was a medical practitioner would he have accepted something as nebulous and unscientific as "the briefest possible time"? The phrase is subject to a multitude of interpretations. It means something completely different to a professional protester from Rising Tide, who has no usual occupation, and to somebody who is not a professional protester and has an ordinary job. The event that is occurring this weekend, during which the Port of Newcastle is likely to be closed, requires not just legislation like section 214A of the Crimes Act or the proposed beefed-up section 213 penalties in the bill; it requires concerted action to use the levers of the criminal law system to stop this sort of activity.

It is undesirable for there to be any mixed messages around events like these. We do not need police Ministers saying "happy days" when they find out about planned protests blocking major facilities and major infrastructure in our State. We need a government that stands up for the New South Wales economy against people who seek to block major infrastructure, and that requires concerted action. Another aspect of the protest this weekend that members should know about is that on Friday there will be what Rising Tide is calling a "school strike" and "the people's blockade". Schoolchildren in the Hunter region are being invited by Rising Tide to not attend school on Friday and to attend its strike between the hours of 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. this Friday 22 November. The invitation that Rising Tide has put on social media says:

Ditch school, grab your friends and meet us at Customs House for a march along the Foreshore to Horseshoe Beach.

Horseshoe Beach is the area that the Mayor of Newcastle has allowed to be occupied by these protesters under a permit granted by the Newcastle council. It is absolutely unacceptable that students in our local schools are being enticed to not attend school and instead to attend protests, which the Supreme Court has not allowed to be conducted lawfully under the Summary Offences Act. Another unfortunate aspect of the protest is the antisemitism that Rising Tide has exhibited on social media. Rising Tide should not be making antisemitic comments on social media in respect of this protest. It asserts on social media that coal from the Port of Newcastle is supporting the State of Israel that is perpetrating genocide in Palestine, so the protest is justified. It is entirely unacceptable that these sorts of antisemitic and anti-Israel comments are being put on social media by Rising Tide in conjunction with these protests.

While the Opposition supports the bill, it is important that legislation that this Parliament puts on the statute books shows regard for judicial processes like the decision from Justice Fagan in the Supreme Court. Executive Government and people like the Mayor of Newcastle should protect our economy and the safety of our first

responders who are being compromised by these irresponsible protests. We all need to get behind a concerted action to see the law upheld for the safety of our police officers and other first responders to these protests.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (15:02):** It is interesting to hear the approach of the member for Wahroonga to debate on the Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024. We are in alignment because in one sense the Opposition does want the legislation to pass, but I believe that the member for Wahroonga cannot have it both ways. As someone who lives in the Hunter Valley and also has responsibility for passenger rail in that part of the world, I was engaged with the action that was taken in June and July this year. Illegal protesters caused havoc on the Hunter rail network. Between 26 June and 15 July, 758 passenger and about 250 bulk and freight rail services were cancelled. That meant buses replaced trains on the Hunter Line between 7.00 a.m. and 7.00 p.m.

This dangerous, illegal protest not only caused millions of dollars in economic damage and put at risk literally thousands of jobs in the Hunter Valley; it also had a significant impact on workers, students and members of the general community going about their daily business. Those people had no engagement with the coal industry. In fact, they were trying to do the right thing and use public transport to reduce emissions from their vehicles. It was an own goal of epic proportions in that the protest action discouraged people from using public transport. In November last year, we had an uplift of some 10 to 15 per cent in public transport users on that line. Over the course of a week or so, people acting for their spoken cause of the environment actually led to less environmentally-friendly commutes to work.

And this is not just about those numbers. People had their lives literally thrown into turmoil. Workers could not get to work and businesses were left without staff. Train drivers were afraid that they would cause a disaster simply by doing their jobs. In conversations with Transport for NSW I was told about train drivers being stared down by protesters. A 1.8-kilometre train on a freight network cannot stop on a sixpence. It has to have notice to slow down. Other issues included the complete and unnecessary diversion of police resources to deal with these entirely preventable crimes, and the clogging up of the courts. We had to also consider the wellbeing and safety of protesters. Some of the comments on Facebook such as "Serves them right!" were horrendous. The reality is we had to try to save some of these people from themselves. We do not want train drivers to have to live with the fact that someone who deliberately put themselves at risk was hurt because the driver had not been able to control the rolling stock of the train.

People say, "They are only after the coal trains. Why can't Transport just leave the passenger trains in the corridor?" If a coal train is derailed, it is not long before that impacts passenger services, and no-one wants that to happen while they are close to each other on the line. Every near miss or incident on a rail network poses a significant safety risk—not just physical but also psychological—to our train drivers, guards and others in the network, and, of course, commuters. In one situation, passengers saw protesters on another train. When the train driver got out to walk the length of the train to find them, they established they could not see them anymore. But when the driver restarted the engine, a protester came back. That caused a great deal of distress, anxiety and mental suffering to those drivers and also the community members. This is not the way people who want to advocate for change should be. If people want to change things, if they want to provide a catalyst for social or environmental change, or whatever their particular passion is, then they need to ensure the activities they undertake do not put people's lives at risk. That is just unacceptable.

The bill prescribes a fine of 20 penalty units—\$22,000—or up to two years imprisonment, and it enables the Local Court to impose either or both of those penalties. This is important. The member for Wahroonga said in his opening remarks that he and his colleagues had fixed this back in 2022 when we had exactly the same situation happening. But they did not fix it. They worked incrementally and left this open. People who want to make a point politically will work incrementally. That is the challenge for members in this place when legislation is rammed through without consultation. This bill has been worked through with police, with the Freight on Rail Group, with my team, with the Attorney General and with a whole raft of stakeholders to ensure an outcome whereby we have legislation that enables the police to act. The member for Wahroonga is always happy to attack the police Minister. It is Tuesday, so it must be Attack the Police Minister Day for him. And that is not good enough. The Opposition is divided within itself and does not want to unite with the Government on this. It has been very reluctant in relation to the bill. In fact, its biggest criticism of the bill appears to be the word "length". I did not know that that was a criterion for judging legislation in this place. Some of the most simple and most effective pieces of legislation are the shortest. For the member to be querying that is quite astounding.

The problem that we had was a lack of a prescribed financial penalty under section 213. That meant that, when the matters were heard in the Local Court, the fine would be limited to 100 penalty units. This change would effectively double the penalty available for the Local Court. It also sends the message to our judiciary that the crime it is dealing with is unacceptable. Police were enormously frustrated when they would put all of the work into surveillance and catching those people who were creating not only significant disruptions but also—more

importantly, from my perspective as someone who is engaged in managing railways—a significant safety risk to innocent people, and they did not have the tools at their disposal because of a failure by the former Government to imagine what the consequences of its changes would be.

Those opposite were lucky in 2022 The protesters stopped at a point. To be honest, I do not know that those opposite did anything to assist that. What the State needs to move forward is what the Government is doing. We have a policy of transition. We are working. We are not like Opposition members, who sat on their hands for 12 years. When in government they did nothing to move transition forward. We understand the frustrations of people who have concerns about the environment—as we all do. Nothing happened for 12 years. The former Government wanted to have the coal wars. So those people got frustrated and they started taking action that escalated—

**Mr James Griffin:** Point of order: Given there was bipartisan support on the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap—

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** What is the point of order?

**Mr James Griffin:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** There is no point of order.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It is great to see the legal geniuses on the other side of the Chamber taking points of order that are not relevant to the debate. Maybe we should have made the bill shorter so they could understand it. We have been leaders in moving our State forward in relation to the environment. We have been very reluctant to impinge on people's rights to protest but, when those rights impinge on safety, that is a real concern. [*Extension of time*]

We need to put safety first. Members in this House are very aware that that is my primary consideration whenever it comes to any kind of transport. I am proud to be part of a government that has acted quickly and has worked with different stakeholders to ensure that whatever we put in place is workable and will achieve outcomes. Regarding the member for Wahrenoonga's comments about the Mayor of Newcastle, the Mayor of Newcastle is not a Labor mayor. He was not elected on a Labor platform. If the member for Wahrenoonga wants to comment about implementation in his speech on the bill, it is entirely his right to do so, but he should not say that the mayor is representing a Labor value when he is making whatever decisions he makes as mayor—as is his right as an elected mayor of the City of Newcastle.

The member for Wahrenoonga has tried to turn this into a quasi-political dispute because he cannot quite bring himself to say that the Opposition agrees that the Government has got the bill right and that Opposition members should have done it when they were in government. We are working with all of the stakeholders: the police, the freight and rail operators, the rail infrastructure managers, Transport for NSW, passengers and communities, who are sick to death of this kind of obstruction to our public infrastructure. More importantly, they are also greatly concerned about the safety and the risk to safety that those protesters are creating. It is appalling. Like many members from both sides of this Chamber, I have participated in protests. But, where protesters go beyond the level of public safety and they pose a grave risk to the safety of others, that is not acceptable and it never should be in a democracy.

I commend the Attorney General. I thank my colleagues at Australian Rail Track Corporation, particularly Wayne Johnson, the CEO. He has been very helpful in this space. I thank all of the members of the Freight on Rail Group. I thank the police Minister. Her leadership in this situation has been very good. She has worked to give the police the tools that they need, as has the Attorney General. I thank everyone at Transport for NSW. I also sincerely thank all of those train drivers, who have enough to deal with. They deal with people behaving in silly ways let alone protesters deliberately taking action that puts them and others at risk of losing their lives. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (15:15):** I make a contribution to debate on the Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024, following my regional colleague the member for Maitland. A number of members in that area have particular awareness of the significant issue of the impact of protests on coal freight and the safety of people participating in such protests. The bill has been introduced following recent protest activity on the Hunter rail network, which disrupted both coal and commuter trains. We have heard from members about the importance of the right to protest. I put on record that I respect those rights. I have many friends who are involved in protests, particularly around thermal coal. Those sorts of protests are fundamental to our democracy. We would not be the society we are if we did not have people prepared to stand up and protest for what they believe is right. But the rights to protest are not absolute. They should not be exercised by people in a way that puts themselves or others at risk.

Protesters, for example, should not be creating a situation where rail workers and train drivers are scared to go to work because they are worried about a potential fatality. I do not know how many members in this Chamber know a train driver who has had the absolutely unimaginable experience of having to stop a massive train on rails as it headed towards somebody on the track. I know two train drivers who have been in that unenviable situation. Unfortunately, they were dealing with something that is way too common on our rail network: somebody looking to self-harm and take their own life. The same risk is there every time a train driver takes one of those massive vehicles along a line. It is a clear and present danger if protest activity is on that infrastructure.

There needs to be an appropriate balance between the right to protest on the one hand and public safety and order on the other. I believe that the bill strikes that balance. I do not believe that those who are opposing the bill have the balance right. I get annoyed when we presume that this is just sometimes an inconvenience for somebody in the public. It is not. Sometimes we are talking about life and death. It impacts on the rail network. People are reliant on rail for their public transport access to health services, for example, or legal services. Complicated things are happening in their lives that we do not happen to know about. The protesters do not know about it either, but they presume that their issue is more important on that day. We need to get the balance right. It is up to us to do that.

With respect, the bill will not change the longstanding offence of obstructing a railway; it will amend and increase the penalties imposed when the offence is dealt with summarily by the Local Court. In a nutshell, it will double the maximum financial penalty to 200 penalty points. Is that substantial? Yes, it is, of course. It is intended to be substantial. As such, the maximum penalty the Local Court could impose for this offence is two years imprisonment or 200 penalty units or both. My observation is that, even though the bill increases them, penalties still have to be dealt with through the judicial system. The judicial system is exactly that—it is judicial. It weighs and measures the extent of the offence against the community. That is what we are trying to do.

In my experience, more often than not our judiciary is very considerate and understanding of people who are heartfelt in their convictions in bringing about their protest and tries to take that into account. The judiciary needs to be able to take the right action. I absolutely support the Attorney General on that. We are out to take action in line with the majority of the community expectations and, where suitable, deter harmful conduct. In my view, the bill supports the message that protesting in a dangerous manner, seemingly without appropriate regard for the health and safety of oneself and others, is simply not acceptable. After that, those who make the call to lay charges, and the judiciary, will get the balance right. I hope the bill passes. At the same time, this is not about stifling the right of people to protest and put forward their heartfelt convictions on very important matters. Climate change and the coal industry are a part of that. We need to get this right.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (15:21):** I contribute to debate on the Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024. I am always delighted to follow the Speaker, Greg Piper, the member for Lake Macquarie. His contributions are sensible and consistent with not only his community's expectations or the legislative reforms but also, in this case, the requirements of the judiciary. At the end of the day, the bill before us, as the Speaker pointed out, amends the penalties process so that the penalty fits the crime. That is the most important part. The bill substantially increases penalties, and this issue is quite substantial. Yes, we can protest in New South Wales, and we should be able to. But public safety is of paramount importance. Yes, we can protest and exercise our democratic right through the correct process by any means, but we must do so safely. The safest way is by having the adequate provisions of law and penalties in place so that the judiciary can prosecute those who are allegedly in breach, to ensure that people comply in the future.

The bill responds to the concerns about the recent actions on railway lines that ultimately put safety at risk. The member for Lake Macquarie referred eloquently to the heart-wrenching circumstances where train drivers have accidents while driving their trains and when, if I may say so diplomatically, there is loss of life. We only need to talk to rail workers and train drivers to hear about the horrific nature of these accidents. Again, that is before we consider victims or those who have died on railway lines. We must make sure that the appropriate penalties are available for the judiciary. There are not too many matters more serious than loss of life, irrespective of the circumstances, whether it be self-imposed or by any other means.

Section 213 of the Crimes Act 1900 makes it an offence for a person to intentionally and without lawful excuse cause the passage or operation of a locomotive or other rolling stock on a railway to be obstructed. Those who knowingly assist another person to obstruct a train or rolling stock on a railway also commit an offence under section 213. The bill provides the maximum penalty amount for section 213 to be 200 penalty units when dealt with in the Local Court. The offences in section 213 are punishable by up to two years imprisonment. Additionally, section 213 does not specify a maximum fine amount. The default maximum fine that the Local Court can impose is currently 100 penalty units, which is \$11,000. That is a substantial amount of money. Referring to points I raised before, this is a substantial issue that requires a substantial penalty.

By contrast, section 214A of the Crimes Act, which contains offences for damaging or disrupting a major facility, provides for penalties up to 200 penalty units, or \$22,000, and two years imprisonment. In recent months, there have been instances of people seriously obstructing railway lines for long periods. These are dangerous actions that pose a threat to the safety of the persons themselves, commuters, train drivers and other railway staff and workers. That is consistent with my opening remarks that this affects so many people, not forgetting victims or those who lose their lives.

Blocking railway tracks also disrupts commuters and commerce and diverts resources from frontline services, specifically the NSW Police Force. Hardworking train drivers and rail workers should not have to work in fear, worrying about whether they will need to apply an emergency brake to avoid striking an illegal trespasser. Everyone across our State should be able to use our rail networks safely. Most people convicted of this conduct have been convicted for a section 213 offence, which we are debating today. The bill is designed to deter people from engaging in such dangerous behaviour by doubling the available penalty in the Local Court for the offence in section 213 of the Act.

It is unfortunate that we find ourselves in a position to need to amend the penalties. I commend the Attorney General, his team and the judiciary for highlighting the provisions in the bill as a way forward. I acknowledge that often penalties are not the answer. We support rehabilitation. But, as advised by the judiciary and by the work of the Attorney General's office, rehabilitation has been inadequate and, sadly, instances of obstructing railways have increased. The bill is set to deter people from engaging in such dangerous behaviour, and the amendments will successfully do that. If an offence against section 213 involves very serious conduct and is dealt with by the District Court on indictment, the District Court can still impose a sentence of imprisonment for up to two years and can continue to impose a fine of up to 1,000 penalty units, which is \$110,000. The bill does not change that, and it intentionally retains the ability for the fine to be imposed in the higher jurisdiction.

Doubling the fine that can be imposed by the Local Court brings the penalty for a section 213 offence in line with the maximum penalty for the offence in section 214A of the Act, and also the penalty for the offences in section 144G of the Roads Act 1993 for damaging, disrupting or obstructing the Sydney Harbour Bridge or other major bridges, tunnels or roads—all of which are summary offences. The increased penalty will better reflect the seriousness of section 213 offences and send a strong message that such dangerous and disruptive conduct on railway lines is simply unacceptable. Ultimately, the question that should be asked is: Will the bill change anything? The bill is designed to give the Local Court greater scope to exercise its sentencing discretion when sentencing a person for an offence against section 213 of the Crimes Act to ensure that judicial officers can impose a financial penalty that reflects the seriousness of the conduct involved.

The independence of the judiciary is the cornerstone of our legal system. We are privileged to have experienced and independent judicial members in New South Wales and, indeed, across Australia. The maximum penalty that is set for an offence represents the Legislature's assessment of the seriousness of the offence and provides a yardstick for the judiciary to use when sentencing. Judicial officers impose sentences in accordance with the penalties that are made available to them by members in this place. This amendment provides judicial officers with greater sentencing scope with respect to the fine that can be imposed for an offence under section 213. This is not about stifling protests. Protests should be allowed in New South Wales, but we must have provisions for public safety.

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (15:31):** I make a very short contribution to debate on the Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024, which the Opposition and I support. This legislation is aimed at mitigating the economic damage and community dislocation that surrounds protests affecting railway infrastructure in New South Wales. Given my previous experience as a police officer before becoming a member of Parliament, I certainly am encouraged to be a strong advocate for the just and rightful prosecution of offenders who, through their actions, injure people, damage property or cause economic harm to our community. The bill aligns the penalty for obstructing a railway with penalties previously introduced by the Coalition for damaging or disrupting major infrastructure such as roads, bridges and tunnels.

That consistency reinforces the need to treat all critical infrastructure with the same level of protection and accountability. In doing so, the bill is an endorsement of the Opposition's approach while in government to managing protests and ensuring economic liability. It highlights the importance of deterring actions that disrupt essential services and endanger lives, and it maintains the functionality of our critical infrastructure across New South Wales. The development of railway lines has been instrumental in New South Wales. Rail serves as a cornerstone for connectivity, transport and economics. In my electorate of Winston Hills, trains and metro lines are important infrastructure systems for transporting commuters to and from work. Railways in regional areas transport people too, but they also convey goods and natural resources that are vital for our State.

Railway lines provide a lifeline for residents and businesses, offering reliable access for all. As a member of the community, I cannot stress enough the significance of protecting these networks from reckless and

dangerous behaviour. Any disruption to these vital networks not only endangers lives but also hinders the functioning of our transport systems. As such, we cannot afford to be lenient when people commit actions that obstruct such major infrastructure. This amending bill ensures that the criminal law adequately reflects the gravity of those offences, ensuring greater flexibility and responsibility for the Local Court. There should be no place for protests that cause wanton economic damage.

I and the Opposition believe increasing the penalty points to 200 and the maximum fine to \$22,000 sends the right message to potential offenders and the wider community. We need legislative measures to ensure the smooth operation of the New South Wales economy and to protect our community, particularly in light of instances of deliberate railway obstructions such as those in the Hunter. Obstructions to such infrastructure carry far-reaching economic consequences. By reinforcing the principle that all critical infrastructure should be protected with equally stringent penalties, this legislation takes a crucial step towards reducing economic disruption and ensuring statewide safety.

Actions that obstruct transport networks not only jeopardise commuter safety but also burden railway staff, strain alternative transport systems and exacerbate costly delays, further impacting the State's economy. The introduction of this amending bill conveys the stance shared by the House that endangering lives and disrupting essential services should not be condoned. Protests that block major infrastructure and railways have significant personal and economic impacts on the people of New South Wales, and they disrupt the daily lives of countless individuals, which causes delays, financial losses and increased stress for commuters, workers and businesses.

The right to protest should not include the right to harm others or jeopardise their financial stability, mental wellbeing or access to essential services. A line must be drawn when protests infringe on the rights of others, particularly when they disrupt critical infrastructure that the public relies on. The consequences of such actions are widespread and they compromise not only individual rights but also the broader economic stability and wellbeing of our community. The Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024 is a crucial piece of legislation that addresses the urgent need to promote both the safety and functionality of New South Wales. It represents a decisive step in safeguarding essential infrastructure that is relied upon every day by millions of residents and businesses across the State. Beyond the immediate risks to safety, these obstructions carry significant economic consequences.

This legislation reflects the Opposition's commitment to preserving economic stability, protecting lives and promoting public confidence in our legal system. As a member of Parliament, I recognise the critical role these systems play in sustaining livelihoods and supporting our local economies. For those reasons, I support this initiative and commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (15:37):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024. This legislation addresses a serious issue that has affected our public safety and transport networks. Our Government is firmly committed to ensuring the safety and reliability of our railway systems, which are an essential part of our public infrastructure. With the bill, we aim to bring in stronger deterrents to behaviours that endanger lives and disrupt the flow of goods and passengers across our railways. In recent months we have witnessed multiple instances of individuals intentionally obstructing railway lines, in some cases for prolonged periods. Such actions pose an alarming threat not only to those directly involved but also to railway staff and commuters, who rely on these vital routes for transportation.

Instances of rail line obstructions compromise the safety and security of our transport systems, endangering lives and risking severe disruptions to an essential service that keeps our communities connected. The object of the bill is to amend section 213 of the Crimes Act 1900, which currently criminalises the act of obstructing a railway. Under the existing provisions, this offence is punishable by up to two years imprisonment. However, section 213 does not provide a specific monetary penalty. As it stands, the Local Court is limited to imposing a fine of only 100 penalty units, or \$11,000, due to the operation of section 267 of the Criminal Procedure Act 1986.

This fine, while substantial, may not fully reflect the severity of the offence nor provide an adequate deterrent against repeated actions that compromise public safety. To address this, the Government is introducing a provision in section 213 of the Crimes Act to allow the Local Court to impose a fine of up to 200 penalty units, which is equivalent to \$22,000. This will double the current financial penalty for the offence, which will better reflect its seriousness. The intent is clear: We want to send a strong message that endangering the safety of our railway network and the individuals who rely on it is unacceptable and will not be taken lightly.

The amendments in this bill are consistent with the penalties for other serious offences under similar provisions in the law. For example, section 214A of the Crimes Act covers offences related to damaging or disrupting major facilities. Offenders are liable to a maximum penalty of 200 penalty units and up to two years in prison. Section 144G of the Roads Act 1993 provides similar penalties for those who disrupt major infrastructure, such as the Sydney Harbour Bridge or other major tunnels and roads. With these comparisons, it becomes evident

that obstructing railway lines, which also serve a critical public function, should warrant comparable penalties. This bill, therefore, aligns the penalties for railway obstruction with those for other significant disruptions to public infrastructure, establishing consistency in the legal consequences for endangering or disrupting critical facilities.

As we have witnessed recently, the reckless conduct of obstructing railway lines can bring entire sections of our transport system to a standstill and lead to massive delays and frustrations for individuals trying to get to work, school or other commitments. Moreover, it also has the potential to impede the efficient delivery of goods and services throughout New South Wales. Our rail network is the lifeblood of our State's connectivity, and obstructing it creates a ripple effect that extends far beyond a single location or moment. In crafting this amendment, the Government is prioritising both public safety and the reliability of our State's transportation networks. By increasing the financial penalty to a significant \$22,000, the Government aims to establish a deterrent robust enough to dissuade individuals from engaging in this hazardous and irresponsible conduct.

Additionally, for the Local Court, the increase in available penalty units serves as a clear legislative indication of the seriousness with which New South Wales treats such offences. This bill is more than just an amendment to existing legislation; it is also a commitment to enhancing safety for commuters and railway workers, ensuring that our transport systems remain secure and accessible for everyone. I emphasise that this legislation is not merely punitive; it is also preventative. It signals to potential offenders that the Government will not tolerate behaviour that endangers lives and disrupts critical infrastructure. With this bill, the Government demonstrates its commitment to upholding public safety and ensuring the continued reliability of the railways of New South Wales. The safety of our railways is non-negotiable, and those who threaten it will be held accountable. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KOBİ SHETTY (Balmain) (15:43):** On behalf of The Greens, I speak on the Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024. The Greens will not support this bill. The bill will amend the Crimes Act 1900 to increase the maximum penalty available for an offence under section 213 of the Act, that of obstructing a railway, which includes a tramway or light rail, so that it includes a fine of 200 penalty units. The maximum penalty for the offence under section 213 will thus be two years imprisonment or \$22,000, or both. This would bring the section into line with the anti-protest legislation that was rushed through in 2022 by the Coalition, with Labor's support from opposition, and amended section 214A of the Act, along with section 144G of the Roads Act 1993.

The Greens are so disappointed to be debating this bill today. As The Greens' spokesperson for democracy, I have been working hard to convince the Minns Labor Government to wind back its outrageous attacks on the right to protest. I moved to disallow the Crimes Amendment (Major Facilities) Regulation 2024, which classifies new Sydney Metro stations at Barangaroo, Crows Nest, Gadigal, Victoria Cross and Waterloo as major facilities under section 214A (7) of the Crimes Act, with serious implications for the right to protest around these transport hubs, but the Government did not support my disallowance motion. I have introduced a bill to appeal the anti-protest laws that were introduced under the Roads and Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. We have not yet brought that on for debate, but it is clear that a number of Government and crossbench members would like to support it. Instead we find ourselves here, debating yet another bill that will seriously erode our right to protest in New South Wales. This is incredibly disappointing from the Labor Government.

The Government says that it is concerned about recent incidents of people obstructing railway lines in the Hunter Valley, where freight trains laden with coal make their way to the Port of Newcastle, and that these actions pose a threat to safety. The Greens too are concerned about people's safety. We are in a climate emergency. Examples of climate change induced weather events that put our lives in danger are becoming all too common. Not three weeks ago, flooding in Valencia took the lives of more than 200 people. That is just devastating. People do not take these kinds of risks of protesting unless they are absolutely desperate. When the Government seems more concerned about the profit of coalmining companies than the fate of people and the planet, is it any wonder that folks take such drastic action? Young people who are watching their futures disappear in a cloud of smoke, climate scientists who have been screaming into the wind for decades to no avail and nannas who are trying to protect the future of their grandchildren are being captured by this type of legislation.

I take a moment to acknowledge the good folks behind Rising Tide, the people's blockade of the biggest coal port, in Newcastle. This event is going ahead this week. That is nothing short of remarkable. There has been attempt after attempt to shut it down, first by the Police Force and then by Transport for NSW. Thankfully, the protesters have held their ground. I congratulate everyone involved. I encourage anyone attending Rising Tide this weekend to make sure they peacefully and safely exercise their right to protest. There are those who would like to see this right taken away from them if they become too disruptive or become a threat to business as usual, but The Greens stand with them. We will defend their right to protest. The bill before the House has not been well received by civil society groups and unions. The Australian Democracy Network has said:

This legislation is being proposed with no community consultation and at a time when the government is meant to be responding to over 1,400 community submissions calling for the repeal of the 2022 anti-protest laws as part of a legislative review. Instead, the government has doubled down on restricting the right to protest and refused to engage with issues raised by stakeholder organisations and the community.

This legislation would put ordinary communities seeking to exercise their protest rights at risk if, for example, they briefly stop near the light rail at Sydney Town Hall or take industrial action that involves transport.

NSW already has the most anti-protest laws of any state in Australia. We need to act now to protect our democratic freedoms.

The network has facilitated an open letter to the Premier, calling for a pause to the introduction of the proposed laws and a meeting with civil society groups to discuss how to safely facilitate the community's exercise of its democratic freedoms. This has been signed by the following organisations: the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association; the Australian Services Union, New South Wales and ACT (Services) Branch; the Sydney Branch, Maritime Union of Australia; the Electrical Trades Union, NSW and ACT Branch; the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union, NSW Branch; the NSW Council for Civil Liberties; Amnesty International Australia; Australian Lawyers For Human Rights; Community Legal Centres NSW; the Human Rights Law Centre; the Hunter Community Environment Centre; the Justice and Equity Centre; the Nature Conservation Council of NSW; the Grata Fund; the Australia Institute; and the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change.

It is important to note that this bill was introduced ahead of a final report being tabled following a statutory review of the 2022 anti-protest laws. I note that the review of the Roads Act amendment has now been published—however, it was not before this bill was introduced—and we are still waiting on the report from the review of the Crimes Act amendment. Many of the organisations I mentioned a moment ago made submissions to those inquiries. They are right to be frustrated with the Government's response to their concerns. It is so incredibly disappointing. There are already substantial penalties in place for the crime of obstructing a railway. The amendments proposed in this bill are a clear overreach by a government that is intent on shutting down legitimate protests, particularly those against the continued mining and burning of coal and gas that puts our planet in peril due to climate change.

I have raised the issue before in this House, but it seems I need to raise it again. The right to peaceful protest, which is being eroded by constant attacks in New South Wales, has its roots in international human rights law. The right to peaceful assembly and association is found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is also found in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR], which Australia is a signatory to. This provides for the rights of freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association. The High Court has also ruled that under our Federal Constitution, we have an implied right to freedom of political communication. In making that determination, the High Court suggested that the free exchange of political communication is fundamental to the operations of the representative and accountable government established under the Constitution.

While these rights are not absolute, there is a high threshold that must be met to curtail the basic freedoms enshrined in international human rights law. For example, the ICCPR requires that any attempts to curtail or restrict the right to peaceful assembly are necessary and proportionate and are an appropriate response to a pressing social need. Similarly, to curtail rights under our Constitution, the law needs to be reasonably appropriate and adapted. Clearly, the proposals in this bill do not meet those tests. The Greens do not support this bill. In the event that other members do support it, I put the Chamber on notice that I will move several amendments during the Consideration in Detail stage.

The first amendment will provide defences and exclusions from the section 213 offence that clearly align with those in section 214A (2) to (6) of the Crimes Act, such as for industrial action. I thank the Government for engaging with me on those amendments. The second amendment will provide that the offence does not apply to a light rail line or tramway. There are serious concerns that should a protester step back onto the light rail line outside the Town Hall in Sydney, they could fall foul of the law. The third amendment includes a statutory review after 12 months that must contain a public consultation element. I look forward to further discussion on those amendments. Again, The Greens do not support the bill.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (15:52):** I contribute to debate on the Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024. Earlier this year, activist groups Rising Tide and Blockade Australia obstructed the Newcastle rail network. A young 24-year-old climate activist named Grace strapped herself to the end of a 50-foot rope. Live streaming the event on Instagram, she said that if a train continued down the track, the line would break and she would fall to her death. Thankfully, Grace survived. After disrupting around 200 passenger trains over the course of a 10-day stoppage to protest coal exports, as well as diverting a stretched police force away from addressing other incidents, rail users resumed their normal operations. I have been to many protests over the years and I agree with protesting, but this amendment is about safety. The Minns Labor Government

supports the right to peaceful protest. But no serious person would suggest that the scope of the right to protest should trump all other rights and responsibilities it may conflict with.

We support the right of train drivers to go to work without fearing that their trains may cause the death of a protester. As a previous official of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union and the daughter of a train driver, I have met many train drivers who have had those sorts of incidents and fatalities occur. It is something they never forget. It can be crippling and debilitating for life. Once that train goes, it is very hard for it to stop quickly if someone straps themselves to the end of a 50-foot rope on a train line. We support the rights of rail workers and passengers to safely access the trains and trams they use to work and travel without stoppages that last for days and disrupt their lives. We support the rights of businesses and their employees to freely engage in commerce and work-related travel. We support the right of protesters to be protected from danger. We do not want a loss of life.

In cases where rights conflict, it is the role of Parliament and the courts, using sensible and reasoned judgement, to balance rights and responsibilities with an interest to protect our most fundamental and basic liberties. In the words of the Attorney General, "we're balancing the right to protest with keeping the community safe and free from disruption". The Minns Labor Government believes that the right to peaceful protest should not and need not come at the cost of tragic and unnecessary deaths on the tracks. That is what this bill is about.

The bill amends section 213 of the Crimes Act by inserting an offence attracting 200 penalty units. By ratcheting up penalties for obstructing a railway, light rail or tram from \$11,000 to \$22,000, with a maximum prison term of two years impossible in the Local Court, we are reflecting in legislation our commitment to the safety of protesters, passengers and rail workers. Inherent in that commitment is our belief that the right to peaceful protest does not extend to actions that seriously endanger individuals. Just as the right to freedom of movement does not give people free rein to speed in school zones, using the force of the law to prevent deaths on the tracks is right and just. Preventing serious harms before they occur follows the demands of prudence.

There is strong legal precedence for laws that prevent disruptive and dangerous behaviours exceeding the bounds of peaceful protest. These measures are in accordance with international legal obligations, which specify that the right to peaceful protest should only be limited in ways that are necessary and proportionate. This bill is both necessary to deter serious risk to the life and liberty of protesters and rail users and completely proportionate to the extreme danger those protest tactics pose. It does not seriously limit the ability of protesters to voice their concerns. There are numerous avenues for doing so that are strongly protected by law and do not threaten lives.

When I consider this bill and its contents, I reflect on the case when that young woman risked her life for a cause she believed in. What may prove to be a long life of energy, enthusiasm and activism could have been cut tragically short. There are so many ways that concerned citizens can make their voices heard without endangering their lives or the lives of others. By deterring the danger of unnecessary tragedy, we encourage individuals to channel their energies towards safer and more effective avenues for communication.

The amendment to prevent the obstruction of railways is firmly in accordance with justice, prudence and the right to safe and peaceful protest. It protects protesters, rail workers and passengers without seriously limiting the right to protest. The member for Balmain said that the proposed amendments contained in the bill are not very effective. Once a train driver has seen someone lose their life, it can never be unseen. Once a young 24-year-old woman—or whoever is next—loses her life, we will never be able to change it. This bill is about protecting people. It allows them to protest, but it protects them and ensures that no lives are lost. I commend the bill and the Minns Labor Government for taking a strong stance to save lives. This is about safety, not anti-protest laws.

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (15:59):** I would hazard a guess that I have never agreed more with the member for Heathcote and her contribution in debate on the Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024. I speak in support of the bill. In Australia, we respect and value the role protesting plays in bringing about social change. It is an undeniable expression of democracy and one that encompasses the voice of the people. However, our democracy does not exist in isolation; it is interwoven with the rights and freedoms of every person. The right to protest lawfully must be balanced with the rights every Australian has to earn a living, provide for their families and go about their daily lives without fear of harm or undue disruption. When protests cross the line from peaceful expression to unlawful obstruction, they cease to be a tool for change.

The bill seeks to address the alarming trend of individuals obstructing railways. While the Government's decision to double fines for those offences sends a clear message, I feel it does not go far enough for repeat offenders who consistently protest at any opportunity. Those protesters are adrenaline junkies. They say they protest in a way that is nonviolent. However, if their actions prevent someone else going about their work because they fear harming someone else, it becomes a violent mental act. The person being obstructed is forced to make a decision to go about their vocation and possibly harm someone or, in fact, cede to someone else's ideological argument. While I will always defend the right to protest legally, I cannot support reckless actions that endanger lives, disrupt essential services or undermine our economy.

There is a fine line between an idea—which may build a better future but requires wider awareness—being backed by the public and actions that disrupt the economy or another person's way of life and their ability to provide for their family. Protests that obstruct essential services, block access to workplaces or disrupt critical industries undermine the very society they aim to improve. We are talking about protests blocking railways. Before I address the railway issue, I bring to the attention of the House the recent increase in public disorder relating to the ongoing protests against forest harvesting operations. Conservation groups stage demonstrations that halt legal operations and directly threaten the livelihoods of timber workers.

While aimed at raising awareness about ideological, environmental and pseudoscientific concerns, those protests have had significant consequences on the livelihoods of those who depend on our most sustainable resource industry. When activists disrupt essential operations they not only delay vital production but also affect the workers and businesses that rely on the industries to support their families. While the professional and persistent activists argue that they are protecting the environment, their actions clearly display that they are hypocrites. They not only purchase timber products but also have mobile phones, drive cars and rely on computers. The precious minerals that are mined are turned into metals used in the above mentioned products.

The timber industry sequesters carbon during tree growth and stores carbon in the product that is harvested, then more trees are grown in the same area, and minerals cannot be put back into the ground after being used. Protesters would have us believe that they are environmental angels, yet they are consumers like every other person who lives in a house, drives a car and uses technology. The same hypocritical protesters have forced temporary shutdowns of worksites, putting jobs at risk and creating economic strain on local communities. Those disruptions not only impact companies but also affect truck drivers, mill workers and families who depend on a stable income from legal and responsible industries.

Similarly, construction projects are the backbone of community growth. Those developments bring better transport, modern utilities and economic opportunities. Activists who blockade worksites grind progress to a halt. They drive up costs, delay completion of projects and harm contractors, tradespeople and suppliers. The disruptions are not abstract inconveniences; they are assaults on the lives and livelihoods of hardworking Australians. Protesters are preventing housing being built during a housing crisis. We must find collaborative solutions that balance sustainability with economic stability, not resort to tactics that create division and hardship.

Nowhere is that more apparent than on the railway network when disruptions have occurred as a result of certain protest groups targeting trains. Blocking railway lines impacts not just freight services but also the commuters who rely on trains to get to work, school or medical appointments. Businesses awaiting critical deliveries are left scrambling. Workers who have been stranded at stations fear losing their jobs. The stress and anxiety those disruptions create are palpable. Local economies and communities are left to bear the burden because of decisions they did not make. Why should the right to protest matter more than the rights of workers going about their day? It is not just about economics; it is about fairness. It is about saying to every Australian, "Your right to earn a living is just as important as someone else's right to raise their voice." Protests must never become a tool to hold the broader community hostage to a cause.

The ripple effect that goes beyond industries directly targeted by protests affects local economies, such as rail line disruptions in the Hunter region this year. Protesters blocking railway lines not only halted the transport of goods but also interrupted commuter services. Local businesses that depend on timely deliveries or reliable worker commutes faced financial losses, creating tension and resentment within communities. Those actions also hurt the mental wellbeing of affected individuals. Imagine a business owner anxiously awaiting the supply of goods that might never arrive or a worker worried about losing their job because they could not get to work on time. They are the real-world consequences of protesters who prioritise making a spectacle over substance.

History shows countless examples of protests that have achieved meaningful, lasting change without resorting to this level of harm. Peaceful marches, petitions, open forums, social media campaigns and direct engagement with policymakers are examples of pathways to progress. Protests that devolve into blockades and obstructions diminish the legitimacy of their cause and alienate the very communities that activists seek to rally. Spare a thought for our local train drivers, workers and transport staff who have to deal with the consequences of any blockade, including cleaning up and removing any blockage materials or even removing a human locked to the tracks, a train or other infrastructure.

Protesting is a powerful tool for change, but it must not come at the expense of others making a living. We must draw a line between legitimate protesters and the activism that harms communities and livelihoods. The Crimes Amendment (Obstruction of a Railway) Bill 2024 is not about silencing voices; it is about protecting livelihoods and maintaining public order. Protest is a cornerstone of our democracy—the strongest democracy in the world—but so too is the right for Australians to travel safely, operate their businesses or provide for their families. Increased penalties in those cases will assist in deterring dangerous behaviour and extreme activism.

No-one has the right to protest unlawfully if it prevents someone else from going about their lives, earning an income or putting food on their table. I commend the bill.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:07):** I speak in debate on the Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024. I acknowledge the contribution of my Greens colleague the member for Balmain to this debate. The Greens strongly oppose the bill, which is the latest in the New South Wales Government's systemic and targeted crackdown on the right to protest in this State. The bill seeks to amend the Crimes Act 1900 to increase the maximum penalty, under section 213 of the Act, for obstructing a railway to a whopping \$22,000, plus up to two years imprisonment. Currently, the absence of a prescribed financial penalty in section 213 means that in a local court the possible fine for obstructing a railway is capped at \$11,000.

By doubling that fine and introducing the possibility of jail time, the bill would bring penalties for exercising the right to protest at a railway, tramway or associated station, building or structure in line with the penalties for other protests criminalised under section 214A of the Crimes Act and 144G of the Roads Act 1993. Both sections were amended in 2022 under what were called the anti-protest laws, rushed through by the Coalition Government, with the shameful support of NSW Labor in opposition. The Greens opposed and continue to oppose those laws as does much of civil society, including the union movement.

I note that the member for Balmain has foreshadowed that she will be moving amendments on behalf of The Greens to include a statutory review of the amended Act after 12 months and to introduce a carve-out for conduct that takes place on a light rail line that is apparently a genuine demonstration, protest, procession or organised assembly. As the member for Balmain has outlined, there is a real risk that by not excluding light rail lines, regular protests that happen on them will be at risk. I have seen many a Labor MP march on those light rail lines. I do not know whether they still join the May Day march now that they are in government. I wonder how many protests for domestic violence vigils, women's rights and other issues that members in this place have joined in previously will be at risk if we do not support the amendment to carve out the light rail lines.

I understand the member for Balmain is in conversation with the Government about amendments that make sure people are not targeted in their workplaces as part of the reform the Government is ramming through to further strengthen anti-protest laws. I urge members to consider the amendments carefully and to recognise it is absolutely critical to protect the right to industrial action and peaceful protest both at work and in our society. It is not okay to just repeat that the Minns Labor Government likes peaceful protest or supports peaceful protest. Peaceful protest cannot be protected simply by saying that statement because, sadly, Premier Chris Minns is not at every peaceful protest to tell that to the NSW Police Force or Transport or the bureaucrats who are empowered with implementing the laws that we pass in Parliament. When we pass anti-protest laws like those in the bill, we send a clear message to the NSW Police Force that its role is to crack down on peaceful protest and to stamp out disruption and people raising their views publicly.

The Labor Government says it is introducing the laws out of concern for protesters obstructing railway lines who are demanding action on climate and the risks such actions pose to the safety of both protesters and people who operate and work on trains and trams. The Government says that concern is particularly strong in the Hunter region, where trains transporting coal have been blockaded by climate activists on multiple occasions. To be clear, The Greens absolutely agree that all workers deserve to be safe at work and that peaceful protest must have regard to that when it is exercised. But let us take a step back and ask: Why is the New South Wales Labor Government really bringing these laws in now when the ink is barely dry on the review of the Roads Act amendment component of the 2022 anti-protest laws and we are still awaiting the report on the Crimes Act amendment component?

It is no coincidence that we are debating the bill in the days leading up to the Rising Tide People's Blockade in Newcastle, when thousands and thousands of people will converge in peaceful protest upon the world's largest coal port—and good on them. It is no coincidence that the grassroots groups and organisations behind the People's Blockade have been in and out of court for the past week fighting against attempts by those in power to shut them down, and it is no coincidence that the New South Wales Government and the State's climate policy is languishing so far behind that we will fail to meet our interim net zero targets, rivers across the country are running dry and we are staring down yet another year of a record-breaking sweltering summer. Nor is it a coincidence that this bill—which, unlike the other anti-protest laws, does not include a carve-out for workers taking industrial action—has been introduced in the context of weeks of industrial action from the Rail, Tram and Bus Union for improved pay and conditions. Under the laws in the bill, rail workers taking industrial action that disrupts rail services could also potentially be on the hook for two years imprisonment and \$22,000 in fines.

I remind members that protest, by its very nature, is meant to be disruptive. It is meant to send a clear message, however uncomfortable, that cannot be ignored about how dire a situation has become. If it does not disrupt, it will not have an impact. When people are trying to change the world, they need to disrupt to have an impact. The world is burning. Wages are going backwards. There is an ongoing genocide, with weapons being

built from components made in Australia. The courageous people who take action to call out those atrocities and demand action know they are putting their lives, comfort and safety at risk, and yet they do it anyway. We should applaud and take inspiration from their courage and principals, and their dedication and determination to make this world a better place for our communities and future generations.

Yet the New South Wales Labor Government is so afraid of being called out on its inaction on everything from climate change to the genocide in Gaza by progressive communities and groups that actually helped put it into power that it would rather throw the book at those groups than listen and address their concerns. Rather than doing something that would alleviate the deeply entrenched issues that drive people to take to the streets and blockade coal trains and ports, NSW Labor—once the party of the mighty union movement that blockaded and picketed ports and various workplaces across the State—has instead chosen to don the mask of a tough-on-crime, law-and-order government. As Chlöe Swarbrick, Greens MP for Auckland Central said last week in the New Zealand Parliament, wear the mask long enough and it becomes your face. Federally, the Labor Government, under the so-called environment Minister and Federal member for Sydney, has approved 28 new coalmines since it was elected. The Leader of the Australian Greens, Adam Bandt, said:

Emissions are higher under Anthony Albanese than last under Scott Morrison, and now Labor has made the climate crisis even worse.

You can't put the fire out if you're pouring petrol on it.

The most recent coalmine approval by the Federal environment Minister occurred in September this year. If Labor really has the safety of community and workers front of mind and wants people to stop protesting, there are things it could do right now. It could take meaningful action on climate. The reason people are putting themselves at risk to stop trains in the Hunter is that Labor continues to approve new coalmines. When we talk about the potential risks to community and the harm caused, let us think for a second about the Pasifika peoples who are currently un-burying their family members to re-bury their bodies further inland because rising sea levels risk washing them out to sea. If we are talking about really caring for people, let us take the climate action we are required to take instead of continually trying to shut down the people who are doing the best they can to change the world for future generations. I encourage and stand in solitary with the protesters and send strength to all of the arms that will be paddling and kayaking this weekend in Newcastle.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (16:17):** I make a short contribution to the debate on the Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024. The Opposition supports the bill. Any bill that takes action to protect people or keep people safe is a step in the right direction. It will be interesting to see what the magistrates do with this bill in the future. I certainly hope that, with the additional powers, magistrates will be able to take the actions necessary to ensure people who break the law have the book thrown at them. It is hypocritical of the member for Balmain and the member for Newtown to talk about transparency and democracy and then vote today against having additional parliamentary sitting days and more opportunities to ask questions in question time. Voting against the opportunity to question governments and talk about what is needed flies in the face of what they stand for.

What about the member for Newtown, who said the world needs to be disrupted and those people need to be applauded for putting their comfort and safety at risk? At the end of the day, these acts of stupidity are completely disgraceful. These people are just thumbing their noses at the laws in this State. We should be ensuring that we have laws that deal with people who have no consideration for other people's lives, jobs or safety. Blockade Australia protesters wreaked havoc on the Hunter Line not just for a few days but for several weeks. They disrupted passenger and freight trains every night and in the mornings. Commuters were also interrupted during peak times by those illegal protests, which caused disruption costing millions of dollars. Those protesters have no regard for the livelihoods of honest working people who are trying to make a living. Blockade Australia also enlisted protesters from other States, who were not even locals, to disrupt the daily lives of those living in the Hunter Valley region and impact the industries and businesses that use the train lines for critical freight reasons.

I listened to the painful contribution of the member for Newtown, and I ask her to listen to my contribution as well. There is no denying that hundreds of passenger services were interrupted, hundreds of coal services were cancelled and hundreds of hours of disruption took place on the train lines. Despite multiple arrests and a few fines being handed down, the illegal activists continued to cause harm to the New South Wales economy. They also put at risk the lives of members of the public, rail operators and emergency services personnel. Rail staff also reported instances of abuse. If Greens members think that behaviour is appropriate and should be applauded, I tell them right now that it is not and should not be. Nobody should have to accept behaviour from these protesters that causes harm.

The significant disruption on the Newcastle and the Hunter Valley lines also meant that agricultural producers were unable to meet their contractual obligations for exports and interstate agreements. The Central Coast's main power station saw its coal stockpile depleted and the region faced potential power shortages and

blackouts if the cancellations continued. The reckless actions of the protesters and their complete disregard for the livelihoods of Australians also obstructed the flow of trade at one of Australia's most crucial rail ports. People missed work, important events and specialist medical appointments because the train lines were down. Export deadlines were missed for essential produce to be shipped to other countries, and whole industries were thrown into disarray. These people call themselves activists, but they choose disruption over dialogue and chaos over constructive engagement. Their actions are a disgrace to the hardworking Australians who depend on the rail lines for their livelihoods.

At a time when New South Wales is experiencing police shortages, it is unbelievable that police were taken from other parts of the State to deal with these protests, which went for weeks on end. Magistrates should be throwing the book at these individuals for their illegal activities. As I have said, harsher penalties are needed to make this type of illegal protesting a serious criminal offence. I thank the Attorney General for bringing the bill to the House, but it is only a step in the right direction. If we need to make the bill harsher and the penalties greater, then that is exactly what we should do because these protesters continue to disrupt people's lives.

I was not going to talk about Rising Tide, but The Greens raised it. These protesters want to call what is going on in Newcastle a "protestival", where people gather on the beach and have some kids' workshops and activities, a singalong and a couple of dance parties. But, at the end of the day, when they go out onto the ports they have no respect for our police and emergency service personnel, who have to go out there if somebody cannot swim or when someone dies.

**Ms Jenny Leong:** They don't have to go out there.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The member for Newtown says they do not have to go out there, but when someone falls off their boat The Greens will be the first ones complaining that nobody is out there to help them. At the end of the day, these buffoons tie themselves to poles, glue themselves to roads and stand on top of trains. The Greens think that those people should be admired and applauded for—what were the words of the member for Newtown?—putting their "comfort and safety at risk". I think those words are a disgrace. I thank the Attorney General for bringing the bill to the House. These protesters try to manipulate the law. We need to continually bring laws to this place that cause the most disruption to those who would disrupt the lives of good people across New South Wales.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:26):** I support the Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024. I thank my friend the Attorney General for bringing this sensible legislation. During this debate a lot of members have talked about free speech as if it is some sort of absolute right in Australia, but that is not the case. In fact, we are the only western democracy that I am aware of where there is no express right to free speech in our foundation stone document. Many people refer to the first amendment rights in the United States, but we do not enjoy similar rights in Australia. Our right to free speech has been hard fought for through the courts, particularly the High Court, in cases involving political donations and defamation legislation such as Theophanous, Stephens, Lange, Australian Capital Television and, indeed, the Unions NSW case, which of course was a seminal case. Our free speech has been developed over time.

However, there are limits on our speech. Although I am an unabashed and fearless fighter for free speech, that does not mean it should be unlimited, for a number of the reasons that have been outlined in this debate. I agree with members who have said that while people should be able to protest, it should not be to the extent that other people's livelihoods and key and critical infrastructure are obstructed. The bill seeks to send a strong message to the community that where critical infrastructure is impeded, there will be penalties. What the Attorney General is recommending in the bill is commensurate with penalties in other States, such as South Australia and Victoria. The Attorney General should be commended for being consistent in sending this strong message.

Of late I have received a lot of correspondence through my office about protests, particularly recurring protests. I am sure that many members of the House would join me in expressing concern that the protests we have seen have an enormous impact on police resources. That is not to say that people should not be allowed to express their views, and it is important that they are given that opportunity. However, when protests are coordinated there is an opportunity cost to fighting other crimes that are important to investigate. Many police officers I have spoken to have expressed the same view.

There is a lot of talk about free speech in Canberra at the moment. Whilst I will not reiterate the arguments that were put forward in question time, I will be very interested to see what position The Greens will take on the misinformation and disinformation bill in Canberra, which is an appalling piece of legislation that will have a chilling effect on free speech. I do not think this bill will because the Attorney General is rightfully seeking to send a strong message about dangerous forms of protest. Playing around in rail corridors and mixing protest with heavy infrastructure is not a safe or sound combination. I listened closely to the excellent speech of the member

for Heathcote, who spoke eloquently about her father and how he was impacted by people protesting in the rail corridor and the devastating consequences that had.

While I appreciate The Greens are passionate about these issues and they are ideologically consistent, I respectfully disagree on this occasion because I worry about the impact. When protest is combined with heavy infrastructure, the concerns go beyond the usual objections one might have. It does not matter whether it is railways or what we saw recently on major highways, those protests get in the way of people going about their business, going to work and doing the things they want to do. I appreciate The Greens have a view on this, but my electorate is best served by a member who will back the Government's legislation on this occasion. Again, I commend the Attorney General for bringing the bill to the House and sending a strong message that while free speech is appropriate, important and essential in the modern democracy, that does not extend to disrupting major infrastructure or putting people's livelihoods and lives at risk. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (16:30):** In reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Wairoa, Maitland, Lake Macquarie, Campbelltown, Winston Hills, Mount Druitt, Balmain, Heathcote, Oxley, Newtown, Bathurst and Kiama for their contributions to debate on the Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024. I thank the member for Wairoa and other Opposition members for agreeing that the bill makes a reasonable amendment to section 213 of the Crimes Act to include the ability for the Local Court to impose a fine of up to 200 penalty units for an offence against that section.

As members noted, these amendments are important in light of recent conduct of protesters on railway lines. I am pleased that the Opposition agrees with the Government that these amendments strike the right balance between the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and the rights of other members of the community to freedom of movement and not to be unduly obstructed from going about their lawful activities. The Opposition and the Government being united in supporting the bill—along with several members of the crossbench, whom I also thank—sends a strong message about how seriously this Parliament takes dangerous actions on railway lines.

I briefly address some matters raised during debate on the bill. The member for Balmain and member for Newtown suggested that the bill erodes the right to protest. The Government is not eroding the right to peaceful protest. People conduct peaceful protests in Sydney and other places in New South Wales every week. In fact, the Government recognises the importance of freedom of assembly and freedom of speech. Those rights are foundational to our democracy. However, international law, constitutional law and common law all recognise that the right to peaceful protest and assembly can be restricted for public interest reasons, including the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. The Government is therefore required to strike a balance between the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly on the one hand, and the rights of other members of the community to freedom of movement so they are not unduly obstructed from going about their lawful activities on the other.

The Government supports peaceful protests and assemblies. Section 213 of the Crimes Act does not criminalise protests. It criminalises persons disrupting railway lines, which is behaviour that can be both extremely dangerous and significantly detrimental to the community, to businesses and to the economy. It poses a threat to the safety of those persons, commuters and railway staff. It also disrupts the lives of members of the community who rely on public transport to get to work, attend school and go about their daily activities, some of which is helping other people. As a government, we support peaceful protests, but we do not support illegal actions that risk people's safety and lives. We cannot apologise for taking action to strengthen the financial penalties for dangerous and disruptive behaviour on railway lines. It also imposes additional burdens on the police that they should not have to meet.

The bill does not create any new offences; it merely increases the financial penalty that the Local Court may impose. The member for Balmain referred to the statutory review of part 4AF of the Crimes Act. The amendments in the bill are entirely separate to the work of the statutory review. Section 213 is not contained in part 4AF. The statutory review is required to consider whether the policy objectives of part 4AF remain valid, and whether the terms of the provisions in the part remain appropriate for securing those objectives. The scope of the review did not include reviewing section 213 of the Crimes Act. The Government has moved swiftly to introduce tougher financial penalties for the dangerous conduct that some people engage in on railways. These amendments do not pre-empt the findings of the statutory review in any way because that review is not considering this provision. The Government is carefully considering the statutory review and the report will be tabled shortly.

The bill will help deter people from engaging in reckless behaviour on railway lines. Doubling the maximum fine that the Local Court can impose for an offence against section 213 of the Crimes Act reflects the seriousness with which the Government and the community view this offence. The bill further strengthens laws in New South Wales that address seriously disruptive behaviour that puts community members at risk. It aligns the penalty for section 213 with the penalty for other key offences that target disruptive conduct. The bill also

sends a strong message that dangerous and disruptive behaviour on railway lines is unsafe and selfish and cannot be tolerated. 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.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Michael Daley and Ms Kobi Shetty.**

#### Consideration in Detail

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (16:37):** I move Government amendment No. 1 on sheet c2024-254B:

No. 1 **Exemption from offence**

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 13—

- (3) A person does not commit an offence under this section if the conduct forms part of the following—
- (a) industrial action,
  - (b) an industrial dispute,
  - (c) an industrial campaign.

When we decided to bring the bill to this House, we were cognisant of the fact that there was no change whatsoever to the wording of section 213 of the Crimes Act. It was merely an adjustment to the financial penalty. Given that section 213 was a longstanding rail safety provision, we did not consider it necessary for the sake of aligning that provision with section 214A to make any amendments whatsoever to the wording of section 213. However, since we have brought the provision to the House, some members of this place, particularly members of The Greens, and also some stakeholders from without, have suggested to us that, for the avoidance of doubt, it would be helpful if the Government would accede to adopting certain provisions from section 214A that exempt certain behaviour from the criminal attraction within section 213. Given that the Australian Labor Party moved those amendments in 2022 when in opposition, we are happy to accede to that request.

The amendments that I have just moved will put beyond all doubt that a person does not commit an offence under section 213 of the Crimes Act if their conduct forms part of industrial action, an industrial dispute or an industrial campaign. Those words were taken from a similar exemption under existing section 214A of the Act. Section 213 of the Crimes Act 1900 provides for longstanding offences that relate to the obstruction of railways. They date back over a century in one form or another in New South Wales, and earlier versions can be found in English legislation from the 1800s. They are not offences designed to impact on industrial action. They are offences squarely directed at the safety of our railways. However, I said two years ago during the debate on the Roads and Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2022:

The Australian Labor Party was founded by a bunch of unionists in the 1800s who thought they were getting a raw deal and went about organising themselves. They formed a political party, and over the many decades since, along with our brothers and sisters in the union movement, it has been the most successful political party in the history of Australia and one of the most enduring social democratic parties in the world. At times many of our members and people who are allied to our causes have had to take actions, to protest and assemble, to engage in civil disobedience. All of those things need to be protected in this State and in this nation. Many people have made other people cranky—put it that way—by engaging in such activities. We do not seek and will not accept that those rights should be unnecessarily impinged.

I also said at the time that we in opposition had insisted on carve-outs to the Roads and Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill for industrial and other industrial-related activities. As I have already said, the offence under section 213 is a longstanding offence directed at rail safety and is clearly different to the offence under section 214A of the Crimes Act. However, we understand the representations that have been made and the desire for absolute clarity on the issue. For that reason, we are moving these amendments.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (16:41):** The Opposition would respectfully say to the Attorney General with regard to this amendment that his original instinct not to contain it within the bill was the right one. Accordingly, we will oppose the amendment. I will explain why. Sections 211 to 214 of the Crimes Act form a particular division within the Act. They all deal with offences relating to railways. In particular, section 214 makes clear that sections 212 and 213 of the Crimes Act relate to each other. One relates to a more serious offence than the other. To have this exemption apply to section 213 without also applying to section 212 is quite illogical.

But, more importantly, the reason that this exemption should not be put within the Crimes Act and within section 213 is not just a question of illogicality; it is a question of public safety. As the Attorney General said in

his reply speech, section 213 is about ensuring that there are not dangerous and disruptive acts taking place on railways, in particular heavy railway. There is no safe place on a heavy railway line to conduct industrial action, an industrial dispute or an industrial campaign without it risking the lives of people. Indeed, section 213, which the bill amends, goes beyond merely being on a railway line. It prevents people intentionally causing the "passage or operation of a locomotive or other rolling stock on a railway to be obstructed". It is not just the railway.

If this amendment is agreed to, it will allow people to intentionally cause damage to a locomotive or to an engine, which could cause damage to people's safety. It will make it lawful if they say, "This was part of an industrial action." Under the Government's amendment, someone can lawfully sabotage railway engines and rolling stock and cause damage to people's lives, and they will have no penalty if they say, "It is okay. It was part of an industrial action." It is actually quite absurd because it is part of the left of the Labor Party wagging the tail of the dog.

When we inserted section 214A into the legislation of this State, there was a huge uproar amongst the left of the Labor Party. The Ferguson left and the other left all went mad. It was changed and similar provisions to this amendment were put in the legislation in the upper House in order get it through. It is groundhog day two years later. But unlike those provisions, which related to acts of obstruction to roads and so on, this amendment, moved to appease the left wing of the Labor Party, will enable people to deliberately sabotage railway engines and rolling stock and cause great harm to people with immunity from any criminal sanction.

It is absolute madness. The amendment should not be supported by anybody who understands anything about railway safety, railway corridors and the like. It is absolutely one of the worst acts I have seen proposed by any political party since I have been in Parliament. It is so fundamentally against the public interest that it is absolutely ridiculous. It is illogical. If the amendment was done properly, it would also apply to section 212. It does not apply to section 212, which is linked to section 213—which the bill amends—as clearly shown by section 214, which allows for a person found innocent under section 212 to still be found guilty under the lesser offence of section 213. The amendment is an absolutely ill-considered, knee-jerk reaction to the left wing of the Labor Party. It should not be passed by this Parliament. It is an absolute shocker.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (16:47):** The Greens support the amendment. I thank the Attorney General and his staff for their engagement on this issue. It is obviously incredibly important that there is absolute clarity around the fact that we do not want industrial action, unionisation and the union movement to be captured by legislation that is intended to restrict the right to protest. Irrespective of how the Government discusses the bill, it is clear that it is another step in anti-protest legislation. It is critically important that unions are protected from it. I thank the Attorney General for moving the amendment. I will no longer be moving a similar amendment and will just move my other amendments. I thank the Government for its engagement.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** The question is that Government amendment No. 1 on sheet c2024-254B be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....52  
 Noes .....38  
 Majority..... 14

**AYES**

- |                     |              |                    |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Aitchison, J        | Harris, D    | Park, R            |
| Atalla, E           | Harrison, J  | Piper, G           |
| Bali, S             | Haylen, J    | Quinnell, S        |
| Barr, C             | Hoening, R   | Saffin, J (teller) |
| Butler, L           | Holland, M   | Saliba, D          |
| Butler, R           | Hornery, S   | Scully, P          |
| Car, P              | Kaliyanda, C | Shetty, K          |
| Catley, Y           | Kamper, S    | Smith, T           |
| Chanthivong, A      | Kirby, W     | Stuart, M          |
| Cotsis, S           | Leong, J     | Tesch, L           |
| Crakanthorp, T      | Li, J        | Vo, T              |
| Daley, M            | McDermott, H | Voltz, L           |
| Dib, J              | McGirr, J    | Warren, G          |
| Doyle, T            | McKeown, K   | Washington, K      |
| Finn, J             | Mehan, D     | Watson, A          |
| Greenwich, A        | Minns, C     | Whan, S            |
| Hagarty, N (teller) | O'Neill, M   | Wilkinson, K       |

## AYES

Hannan, J

## NOES

Anderson, K  
 Ayyad, T  
 Clancy, J  
 Cooke, S  
 Coure, M  
 Cross, M  
 Crouch, A (teller)  
 Dalton, H  
 Davies, T  
 Di Pasqua, S  
 Griffin, J  
 Henskens, A  
 Hodges, M

James, T  
 Kemp, M  
 Layzell, D  
 Moylan, B  
 Petinos, E  
 Preston, R  
 Provost, G  
 Regan, M  
 Roberts, A  
 Saunders, D  
 Scruby, J  
 Singh, G  
 Sloane, K

Speakman, M  
 Taylor, M  
 Thompson, T  
 Toole, P  
 Tuckerman, W  
 Tudehope, M  
 Wallace, J  
 Ward, G  
 Williams, L  
 Williams, R  
 Williamson, R (teller)  
 Wilson, F

**Amendment agreed to.**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (16:54):** By leave: I move The Greens amendments Nos 1 and 3 on sheet c2024-253C in globo:

No. 1 **Defences and exemptions from offence**

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 13—

- (3) Subsection (1) does not apply in relation to—
- (a) a tramway, or
- (b) tracks that form part of a light rail system, within the meaning of the *Transport Administration Act 1988*.

No. 3 **Review**

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 13—

**[2] Schedule 11 Savings, transitional and other provisions**

Insert at the end of the schedule, with appropriate part and clause numbering—

**Provision consequent on Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Act 2024****Review of operation of s 213**

- (1) The Minister must review the amended provision to determine whether—
- (a) the policy objectives of the amended provision remain valid, and
- (b) the terms of the amended provision remain appropriate for securing the objectives
- (2) The review is to be undertaken as soon as possible after the period of 12 months from the commencement.
- (3) The review must include—
- (a) consultation with the public about the matters mentioned in subsection (1)(a) and (b), including an invitation to make submissions about the matters, and
- (b) publication of any submission made about the review, with the consent of the person making the submission,
- (4) A report on the outcome of the review must be tabled in each House of Parliament within 18 months after the commencement.
- (5) In this section—

**amended provision** means section 213 as amended by the *Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Act 2024*.

**commencement** means the commencement of the *Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Act 2024*, Schedule 1[1].

Amendment No. 1 provides that the offence does not apply on a tramway or light rail. It looks to capture concerns raised by civil society organisations that the bill will encroach upon their ability to assemble peacefully at Sydney

Town Hall, which is very near to a light rail corridor. Those organisations are concerned that this would in effect make it incredibly risky for people to protest outside Town Hall in case they should step onto the light rail tracks. Amendment No. 3 requires there to be a statutory review after 12 months and that the review must contain a public consultation element. This amendment is also in response to civil society organisations that have requested a review in 12 months.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** Order! The member for Balmain will be heard in silence.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** Over 1,000 submissions were made in good faith to the last statutory review on the 2022 anti-protest laws. The organisations raised the need for a better review in response to this latest tranche of anti-protest laws on rail lines.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (16:56):** With respect to the mover, the Government does not support these amendments. Section 213 provides for longstanding offences that relate to the obstruction of railways. As I said in my speech in reply, an offence of obstructing a railway has existed in one form or another for over 100 years in New South Wales legislation and since the 1800s in English legislation. Obstructing rolling stock on a railway is dangerous and puts the person obstructing the train and train drivers at risk. That is also the case where a person obstructs light rail, which can also give rise to significant safety issues and may put lives at risk. The Government does not support carving tramways or light rail out from the operation of the provision.

The section 213 offence is directed at ensuring the safety of our railways and of the people using those railways. It is a different offence to that provided for under section 214A and directed at different conduct. Section 214A is an offence of "Damage or disruption to major facility". It is situated in the Crimes Act 1900 in part 4AF "Major facilities". It was introduced in 2022 following major disruptions to facilities caused by small-scale civil disobedience actions. Section 213 provides for an offence where a person "intentionally and without lawful excuse, does an act, or omits to do an act, which causes the passage or operation of a locomotive or other rolling stock on a railway to be obstructed". The offence only applies where a person does not have lawful excuse.

As such, there is no need to introduce an equivalent of section 214A (6) as lawful excuse is already built into the offence. This also impacts on the utility of the introduction of an equivalent provision to section 214A (2) in relation to a reasonable excuse. Where a person has a lawful excuse, the offence in section 213 will not apply. It is not clear what the purpose would be of also including a reasonable excuse exclusion to this offence. Section 213 also only applies to persons who obstruct the passage of locomotives or other rolling stock on a railway. Section 214A is a broader offence that also has the capacity to cover people who are near a major facility. Section 213 is clearly a different offence with different application. Broader exceptions are therefore necessary for the section 214A offence but not the section 213 offence. The Government has already moved amendments to clearly protect industrial action. The remaining Greens amendments are not required or supported.

The Government opposes amendment No. 3, which proposes a statutory review. The Government's legislative reform does not amend the scope or nature of the offence; it changes the penalty available in the Local Court to clearly specify that the Local Court may issue a fine of up to 200 penalty units. There is no efficacy in conducting a statutory review of that change. The amendment aligns the penalty in section 213 with the penalty for the offence in section 214A of the Crimes Act for damaging or disrupting a major facility, and also the penalty for the offences in section 144G of the Roads Act 1993 for damaging, disrupting or obstructing the Sydney Harbour Bridge or other major bridges, tunnels or roads—all of which are summary offences. The setting of a maximum penalty provides a sentencing yardstick for courts, and the imposition of penalties in individual matters will be a matter for the courts. I note the Department of Communities and Justice and the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research will continue to monitor that offence.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** With the concurrence of the House, we will conclude consideration of the amendments to the bill before proceeding with the public interest debate.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (17:00):** The Opposition agrees with everything the Attorney General said with regard to the review provisions proposed in The Greens amendment No. 3 and everything he said prior to his statements about that review. Those statements were overwhelming arguments against his amendment, which we opposed. I am glad there is a limit to the absurdity of the Government's behaviour on the matter. The Opposition opposes the amendments.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** The question is that The Greens amendments Nos 1 and 3 on sheet c2024-253C be agreed to. A division has been called for. There being only five members for the question, the question is resolved in the negative. I direct that the names of those members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**Ayes, 5**

Mr A. Greenwich  
Ms J. Leong  
Ms J. Scruby  
Ms K. Shetty  
Ms T. Smith

**Amendments negatived.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** The question is that the clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 as amended be agreed to.

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** The question is that the motion be agreed to. A division has been called for. There being only four members against the question, the question is resolved in the affirmative. I direct that the names of those members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**Noes, 4**

Mr A. Greenwich  
Ms J. Leong  
Ms K. Shetty  
Ms T. Smith

**Motion agreed to.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** It being after 5.00 p.m., the public interest debate will now proceed.

*Public Interest Debate***GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (17:07):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that the New South Wales Government is building better essential services for New South Wales, including through:
  - (a) removing the wages cap;
  - (b) providing 16,700 New South Wales teachers and support staff permanent contracts;
  - (c) dropping teacher vacancies to a three-year low, with 24 per cent fewer vacancies at the start of term 3 in 2024 than the same time last year;
  - (d) delivering the largest pay increase in two decades to TAFE NSW teachers;
  - (e) investing \$252 million to employ 1,300 new apprentices and trainees in the local government sector; and
  - (f) investing an additional \$572 million to make the 1,112 nurses and midwives left unfunded by the previous Government permanent.
- (2) Supports the Government's \$8.7 billion in responsible cost-of-living relief to households, including:
  - (a) \$189 million to safeguard bulk-billing at GP clinics across the State by providing a payroll tax waiver for GPs that bulk-bill a minimum number of appointments;
  - (b) \$561 million investment over two years to cap tolls at \$60 per week after the former Government privatised motorways and made Sydney the most tolled city in the world;
  - (c) waiving or reducing stamp duty for first home buyers purchasing homes up to \$1 million—the most generous first home buyer support scheme of any State or Territory that helps five out of every six first home buyers;
  - (d) \$435 million in 2024-25 to provide rebates on energy bills of \$250 for families and seniors and \$350 for low-income households and those with medical conditions;
  - (e) \$430 million has been allocated to provide fee relief for families of three-, four- and five-year-olds across New South Wales; and
  - (f) a 10.5 per cent pay rise over three years for the State's essential workers, which comes on top of the 4.5 per cent pay rise last year—the biggest in over a decade.

- (3) Supports the New South Wales Government's reforms to the planning system to build more homes for New South Wales, including through:
  - (a) accelerated rezoning of 45 locations near train stations across New South Wales to boost housing supply of affordable, well-built and well-located homes;
  - (b) investing \$450 million to build new apartments for essential workers; and
  - (c) delivering up to 30,000 new homes by leveraging surplus government land.
- (4) Acknowledges the New South Wales Government is building better communities for New South Wales, including through:
  - (a) investing a record \$119.4 billion in infrastructure over the next four years;
  - (b) introducing the toughest domestic violence laws in the country, making it far harder for perpetrators to get bail;
  - (c) tackling knife crime by giving police extra powers to keep knives off our streets and bring in new restrictions relating to the sale of knives to children;
  - (d) banning no-grounds evictions and limiting rent increases to only one per year;
  - (e) legislating ambitious emissions reduction targets; and
  - (f) investing \$334 million for new and upgraded roads across regional New South Wales.

That was a lot! The reason it was a lot is that the Government has not been sitting on its hands. The first part—phase A, if you want to call it that—of this Government's time in office was to spend a large chunk of its time mopping up the mess left to it by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government. In fact, this Government had to accomplish all of that after inheriting the largest debt ever handed from one government to another in the history of New South Wales.

The differences in education have been profound. I can talk from experience. Having been in the classroom on 24 March 2023 and then, on 26 March 2023, no longer having that position because I was here as the member for Camden, I know that one of the biggest things we on this side did straightaway was bring in the mobile phone ban. We said we would do it, and we did it. One year after the ban was enacted, the Department of Education undertook a survey that found that 81 per cent of students, who do not really agree on anything, said that their learning has improved since the ban; 87 per cent of principals said that students are less distracted in the classroom since the ban; and 86 per cent of principals said that socialising has improved since the ban. Let us not forget: Schools are not only about educating in reading, writing and arithmetic; they are also about socialisation and anger management.

Some 16,700 teachers and support staff in New South Wales have been given permanent contracts. These people could not get loans or become permanent parts of their school communities because they were on ongoing casual contracts, which meant that, at this time of year, there was this movement within a school where everyone had to be interviewed again for their jobs. There is not a clear collegiate atmosphere in schools when they all are going for the same jobs again. The first of our 100 public preschools was opened on 14 October, which means we can start looking at early intervention, finding our students and knowing where they are.

We have delivered the biggest pay increase in two decades to teachers at TAFE NSW, which those opposite shredded, ripped apart and tried so hard to kill. We have resuscitated it and are bringing it back. We are delivering a \$1 billion pipeline of investment into school maintenance, which is huge for Camden. We are also doing things on a smaller scope. On 3 December in my electorate, we will have the first orientation day for Gledswood Hills Public School. A community gets a brand new high school because we are delivering things and getting things done. We are passionate about making sure that New South Wales gets what it needs.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (17:14):** I am delighted to speak in this public interest debate. If you were to wander out today through Martin Place or my electorate of Rouse Hill, or walk down the main street of Parramatta—and perhaps even the main street of Cessnock, Camden, Liverpool or Leppington—and ask people in the street whether they are better off now than 20 months ago, they would say they are absolutely not, because the cost of living is biting so very hard. It is a good place to start on the public interest debate, which is about building a better New South Wales.

I would have thought that one of the promises so vital for this Government to keep would have been the promise to build, in its words, the first new hospital in Western Sydney since forever: the Rouse Hill Hospital. Of course it has not been started. There are plans, I believe. There has been a talkfest in relation to that. But we found out in just the last couple of days, through that talkfest and consultation, that that hospital will not have a maternity ward. Here is a government that promised to spend \$700 million and invest in a new hospital. The previous Government, the Liberal-Nationals Government, in building a better New South Wales spent \$700 million alone on Blacktown Hospital, and I can assure you it has all the bells and whistles. It is a great hospital, with some wonderful personnel, doctors, clinicians and nurses, and it certainly has a maternity ward and everything else that you would hope for and desire in a world-class hospital like Blacktown. That was at a cost of \$700 million.

The current Minns Labor Government said it would build a \$700 million hospital at Rouse Hill. In its 2022 budget the Liberal-Nationals Government already committed \$300 million for that project. The Minns Labor Government already has that \$300 million in hand. That is plenty of money to get the project started. But in the last two budgets handed down by the Minns Labor Government, we found out that the completion date for the Rouse Hill Hospital is in 2029, not at the end of this term but halfway through, supposedly, the next term. I ask Government members one thing, which I would ask of any sensible person: How can they possibly propose to complete a \$700 million project in 2029 when they have not even started yet? But now we find out we will not have a maternity ward. What else will we find out in the near future we are not going to get? Unfortunately we now have a government with the largest debt of any in the history of New South Wales.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Members on both sides of the Chamber will come to order.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** It is spiralling out of control and will continue to be in deficit and have record debts for the foreseeable future. That is because of the reckless spending, unfortunately.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The Clerk will stop the clock. The next time the member for Davidson interjects, I will place him on a call to order. I have heard too many interjections from him today.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** There are so many different things in the motion that I could raise and pick on. But the fact of the matter is that people are not better off. The only reason this Government is in so much debt is its reckless spending on behalf of its union colleagues. We have added it up and we believe the hit to the budget for those massive wage increases to the unionised workforce is up around \$10 billion. That is the hit to the budget. That is going to not only deprive the people of this State of many other services but also, more importantly, force up inflation because of the money that is being injected into the system. There are so many areas where this Government has failed. The only thing it has achieved is putting drivers on our driverless trains and metro. I certainly hope they are not going to be striking. If they are striking, we do not need them anyway.

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (17:20):** When the Minns Labor Government was elected, it inherited a State marked by neglect, with a rising cost of living, unfunded services and communities like East Hills bearing the brunt of years of inaction. After 12 years of neglect under the previous Liberal Government, Labor has had to work tirelessly to repair the damage, rebuild trust and lay the foundations to build a better New South Wales. Whether it is through cost-of-living relief, investments in our schools and hospitals or addressing issues such as housing affordability and domestic violence, the Minns Labor Government is delivering outcomes to improve our State and the electorate of East Hills. We abolished the unfair wages cap, providing a long-overdue pay rise to essential workers—teachers, nurses and police officers—who were all undervalued for far too long.

In the East Hill electorate, more than 1,000 local teachers have already seen the impact of that change, with many receiving the largest pay rise in nearly three decades. Households struggling with rising energy prices have benefitted from targeted rebates, with more than 1.6 million households and 300,000 small businesses receiving relief. After years of neglect, Labor is making unprecedented investments in schools and education. Statewide, teacher vacancies have dropped to a three-year low as we prioritise pay increases and permanent contracts for staff. In East Hills, 194 temporary teachers and support staff have transitioned to permanent roles, ensuring stability for our schools and students. We are also upgrading the infrastructure of our local schools, committing \$7 million for upgrades to Condell Park High School and \$7.4 million for Sir Joseph Banks High School, and finalising upgrades to Picnic Point High School. Those investments will ensure students in East Hills learn in environments that inspire them to achieve their very best.

The Minns Labor Government has also committed \$2 million this financial year to much-needed repairs and upgrades across my local primary and secondary schools. We are investing in health care to ensure that everyone can access timely quality care. Under Labor, we have reduced the overdue planned surgery waitlist by 85 per cent, and the paediatric surgery waitlist by 92 per cent, restoring trust in a system that left too many members of my community waiting for far too long. We are investing in new and upgraded hospitals, including \$350 million for Canterbury Hospital's first significant upgrade since 1988. We are investing \$1.3 billion to build a brand-new Bankstown hospital, while also retaining the old hospital to better service the community of East Hills. A new Bankstown hospital was promised by the previous Liberal Government election after election, which it never delivered. It could not even agree on a site.

I know firsthand about the scourge of domestic violence in my community, having helped set up the Biyani House women's shelter. Labor is delivering comprehensive reforms to combat domestic violence and protect vulnerable members of my community. New coercive-control laws, bail reforms and the launch of the State's first primary prevention strategy mark a holistic approach to addressing this crisis. We are making it hard for perpetrators to make bail and introducing electronic monitoring for serious offenders on bail. Those reforms will

make a huge difference to families suffering from tragedies of domestic violence and help to reduce the number of horrific and sad deaths across New South Wales.

Labor understands that housing affordability is one of the most pressing challenges facing families today. We are addressing the needs of first home buyers through the most generous assistance scheme in the country. By raising the stamp duty exemption threshold, we have helped more than 33,000 families across New South Wales, and 1,300 families in Canterbury-Bankstown have saved an average of \$19,546. That is a critical step in addressing the housing crisis and restoring the dream of home ownership for families. We are committing to building 8,400 new public homes, giving priority to women and children fleeing domestic violence through the \$6.6 billion Building Homes for NSW program. It is the largest ever investment by a New South Wales government to build new, good-quality public housing.

The Minns Labor Government has also introduced protections for renters, including banning no-grounds evictions and limiting rent increases to once per year. After 12 years of neglect under the Liberals, our communities are finally being heard, valued and supported. I am very proud of what the Government has been able to achieve in such a short time. Whilst its achievements are impressive, we still have much to do. My Labor colleagues and I are committed to improving services and infrastructure right across New South Wales.

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (17:25):** I make a brief contribution to this public interest debate. I challenge the notion presented in the motion that the New South Wales Government is building better essential services for New South Wales. I like the member for Camden. We get along outside of this place. But this motion is not only an overstatement, but also a delusional fantasy from a government that is utterly detached from the reality faced by the real people of New South Wales.

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

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON:** I will delve into the Government's so-called achievements. Government members have made claims about decreasing teacher vacancies, yet today in question time we learned of a regional school that is resorting to fundraising to afford a full-time teacher. In my own electorate, students are being told by their teachers that there is no money for basic education materials such as science experiments. "You can't dissect a rat today."

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** That's because you defunded public education.

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON:** No, it is because the Government took away all the department's funding. There is nothing left in the kitty. They cannot do the basic stuff in their classrooms. I agree that teachers deserve more, but at what cost? Where is the transparency from the Labor Government on the landmark pay rises? It is as clear as mud, in my opinion. Government members boast about responsible cost-of-living reliefs. That is a euphemism for doing the bare minimum. It is more like throwing the crumbs to the peasants while the urban elite feast. The back-to-school vouchers are gone. There is no relief for parents. The Active and Creative Kids programs were slashed and are nearing extinction. What about our seniors? The cut of the seniors travel card means more isolation for people in the regions, while city folks enjoy the perks. That is not relief; it is downright neglect.

The Government has lifted the wages cap and celebrated pay rises, but outside thousands of nurses and midwives protest, feeling the squeeze more than ever. Our health system is not only on life support; it is also being held hostage by the inefficiencies and underfunding under this Government's watch. But let us all clap for the Government's self-congratulatory back patting today. The Electrical Trades Union turmoil has left projects at a standstill and builders on the brink. The Premier seems content to watch from the sidelines. Government members talk about building more homes, but where are they? There are none in my electorate. Where are the new initiatives? There are none in my electorate.

For 20 months, Government members have worn the high-vis and hard hats, taking credit for what the former Liberal-Nationals Government had already set in motion. There are no new projects. There are no new plans. There is nothing in the pipeline. This is not just a headache for New South Wales, but also a full-blown migraine that started on 26 March 2023. With each budget, the pain intensifies. The \$250 power bill discount was a laughable bandaid when bills have surged by up to \$500 a year and the cost of living soars, including through the sneaky PWC licence fee hikes the Government thought we would not notice, but we did.

People cannot see a GP for weeks. Emergency departments are at breaking point. Through all of that, Government members have the audacity to claim they are building a better New South Wales. No, they are not. They are breaking it. Let us not be fooled by the spin. The New South Wales Government is not building; it is dismantling the very services that keep our society functioning. It has lost the plot. It is time for us to demand a government that not only listens but also acts with the urgency our State deserves.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (17:28):** I thank the member for Camden for bringing this motion to the House.

**Dr Marjorie O'Neill:** Great motion.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** It is a very great motion. I acknowledge that interjection. Anyone who listened to the contribution by the member for Myall Lakes would think the world started on 26 March 2023. The reality is that when we came to government on 26 March 2023, this State was in crisis on a number of fronts. Whether it was health, education, industrial relations or the cost-of-living crisis that was experienced most acutely by many of our frontline workers, New South Wales faced so many challenges that the previous Government ignored for almost a decade. Let us look at the reasons this motion has been brought to the House and why we are proudly building a better New South Wales.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The member for Davidson will come to order.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** I have to start with abolishing the wages cap. Many of our most essential public sector workers saw their wages go backwards for 12 years. That meant playing catch-up. Many of our nurses, teachers and caseworkers on the front line of providing essential services have experienced the cost-of-living issues that members hear about from our constituents. In 2008 a workday peak-hour route from Liverpool to the city cost about \$8.80. In 2023, under members opposite, it cost \$24. That is an increase of 300 per cent. Talk about a cost-of-living crisis! There was not a road that those opposite did not want to toll, and it was a Western Sydney toll. Looking at the application of tolls across our city, we see that toll increases were mainly experienced by those of us in the west.

Let us compare that figure with the toll paid by those in North Sydney. In 2008 the toll to get into the city from North Sydney was \$4. In 2023 the toll was still \$4. Meanwhile, the tolls that my constituents in Liverpool paid increased to \$24 daily. Those opposite were smashing Western Sydney families because they only cared about their mates. We are not just addressing tolls or acute cost-of-living issues faced by New South Wales residents. We are also tackling the housing crisis that those opposite pretended fell out of the sky 18 months ago. The supply of quality and affordable housing, the essential maintenance and upgrades of our public housing stock, and reforming the rental market and strata schemes to adequately fit the needs of today's community are challenges that we have taken on and delivered on.

A couple of weeks ago we passed important legislation to make our rental laws fairer for the almost one-third of New South Wales residents who rent. We are also addressing the gender pay gap. In the 18 months since March 2023, we have reduced the gender pay gap from 11.8 per cent to 9.8 per cent. That is a 2 per cent decrease in just 18 months, and removing the wages cap was a large part of it. We also introduced portable long service leave for 250,000 community services workers who day in, day out support some of the most vulnerable people in our community. Those opposite did not care about those workers enough to ensure that they had access to basic workplace rights. They also had the opportunity to pass industrial manslaughter laws, but they did not want to tackle that for the 12 years they were in government. We delivered that within our first 18 months in government to provide protections for some of the most vulnerable workers in our State. There are so many different aspects of rebuilding New South Wales this Government is delivering on that I have run out of time to list them.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:33):** I thank the member for Camden for bringing this motion to the House and reflect on a productive year for the New South Wales Minns Labor Government. I particularly acknowledge the strong collaborative working relationship with the crossbench. As an Independent member of the crossbench, we are grateful to work with the Government and help New South Wales move forward by strengthening and improving legislation and new projects. The member leads her motion with a focus on housing. That is a priority and there is so much to do, but it is important to acknowledge the work that has been done. The largest ever tranche of rental protections passed the Parliament this year, including no-grounds evictions reforms, which the crossbench has called for for years and which the Minns Labor Government has delivered.

There is so much to do in the housing space but, working with Unions NSW, Independent members successfully established a select committee into essential worker housing, of which the member for Camden is the deputy chair. We are working well to identify creative solutions to ensure that we deliver more housing for key workers who keep our cities and our regions going. It has been a big year for the environment as well. It is important to remember that this was the year in which the Parliament came together to ban offshore oil and gas drilling, following an inquiry chaired by the member for Cessnock. That was important reform. The member for Camden highlighted the funding that has been allocated to public housing maintenance and repairs. I have 1,500 public housing properties within the Sydney electorate. We have gone from a crisis line of housing tenants in desperate need to almost feeling like we are property managers, helping people with their repairs and maintenance, getting the work done and helping people find a safe place to live.

The Government put \$1 billion into social housing repairs and maintenance. I give a big shout-out to Minister Jackson, who joins me quarterly to see the work that needs to be done and makes sure it gets done. It has also been a big year for animal welfare within New South Wales. I had carriage of the Hon. Emma Hurst's legislation to ban swim tests on animals, which passed this place. We also banned puppy farms this year and improved protections for renters with companion animals. There continues to be a big focus on homelessness. The significant Homelessness Innovation Fund was set aside in the budget. I also highlight the work of the Minister for Families and Communities with children in out-of-home care. I attended the forum today with care leavers who had the support of the CREATE Foundation and heard some heartbreaking stories that had heartwarming outcomes. I acknowledge the challenge facing the Minister with the system that she has inherited and the trauma it has caused the 14,000 children she is responsible for. I know I speak for the crossbench when I say we are grateful this Minister is in that role and we are here to help and work with the Minister as best we can to help that cohort.

I must also acknowledge that this has been the biggest year in recent history for LGBTQ law reform, thanks to the focus, energy and support of the Labor Government. We started the year with the apology, 40 years after homosexuality was decriminalised. We have legislated a ban on harmful conversion practices. The LGBTQ equality bill, which amended some 12 different pieces of legislation to make New South Wales a safer place for the LGBTIQ+ community, also passed. All of this has given Independent members of the crossbench such great hope for what is ahead as we continue to tackle housing and work with the Government for the safety and security of the communities we represent. It also has been a big year for private members' bills, with five passing the Parliament—a historic first—all amended by the Government as part of the collaborative working relationship between the crossbench and the Government.

I thank the member for Camden for moving the motion, and I thank the Minns Labor Government for our strong and collaborative working relationship. The crossbench is here to work with the Government and hold it to account. We will not always agree, but we will always be focused on outcomes.

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (17:39):** I am proud to contribute to the debate on the motion. As many members know, I like to read books. I even bring books into the Chamber and even quote books in the Chamber, and I will continue to do so. Recently I read a book called *Mates: Five Champions of the Labor Right*, which talks about people like Laurie Brereton, Leo McLeay, Paul Keating and Bob Carr. The greats of the Labor right would be so disappointed with this Government. Their legacy has been completely trashed. I disagree a lot with Bob Carr but he at least continued to build the Olympics. This Government has had no achievements. The Fergusons in the House will not agree with me, but the Labor right should be so disappointed they are not delivering in government. Chris O'Keefe asked on 2GB the other day, "Is Chris Minns Bob Carr 2.0?" He said:

When is the last time that you heard a policy announcement from Premier Chris Minns or his Government that you thought, "Wow, what a great original idea"?

Chris Minns is pretending to be everything from Bob Carr to Neville Wran, and he is clearly not delivering. After the 602 days Labor has been in government, it brings in a motion with only 21 achievements.

**Ms Anna Watson:** Point of order—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Shellharbour rises on a point of order.

**Ms Anna Watson:** We have been listening to the member for Davidson for far too long and he has not come anywhere close to talking about the motion. The member for Myall Lakes had the same sort of contribution.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** I am confident that the member for Davidson will get to the motion very soon.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** The motion is about 21 points of achievements in 602 days. How much more relevant can I be to the motion when I am calling out the motion itself? I find it interesting that the title the member gave the motion is "Building a better New South Wales". What are the building approval numbers at the moment? In September 2021, dwelling approval numbers were 64,000. In September 2022, they were 54,000. In September 2023, they were 47,000. What are they after 20 months under the Minns Labor Government for the past 12 months? They are 41,000, the lowest in 12 years.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Members will come to order.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** How ironic that they title the motion "Building a better New South Wales", but the Government is not building at all. It has the lowest approval numbers in 12 years. I give a case study on the lack of building. Michael McGowan wrote an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 14 November entitled "Inside

the schism that has left Sydney's 'mini-city' housing deal on life support", which was about the Rosehill announcement. In the article, one Australian Turf Club member who was running for re-election said:

It has been shambolic, to put it politely.

That is a case study on the Minns Labor Government's record on building. But it goes further. This public interest debate motion gives a big pat on the back to transport-oriented developments [TODs]. The report of the upper House inquiry into TODs led by The Greens stated:

This inquiry heard arguments that the TOD program's one-size-fits-all approach is not well enough designed to stimulate appropriate housing supply, address affordability issues, or ensure that the type of housing delivered meets the needs of communities for long-term, liveable homes.

The motion says the Government is building a better New South Wales but it is in fact not building anything. I need to give credit where credit is due. The Government has increased one thing to record levels never seen in the history of New South Wales. If I read from the budget papers, which the Minister for Fair Trading has not done, there is a figure called net debt. In 2024-25, net debt was \$110 billion. In 2026-27, it will be \$121 billion. In 2026-27, it will be \$130 billion. In 2027-28, it will be the largest debt ever delivered in the history of New South Wales at \$139 billion. That is Labor's greatest achievement. As we know, increasing net debt puts pressure on inflation which causes a higher cost of living, and that is the achievement of the Minns Labor Government in 20 months.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (17:44):** In reply: I thank all members who contributed to the debate, including those representing the electorates of Kellyville, East Hills, Myall Lakes, Liverpool, Sydney and Davidson. I will talk about cost of living. I used to own a business. One of things I understood when I owned a business about the way cost of living works, in a very simple form, is that money coming in can be controlled and money going out can be controlled. What makes the difference, though, is that one of those has to change to relieve the cost of living. One of the very first things the Minns Labor Government did was abolish the wages cap, which delivered a minimum 15 per cent pay rise over four years to essential workers like teachers, nurses and police officers. That changed the money people were getting, which is a cost-of-living measure that the Opposition does not seem to understand. I find it concerning when the member for Kellyville says that a wage increase that benefited hundreds of thousands of people was just done for union colleagues. The teachers, paramedics and police officers in his electorate would be very concerned by that.

The member for Sydney talked about a collaborative government. One thing that defines being an adult is the ability to collaborate with others, to take the responsibility for what one is presented with in life and to not pretend in some fantasy world that 24 March 2023 and earlier did not exist. The Government has a problem. It is trying to get things done. The big people are here now taking on the task, working with others and being the adults in the building, and I ask the Opposition to get out of the way and let us deliver what needs to be delivered for the people of New South Wales. That includes cost-of-living help and helping the people of New South Wales make their ends meet. That includes making schools and TAFE better and better, and supporting our teachers. The Opposition ran the health system into the ground. It had no idea what was happening in the world.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The member for Myall Lakes will come to order.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL:** That is what we have to mop up. I am exhausted from all of the mopping up we have had to do since coming into government. We are working on the protection of women. We are working on law and order. We are building a better New South Wales. We have not finished, but what an incredible start.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....53  
Noes .....37  
Majority.....16

AYES

Aitchison, J	Hagarty, N (teller)	Piper, G
Atalla, E	Harris, D	Quinnell, S
Bali, S	Harrison, J	Regan, M
Barr, C	Haylen, J	Saffin, J (teller)
Butler, L	Hoening, R	Saliba, D
Butler, R	Holland, M	Scully, P
Car, P	Kaliyanda, C	Shetty, K
Catley, Y	Kamper, S	Smith, T

## AYES

Chanthivong, A	Kirby, W	Stuart, M
Cotsis, S	Leong, J	Tesch, L
Crakanthorp, T	Li, J	Vo, T
Daley, M	McDermott, H	Voltz, L
Davis, D	McGirr, J	Warren, G
Dib, J	McKeown, K	Washington, K
Donato, P	Mehan, D	Watson, A
Doyle, T	Minns, C	Whan, S
Finn, J	O'Neill, M	Wilkinson, K
Greenwich, A	Park, R	

## NOES

Anderson, K	James, T	Speakman, M
Ayyad, T	Kemp, M	Taylor, M
Clancy, J	Layzell, D	Thompson, T
Cooke, S	Moylan, B	Toole, P
Coure, M	Petinos, E	Tuckerman, W
Cross, M	Preston, R	Tudehope, M
Crouch, A (teller)	Provest, G	Wallace, J
Dalton, H	Roberts, A	Ward, G
Davies, T	Saunders, D	Williams, L
Di Pasqua, S	Scrubby, J	Williams, R
Griffin, J	Singh, G	Williamson, R (teller)
Henskens, A	Sloane, K	Wilson, F
Hodges, M		

**Motion agreed to.***Community Recognition Statements***GRACE NEWCOMBE**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (17:54):** With immense gratitude, I pay tribute to Grace Newcombe, whose impact as a director of Ladies Like to Lunch has been nothing short of transformative. Inspired by her mother and father, especially since her mother's cancer diagnosis in 2013, Grace has dedicated herself to this vital cause with unparalleled commitment. Her leadership created and uplifted a supportive community, where hope and resilience thrived. Through her tireless efforts she has raised funds and awareness for breast cancer, bringing together friends, family and strangers alike, united by compassion and a shared mission to uplift those affected. As she steps down from her role at Ladies Like to Lunch to enjoy some well-deserved rest and time with her family, Grace's legacy will undoubtedly remain. Her service to the organisation has set a solid foundation and her influence has left a lasting imprint on many. I give my heartfelt thanks to Grace for everything she has done. I wish her all the very best in her next chapter with her loved ones and look forward to seeing her journey continuing to be an extraordinary one.

**MICHAEL KONDRATENKO**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (17:55):** I congratulate 18-year-old Michael Kondratenko of Richmond on recently completing his year 12 studies. Astonishingly, he achieved a perfect attendance record during his 13 years of schooling. Michael attended Bligh Park Public School, where he developed an interest in martial arts. He trained in haidong gumdo, the art of Korean sword fighting. Michael also joined the Hawkesbury Wolves taekwondo club, earning his black belt at the age of 11. Michael then enrolled at Richmond High School and participated in the Duke of Edinburgh life skills program, obtaining a silver award. This achievement is testament to Michael's adaptability and problem-solving and communication skills. I applaud Michael's efforts and achievements, noting that being diagnosed with late onset type 1 diabetes did not deter him from his goals. Having just completed his Higher School Certificate, Michael intends to indulge in bushwalking and camping with friends. He plans to study mechanical and engineering skills in 2025.

**ISLAMIC FORUM FOR AUSTRALIAN MUSLIMS CONVENTION**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (17:56):** Recently I had the honour of attending the

Islamic Forum for Australian Muslims [IFAM] convention, a gathering dedicated to exploring the key Islamic themes of faith, unity and social justice. As a guest speaker for the Friends of Palestine session, I spoke about advocating for freedom and justice for Palestine—a cause close to my heart. Again, I reiterated my hope for a lasting and just peace. Established in 1993, IFAM is a large, volunteer-driven organisation committed to fostering values and ethics within the community, guided by Islamic principles. The two-day conference was a resounding success, attracting community leaders, families and individuals of all backgrounds. The community event provided a knowledge-rich and engaging environment, featuring activities for children and meaningful sessions for adults. The atmosphere was inspiring, with passionate speeches about a range of issues, including the Palestinian experience, touching on stories of resilience, tragedy and hope. There was a touching sense of community, unity and dedication that everyone felt, making the convention an incredibly valuable experience for all. I extend my heartfelt thanks to IFAM.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I remind members that they have 60 seconds to make their community recognition statements.

#### **COFFS HARBOUR OLDER WOMEN'S NETWORK**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (17:58):** A Coffs Coast organisation that is helping women in my community age well is powering ahead with positive outcomes. In November, Coffs Harbour Older Women's Network turns four and it is looking forward to many more years of supporting and empowering local women. The network welcomes women of all cultures to build wellness and social connections within the community and is led by a group of experienced older businesswomen. The members are passionate about advocating for change, providing social connections, assisting with building resilience in a changing world and ensuring that women age well together. The founding committee members are Daniela Martignago, Bronwyn Chalmers, Lorraine Penn and Yvonne Kachel. They share a determination that older women should not be left behind. Coffs Harbour Older Women's Network is a local success story worth celebrating. I congratulate its members on their outstanding community leadership.

#### **GREEN VALLEY LANGUAGES AND ARTS SCHOOL**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (17:59):** I am always proud to share with people the incredible depth of linguistic diversity that exists in Liverpool. Amazingly, there are languages that are no longer spoken in their place of origin that thrive in Liverpool. An essential ingredient to this phenomenon is the vital role that our community language schools play. One of these is the Green Valley Languages and Arts School that this year celebrates 30 years of providing an education in Hindi language and dance at Green Valley Public School every Sunday. It has taught Hindi from kindergarten to year 12, as well as Bharatnatyam, the harmonium and the tabla. The school has been the bedrock of continuing cultural education in Liverpool. The ongoing success of the Green Valley Languages and Arts School was only made possible by the hard work of staff and the parents' committee. I congratulate Aakash Prasad, Vandana Gupta, Abhishek Mishra and Uma Prasad for their ongoing dedication to maintaining the Hindi language and cultural identity in Liverpool. I look forward to seeing the school continue to thrive for the years to come.

#### **NORTHERN BEACHES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NETWORK**

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (18:00):** Tonight I acknowledge the incredible work of the Northern Beaches Domestic Violence Network. This vital collaborative group brings together individuals and organisations to combat the alarming rates of domestic and family violence in our community. From 25 November to 10 December the group champions the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, a global campaign that raises awareness and drives action against this pervasive issue. I can even be seen at the grandstand at Cromer Park between 9.00 a.m. and 12.00 p.m. on 7 December where I will be emceeing. Better still, the highlight of these efforts is the upcoming gala and awards night on 30 November, a celebration of the courage and dedication of those working tirelessly to support survivors of domestic violence. I commend Narelle Hand and her incredible colleagues for their unwavering commitment to supporting victims and advocating for change. Their work is inspiring, reminding us all of the importance of standing united against domestic violence. I thank her for her leadership and dedication to making our community safer and stronger.

#### **MILA KRSTEVSKI**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (18:01):** I acknowledge the outstanding achievement of Mila Krstevski, a six-year-old from Flinders who won the Mini National Championship at Get the Beat on the Sunshine Coast on 28 September 2024. The win came with an all expenses paid trip to Las Vegas to compete in the Rainbow Dance Competition. Mila trains four days a week at VPA Studios in Unanderra, with each session going for 3½ hours. She trains in multiple styles of dance: ballet, jazz, hip-hop and contemporary—which was the style she used in the competition. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I congratulate Mila on this remarkable

achievement at such a young age. We wish her all the best in Las Vegas. We congratulate her friends and family as well.

### MIGHTY PLAYWRIGHTS

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (18:02):** I recognise the Mighty Playwrights program, which is undertaken by the Lieder Theatre in Goulburn. The initiative was a collaboration between the Goulburn Mulwaree Library and the Lieder Theatre that supported students to partner with mentors to develop their ideas, write plays and stage them. The program had a significant impact on young creatives in the region by supporting adult mentorship and nurturing creativity among young participants. The library and mentors worked with the young playwrights to develop their ideas and write the plays. The Lieder Theatre would then help bring the plays to life using their own resources. In its five years, Mighty Playwrights staged 37 plays, with 77 volunteers involved in the most recent year. Due to the lack of funding from the Labor Government, the program has been discontinued. But, as I understand, the philosophy and benefits of the Mighty Playwrights will continue to resonate in future initiatives from the Lieder Theatre.

### CHARLESTOWN ELECTORATE HSC STUDENTS

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (18:03):** On 8 November the last of the 2024 HSC exams were held. To those students in the Charlestown electorate who are now awaiting their results, I say congratulations. For many, it is the culmination of 13 years of schooling and one more step on the lifelong journey of learning. To the students at Cardiff High and Kotara High; at St Mary's Catholic College, Warners Bay and Whitebridge; at Hunter Sports High and through alternative learning pathways—you should all be so proud of yourselves. To students who are finishing up high school, whether they are continuing studies, joining the workforce or taking a break—take a moment to celebrate this fantastic achievement. I also remind them that these exams are not everything. No matter what they want to do in life, if they work hard and stay hopeful, they can absolutely achieve their dreams.

### MCDONALD'S TAMWORTH

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (18:04):** It gives me great pleasure to recognise the teams at McDonald's Tamworth who raised critical funds for Ronald McDonald House on Saturday. McDonald's employs more than 600 people in Tamworth. It was my pleasure to join the Northgate team on Saturday to try my hand at flipping patties and serving customers. Making a Big Mac is a skill, and I will be McHappy to leave it to the experts from now on. McHappy Day is an important day in Tamworth because Ronald McDonald House provides an incredibly important service for sick kids and their families in our community. I congratulate franchisee Adrian Sipple, as well as the 600 local McDonald's staff, on an outstanding McHappy Day, raising funds for Ronald McDonald House Charities.

### CAMDEN ELECTORATE REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (18:05):** At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them. At 11.00 a.m. on 11 November 1918 the guns on the Western Front fell silent after more than four years of continuous warfare. The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month attained a special significance in the post-war years. It became universally associated with the remembrance of those who had died in the war. Originally known as Armistice Day, it was renamed Remembrance Day after World War II to commemorate those who were killed in both world wars. Camden RSL Sub-Branch, under the guidance of its president, Iain Richard-Evan, held a solemn and beautiful service at Macarthur Park memorial site on 11 November to mark Remembrance Day. We were joined by local returned and current service personnel, school students, air force and army cadets, and the Camden Community Band. The singing was once again led magnificently by Francesca. It was a beautiful service, including the laying of wreaths, bringing together members of Camden Council, the Hon. Angus Taylor, MP, and me to honour those who gave the ultimate sacrifice. Lest we forget.

### ORANGEVILLE-WEROMBI RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (18:06):** What a joy it was to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the Orangeville-Werombi Rural Fire Brigade on Sunday 27 October. We were joined by many wonderful past, present and new RFS members who have given so much to our community. It truly was a privilege to stand alongside the NSW RFS Greater Sydney Area Commander, Chief Superintendent Greg Wardle, and NSW RFS Southern Highlands Area District Manager, James Morris. The dedication and service of this brigade are absolutely invaluable to the safety of the north-western part of the Wollondilly electorate and beyond. I give a huge thank you to all the amazing volunteers and staff who work so tirelessly to protect our towns and villages

during disasters, bushfires and emergencies. Their incredible courage and commitment shine brightly and they do not go unnoticed.

#### FISHER'S GHOST ART AWARDS 2024

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (18:07):** Tonight I am delighted to congratulate all the winners of the Fisher's Ghost Art Awards 2024. These awards are a longstanding and valued Campbelltown tradition that recognise exceptional artists across all mediums. This year's open award winner was Katy B. Plummer for her video installation, *Margaret and the Grey Mare*, which is an opera, a fever dream about an opera. It is also a dress rehearsal for an opera, and an opera written with a ghost and performed in a haunted dream theatre. The other award winners were Kalanjay Dhir and Akil Ahamat's *A Vanishing Point* in the contemporary section and Catherine Stait-Gardner's *Still Life Objects Waiting to be Painted* in the traditional section. The Macarthur Award went to Lathalia Song for *Lament*; the Aboriginal Art Award went to Dave Doyle for *Eroded*; and the Macability Award went to Catherine McGuinness for *Good night tinker bell*. I thank Campbelltown City Council and congratulate all of the winners.

#### BILLY MCCARTHY

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:08):** Tonight I acknowledge an extraordinary achievement by a young man in my community who has proven himself among the best in the nation. I give a huge congratulations to Billy McCarthy from the Avoca Beach Surf Life Saving Club for winning the under-14 male division of the prestigious Coolangatta Gold. Beating a field of 48 of Australia's top ironman competitors, Billy's victory is a testament to his incredible talent, determination and hard work. Competing in an event that combines running, swimming and board paddling, Billy took on one of the most challenging courses in surf sports on 12 October at the iconic Gold Coast. The Coolangatta Gold, now celebrating its fortieth anniversary, is renowned for launching the careers of ironman legends, and Billy has certainly made his mark in this rich tradition. Billy's journey in surf lifesaving has been nothing short of impressive. From his years at Wamberal to now competing for the Avoca Beach Surf Life Saving Club, he has consistently represented the Central Coast with distinction, claiming multiple State titles and making his mark at national events. Billy's determination and passion for the sport are inspiring. We cannot wait to see what the future holds for him. I congratulate him on this incredible achievement.

#### AUSTRALIAN JUNIOR SCRABBLE CHAMPIONSHIP

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (18:09):** On 25 August 2024 I had the pleasure of attending the Australian Junior Scrabble Championship at the Cabra-Vale Diggers Club in Cabramatta. It was wonderful to see young people showcasing their skills and passion for this classic word game. I was informed that only about 32 children across Australia participated in the tournament. Remarkably, 23 are from my local area and 18 began their journey at Cabramatta Public School. I congratulate the following students from my electorate: under-18s first place winner, Nathan Tang, who is in year 9 at St Johns Park High; under-14s second-place winner, Jeffrey Lam, who is in year 6 at Cabramatta Public; under-12s first- and second-place winners, Phi Long Ma and Alvin Korn, who are both in year 5 at Cabramatta Public; and under-10s second-place winner David Lam, who is in year 3 at Cabramatta Public. I thank Mr Tony Hunt, National Youth Coordinator of the Council of Australian Scrabble Players Association, and Ms Tisa Ng-Prentice, the scrabble coordinator at Cabramatta Public School, for their kind invitation and dedication to this game.

#### MOREE WALKERS

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands) (18:10):** I recognise members of the Moree community who joined together to walk 30 kilometres from Moree to Pallamallawa recently in order to raise vital funds to support the Black Dog Institute. In doing so, 45 Moree walkers raised a staggering \$40,554. I congratulate the organisers of the event, participants, supporters and volunteers on contributing to the overall success of the day. I give a special thanks to Luke Woods and also to the many sponsors, including Jocks Hire, O'Dempsey's Charters and Local Tours, Reado's Meats, Mobas Batteries, Coles, Johnson Concrete and Quarries along with T&FS Woods of Moree. I commend all involved in this fantastic initiative, which has provided support to those suffering from mental health issues and commemorates loved ones and friends who have lost their lives to suicide. The Northern Tablelands electorate thanks all of the Moree walkers.

#### HOOMIKO SUSHI

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (18:11):** I acknowledge Hoomiko Sushi, a small business in Engadine that has become a lunchtime lynchpin for the Heathcote electorate office. Hoomiko Sushi is a small Japanese restaurant that serves Engadine and the surrounding suburbs with fresh, high-quality Japanese sushi, sashimi and classic dishes. Its produce is bought daily from Sydney Fish Market so the freshness cannot be disputed. I regularly invite my staff or guests to the Heathcote electorate to join me in taking advantage of the wonderful hospitality and even better cookery at Hoomiko. I am honoured to be able to recognise an important

part of my local economy. Small businesses are the lifeblood of any community, especially the Heathcote electorate. I cannot pass up an opportunity to order my favourite—and the restaurant's signature—dish, the Hoomiko roll. I congratulate Hoomiko Sushi at Engadine on all that it does.

#### EMBELLISH KIAMA

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (18:12):** Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises an incredible milestone for Kiama's much-loved Embellish boutique, proudly marking 21 years on Collins Street. Since opening its doors in 2003, Embellish, founded by Liz Lindsay—later joined by her daughter Amy—has been a vibrant part of our community. Through their unique blend of style and personal service, they have created a space where residents find not only beautiful, one-of-a-kind clothing and gifts but also a sense of belonging. I congratulate Liz and Amy on their commitment to quality and dedication to customer care. Their passion for curating special items has earned them the loyalty and affection of the Kiama community. We acknowledge and thank the locals who have embraced Embellish through the years, proving that it is more than a boutique; it is a cherished part of Kiama's fabric. Here's to many more years of style, community and success!

#### KATRINA NORWOOD

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (18:13):** I acknowledge and congratulate Katrina Norwood, a truly remarkable member of the Shoalhaven community, on receiving the Katie Walker Outstanding Service Award at the 2024 Country Education Foundation of Australia Alumni Awards. This prestigious honour celebrates volunteers who go above and beyond to support local youth. For over a decade, Katrina has served as the volunteer treasurer for the Shoalhaven Education Fund, playing an essential role since its inception. Katrina's involvement goes far beyond finances, with her commitment to education an inspiring testament to the power of community. Katrina's kindness, warmth and personal connection to the students she helps have made a world of difference. Katrina firmly believes education is the key to solving many global challenges and her dedication to supporting young people on their educational journeys has made a lasting impact. I congratulate Katrina on this well-deserved recognition of her outstanding service.

#### TRIBUTE TO JOHN ANSCHAU

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) (18:14):** I pay tribute to John Anschau, a long-time Huntleys Point local who sadly passed away in November 2022. John was passionate about his history and before he passed away wrote a book entitled *The Secret Suburb* about his beloved Huntleys Point, Sydney's smallest suburb by population. His book covers close to two centuries of Huntleys Point's rich history, exploring the development of the suburb from early settlement until modern day, and discusses the lives of its residents. It is a true shame that John is not here with us to celebrate the publishing of his work. However, his wife, Jann, is passionately continuing his work. The book thankfully cements John's undisputable standing as Mr Huntleys Cove throughout history.

#### GIRRAWEE PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (18:15):** On Monday 28 October I was delighted to join Premier Minns and Deputy Premier Car for the official sod turning at Girraween Public School to mark the start of a new era for the school and for families in the electorate of Prospect. Founded in 1919 with 11 students, today Girraween Public School has an enrolment of 1,250 children, with 94 per cent of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, predominantly Tamil. The \$35.8 million upgrade will include a new three-storey building with 38 permanent classrooms, extensions to the hall, upgraded amenities, landscaping and refurbishments to existing classrooms. For a school that was once 70 per cent demountable classrooms, the long-awaited upgrades will meet enrolment growth into the future and deliver modern learning spaces for students. My heartfelt congratulations go to principal Jodi-Ann Warner and all students, teachers and parents at Girraween Public School. Best wishes for the exciting times ahead for our community.

#### MARGARET DALMAU

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (18:16):** The cancer journey can be traumatic for patients and their families and is sometimes made even worse by the need to travel away from home for treatment. Having a safe and supportive home away from home can make a big difference and Wagga Wagga's Lilier Lodge has been that haven for the past 20 years. For almost half that time, manager Margaret Dalmau has overseen changes that have improved the facility and created a more supportive environment for those enduring a difficult time. Ms Dalmau is now preparing to retire after helping thousands of patients and their loved ones. She says it has been a privilege and humbling to make a difference for so many people in a place where close friendships are made and the guests are the real heroes. The staff are also heroes, and I sincerely thank Ms Dalmau for her dedication and commitment. She has paid tribute to those who have shared the journey, including her partner, Frank Murtagh; team members

Alison Casnave and Greg Nolan; Emma Phillips from Can Assist; and Cancer Council NSW. Congratulations and best wishes to Ms Dalmau. I thank her for all she has done.

#### **MOLLIE MURPHY**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:17):** Huge congratulations go to Mollie Murphy of Umina Surf Life Saving Club [SLSC] for being the winner of DHL Surf Lifesaver of the Year. Starting as a nipper, Mollie has been a passionate lifesaver and Umina SLSC member. Patrolling since 2012, Mollie has spent almost 800 hours, including more than 140 hours this season alone, serving in various roles such as director of lifesaving and patrol captain. Mollie's hands-on approach ensures beach safety across all 12 patrol teams. Her decisive leadership has led to over 68,000 preventative actions and 300 lifesaving rescues. Moreover, Mollie has a strong focus on youth development and has created countless initiatives to empower young women across the club. One of the most remarkable successes from Mollie's contribution is the member engagement transformation at the club. Thanks to Mollie's perfect recipe of leadership and inclusivity, Umina SLSC is well known for its vibrant and inclusive environment. It is evident that Mollie's success is no accident as it takes commitment and dedication to make such a significant impact in our community and beyond.

#### **HUGOS MANLY**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (18:18):** I acknowledge one of Sydney's most iconic restaurants and a staple of the Manly hospitality scene, Hugos Manly. I am pleased to inform the House that Hugos recently took home the prestigious best pizza restaurant in Australia at the 2024 Restaurant and Catering Hostplus Awards for Excellence. The award is a fitting testament to the consistently outstanding service and quality that both locals and visitors are treated to every time they set foot inside this celebrated establishment. Hugos prides itself on delivering great food prepared with the freshest ingredients, creative beverages, and attentive and friendly staff. I congratulate the entire team at Hugos and all those who have played a role in helping secure the wonderful achievement. We are extremely fortunate in Manly to call Hugos one of our own, and I wish it all the best for the future and a busy summer.

#### **HENRY BAYLISS**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (18:19):** I am sure the House will join me to recognise and celebrate the remarkable life of Mr Henry Bayliss, who turned 100 years of age on 30 September this year. Mr Bayliss has led an extraordinary life, dedicating his working years as an electrician to New South Wales railways, a career marked by skill and dedication. His commitment to his trade was briefly interrupted when he bravely served our country as a field artillery gunner in New Guinea during the Second World War. His service in the war is a testament to his courage and sense of duty—qualities that have defined his life. After the war, Mr Bayliss returned home and continued his career. He has been a great and devoted husband, a loving father, a proud grandfather and a cherished great-grandfather, nurturing a large family who hold him in the highest regard. At 100 years of age, Mr Bayliss remains fit and healthy, with a sharp mind and a strong spirit. His life is an inspiration to all who know him and our community is incredibly proud to celebrate this milestone with him. I wish Mr Bayliss a happy birthday.

#### **GYMEA TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (18:20):** I congratulate the incoming student leadership team of GyMEA Technology High School for their appointment. Being democratically elected by peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in New South Wales Parliament to acknowledge the student leadership team for 2025, namely school captains Evan Moukatas and Rhys Evans, vice captains Jessie Davies and Lana McGrath and prefects Hayden Braym, Prisha Chauhan, Harshit Naga, Eutihia Poniris, Luke Madden and Thomas Sheekey. With guidance from Principal Peter Marsh, I have every confidence that these dedicated young adults will capably lead their peers through what will be their most important year of schooling thus far and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify GyMEA Technology High School's motto of "inspire, learn, succeed".

#### **PETER MOORE**

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (18:21):** Peter Moore has been an integral part of the Fairfield Liverpool Cricket Association for more than 20 years, leading as the longest serving secretary and president in the association's history. His contributions to cricket go far beyond administration. He has dedicated 25 years to coaching junior, senior and representative teams, as well as umpiring both juniors and seniors. As a former youth cricketer I was one of those kids he had an impact on in the association. As the founder and president of the Hoxton Park Tigers Cricket Club, Peter has fostered a thriving junior program, attracting hundreds of young

players and truly making a difference. I commend Peter for his passion and dedication, which have had a profound impact on the lives of countless young people, inspiring them to pursue their passion for sport and life.

#### NORTH SHORE CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (18:22):** Each year I have the pleasure of inviting local primary schools to participate in the North Shore Christmas card competition. After thoughtful deliberation with my office staff and my children as little helpers, we selected the winning artwork that is to be featured on my Christmas cards and sent out to members of our community. This year's theme was "Aussie Christmas", and it was wonderful to see how the children interpret what our Christmas looks like. I am delighted to congratulate this year's winner, Mila from Middle Harbour Public School. Mila's artwork captured an incredibly detailed Christmas scene, featuring Santa in board shorts riding a wave surrounded by a kangaroo, a koala, a platypus, a cockatoo, a reindeer and more. It was a fantastic representation of an Aussie Christmas. A special mention goes to our three highly commended artworks by Anna from Neutral Bay Public School, Isla from Mosman Public School and Irene from North Sydney Demonstration School. I congratulate all of our local students who took part. The talent and creativity of our local students is always so impressive, and a highlight of my year. I wish them all a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

#### CAOIMHE BRAY

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (18:23):** I offer a huge congratulations to one of our country's best up and coming athletes in both soccer and cricket, Caoimhe Bray, for claiming the final spot in the Sydney Sixers for the Women's Big Bash League season. At only an astonishing 15 years old, the Adamstown student became the youngest player in WBBL history after her outstanding Sydney Sixers debut against the Melbourne Renegades last month. In addition to this incredible achievement, Caoimhe was also selected as a goalkeeper for the CommBank Junior Matildas Squad for its under 17s Women's Asian Cup team and has recently signed a development contract with the Newcastle Jets. Caoimhe's achievements are a testament to her hard work and dedication, and I wish her all the best in her upcoming matches.

#### ADAM DEMAMIEL

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (18:24):** I am thrilled to congratulate Adam DeMamiel on his well-deserved nomination as a finalist for the NSW Local Hero of the Year award. As co-founder and CEO of Boys to the Bush, Adam has shown extraordinary dedication to supporting and uplifting vulnerable youth across Australia. Through Boys to the Bush, Adam and his team have created a powerful support network, serving as positive role models and mentors for young people in need. Their impact has been life-changing, reaching over 7,000 individuals through mentorship programs, camps, school initiatives and community engagement days. The influence of Boys to the Bush reaches beyond each participant, helping to strengthen families and build more resilient communities. While Adam was not able to go on to the national Australian of the Year awards in Canberra—and I congratulate winner Martha Jabour—I thank him for his ongoing commitment to supporting vulnerable youth. His dedication provides meaningful opportunities for their growth, and that is truly inspirational. Well done.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### NEWCASTLE ELECTORATE

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (18:25):** In the final sitting week, I take this time to reflect on the achievements of this Government and the people of Newcastle. What an amazing year it has been. I am proud to represent Newcastle as a member of the Minns Labor Government, delivering vital infrastructure for our community as well enacting progressive legislative reform. It is a wonderful thing to follow through on an election commitment, and on 29 October the Minns Government proudly partnered with the Albanese Federal Government to deliver the Hunter Net Zero Manufacturing Centre of Excellence at TAFE NSW's Tighes Hill campus. As the shadow Minister for TAFE who got that commitment into our election platform, it was a particularly good day. The Hunter has a proud history of industry and manufacturing, which is why it is the perfect place for a centre of excellence. This joint venture will see both governments investing a total of \$60 million over five years to ensure wider Hunter communities have the skills needed to benefit from energy transition.

This year has seen several major regionally significant projects progress, including the \$835 million John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct redevelopment, the \$2.1 billion M1 extension and Hexham Straight widening project, the \$76.5 million Newcastle High School redevelopment and the \$950,000 Islington cycleway extension. The Stockton Centre site has been identified as a possible location for a much-needed housing development to help address the ongoing housing crisis. In the meantime, work is underway to complete the \$2 million worth of upgrades to seven properties on the site so they can be used for temporary accommodation for up to 25 people. The Port of Newcastle's Clean Energy Precinct is also on track to become hydrogen ready.

Delivered and managed in partnership with the New South Wales Government, this project will contribute to Australia's transition to net zero.

In conjunction with these major projects, I was thrilled to deliver funding to many smaller organisations, including the Merewether Surf Life Saving Club, Carrington oval, Catholic Care for the Hamilton South playground, and John Hunter Hospital for the return of its shuttle bus. I also acknowledge some of the amazing achievements by some of my constituents this year. In March I named Sister Carmel Hanson, RSJ, as the local woman of the year for her leadership in providing shelter and support to thousands of our community's most vulnerable members through the House of Hospitality. Dr John Ward was named senior of the year for his advocacy and dedication to improving the lives of ageing Australians with the Hunter Ageing Alliance. Newcastle Ward 2 Councillor Paige Johnson made history as the first openly transgender woman elected to public office in New South Wales.

It was also an amazing year for our wonderful Novocastrian Olympians and Paralympians this year in Paris. Jess Hull came back to Newcastle as the first Australian to win a medal in the women's 1,500-metre race, smashing the Australian record by over five seconds. Rose Davies, Emily van Egmond, Clare Wheeler, Ky Willott, Matthew Dawson, Mariah Williams, Tyler Wright, Spencer Turrin and Nathan Power also made Newcastle proud in their respective events. Medalling in all three of her events, Lauren Parker made history as Australia's first dual-sport Paralympic medallist at the same games. Para-athletes Rheed McCracken and Luke Bailey also displayed fierce determination.

**Ms Liesl Tesch:** We love it!

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP:** The member for Gosford says we love it, and we absolutely do. I congratulate her on her lifetime achievement. She is just down the road, so we might claim her as a Novocastrian. Her sister lives there. We have taken many historic steps in making New South Wales a better place for LGBTIQ communities, including apologising to people convicted under laws that criminalised homosexual acts and banning conversion practices. We also passed the equality legislation, amending eight other Acts to align New South Wales with the rest of the country. We also continue to affirm our position as a leading creative and cultural hub, hosting the New Annual Festival and West Best Bloc Fest to national and international acclaim.

The Minns Labor Government has passed significant rental reforms, banning no-grounds evictions, capping rent increases and making it easier to have pets in rentals. We have also introduced several reforms to support our night-time economy and entertainment sector, including providing relief for music festivals and reducing red tape for live music venues. Newcastle is a vibrant city with the highest concentration of artists per capita, and I will continue to advocate for our local arts community. Labor loves live music, and we want our night-life not only to survive but to thrive. I am proud of the work we have done as a Government, but there is a lot more to come. I hope everyone has a safe and happy end to 2024, and a wonderful 2025.

#### ALBURY ELECTORATE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (18:30):** The community of Albury-Wodonga has a long and distinguished manufacturing history. Situated at the intersection of major highways, with rail and transport hubs and an airport, Albury-Wodonga is a gateway to all national and international trade destinations. The most recent data shows the sector in our region employs 4,222 people, with an annual economic output of \$4.3 billion. We are home to a highly skilled and experienced workforce, supported by multiple tertiary institutions and training organisations on both sides of the Murray River. Our businesses proudly emblazon their products with the iconic green and gold "made in Australia" logos, from ski-boats to camping trailers, kit sheds to defence equipment, whisky to forged steel.

Currently around 29,000 manufacturers are employing more than half a million workers in New South Wales, which is the largest manufacturing State in Australia and home to a host of innovative companies that make and export world-leading products. However, over the past four decades the New South Wales manufacturing sector has been challenged. Once our largest employer, it is now the ninth, largely due to automation, offshoring, outsourcing and a structural shift towards services. In 2021 the former Liberal-Nationals Government took action to encourage the adoption of modern manufacturing in the hope that it would become the successor to the car manufacturing industry.

The *Making it in NSW* report was delivered in July 2022 by the Modern Manufacturing Taskforce. The group is based in New South Wales and made up of prominent manufacturing experts from range of diverse backgrounds, led by Tony Shepherd. Its key recommendation was appointing Modern Manufacturing Commissioner Lisa Emerson, who was tasked with developing a modern manufacturing strategy for New South Wales to bring our faltering sector back to life. That document was to be an Australian first, examining the emerging fields of augmented reality, industrial automation, robotic process automation, 3D printing and

nanotechnologies. Unfortunately, it was never meant to be. Commissioner Emerson's role was axed just over a year ago. She was never given the opportunity to share her crucial insights. In an article in *Australian Manufacturing*, Harrison Manufacturing CEO Julie Harrison said:

My view of the NSW Commissioner for Modern Manufacturing was she was in a great place to develop a strategy for the state—and by default, Australia—which would set out how we could use our high educational standards, our resources industry and our knack for innovation, to offer a unique manufacturing proposition to the world.

The decision to ignore the expert insights of the Modern Manufacturing Taskforce and scrap efforts to ensure that the sector's future prosperity is troubling, particularly at a time when we must support manufacturing in this State. In an August 2024 Business NSW report entitled *NSW Business Conditions: A Delicate Environment*, one manufacturer said:

We have started utilising our stock holding and not replenishing. We are doing all we can to retain all our workforce by carrying out cross fields training and carrying out early maintenance and upgrades on machinery while quiet. But if this current slowdown continues, we will be forced to have to let some staff go unfortunately.

In a rapidly evolving global economy, New South Wales must prioritise modern manufacturing to remain competitive. We must promote the industry as one that boasts clean, exciting, high-tech careers, dispelling those old images of unskilled, noisy, assembly line-type activities. An exciting step forward in fostering the manufacturing ecosystem in the Albury-Wodonga region is the creation of an industry body named Manufacturing BRIDGE, a small and passionate group led by chair Brad Robertson and spearheaded by Karen and Linton Habermann. BRIDGE aims to highlight the local quality, capability, innovation and sustainability that the Albury-Wodonga manufacturing sector has to offer locally, nationally and globally.

BRIDGE stands for "border region industry development and growth exchange". The group's values and mission include enhancing collaboration and innovation among local manufacturers; creating a more sustainable and competitive manufacturing sector; building a stronger brand reputation for Albury-Wodonga as a manufacturing hub; attracting, skilling, upskilling and retaining local talent; and ultimately driving increased investment and job creation in the region. Manufacturing BRIDGE is not only looking to address our immediate skills shortages in the Albury-Wodonga community but also laying the groundwork for long-term resilience and growth. That is the type of bold vision, innovation and collaboration that we need from the Government to stem the tide and rebuild our manufacturing sector.

### EVERYONE CAN DANCE

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (18:35):** I have big news for the New South Wales Parliament—the happiest place on earth exists in Camden. On any given Tuesday evening the fabulous Everyone Can Dance group comes together. Everyone Can Dance has a very simple rule: If you want to dance, you are welcome to. It is based on the idea that nobody should be stopped from expressing themselves through dance. The most amazing thing about Everyone Can Dance is that dancers and performers range from the age of eight all the way through to 58. A huge number of dancers in both junior and senior classes are led by the incredible and indefatigable Lauren Casucelli.

I met Lauren many years ago, and her mother, Lee Casucelli, also works with the group. I met Lee on a course on how to become a better teacher for children with autism. Lee took me on a journey to better help my students, and during that time we became quite good friends. Later, Lauren and Lee started the dance group. Lauren has a long history of dance and also runs and is president of the group. The dance group creates a space for performers to rehearse and build friendships. I have visited a number of times because, honestly, when I am there I do not want to stop. It is the best injection of happiness one can ever have. Parents at Everyone Can Dance provide support to each other during that time away from their beautiful children, whom they love.

Let us be honest—the full-time care of a child with high needs can be exhausting. Some days it is too hard; sometimes parents feel overwhelmed. But when I turn up at Everyone Can Dance, someone usually has their car boot open and everyone is standing together having a cup of tea or a cold drink, discussing how to approach life with a child with high needs. One parent said to me that the hour that her child spends at Everyone Can Dance is the only hour in the week when she gets to go food shopping, and it is the only time all week that she has by herself. That is it, and her child is 19. The idea that she can have an hour in which she does not have to speak to anyone is just golden.

It is time to recognise in this place the work that people like Lauren and Lee do. The hidden gems at Everyone Can Dance are the volunteers who work as buddies. Lots of the performers have a buddy they dance with, and they can form very close relationships. Some of them sit and share their life stories. For some of the performers, their buddy might hold them so they can dance without hurting themselves; for other performers, their buddy might help them to move their wheelchair around in time to the music so they can take part in the performance.

**Ms Liesl Tesch:** Like this.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL:** Exactly like that. I went to the most glorious afternoon's entertainment on 3 November for the Everyone Can Dance yearly concert. This year's theme was Saturday Night Fever, and there was an incredible collection of singing and dancing. There was so much joy on the stage. One of the gifts is that parents are not allowed to help backstage. Lee and Lauren get another team of volunteers to help with the costume changes and make-up—and they do a ripper job—so that parents can watch and enjoy. I can say that there was not a dry eye in that Penrith Panthers Leagues Club auditorium. It was absolutely magnificent. I sat and watched the pure joy that came out of the performers. I thought about how some of them have really tough days to get through to get on stage. For anyone who would like to lift themselves up, I recommend going to Gregory Hills Community Centre on a Tuesday evening. If anyone has a child with additional needs, that is where they need to take them. I thank Lee and Lauren.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** That sounds like a lot of fun but, unfortunately, some of us have two left feet.

### **ARMIDALE EZIDI COMMUNITY**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands) (18:40):** In what will probably be my last private member's statement for this calendar year, I address the House about a really positive story in Armidale. The Ezidi community is a religious group of people indigenous to Kurdistan, which includes modern-day Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran. That community of people has been subject to persecution for centuries. The first recorded incident of persecution dates back to 1246, and they have been subject to persecution ever since. It came to a head in 2014 with the Sinjar massacre, a genocide of the Ezidi people by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant [ISIL]. That led to the expulsion and effective exile of the Ezidis from their ancestral lands in an area that they refer to as Sinjar. Thousands of Ezidi women and girls were forced into sexual slavery by Sunni fundamentalists, including ISIL, and thousands of Ezidi men were killed. Some 5,000 Ezidi civilians were killed during what has been called a forced conversion carried out by ISIL in northern Iraq.

That persecution led to international attention, which resulted in American-led intervention in Iraq, which started with United States air strikes against ISIL. The Kurdistan Workers' Party, the People's Protection Units and Syriac Military Council fighters then opened a humanitarian corridor through the Sinjar Mountains. Those Ezidi people who survived the genocide were able to flee. Many of those who fled found their way to Armidale in the Northern Tablelands between 2018 and 2022. We now have 1,200 members of the Ezidi community in our town of Armidale, and the town has welcomed them with open arms. They are a very important and much-loved part of the community in the tablelands. We now have Ezidi children in primary schools. We have Ezidi teenagers in secondary schools. We have members of the Ezidi community studying at the University of New England. We have students studying teaching, nursing, pharmacy and even medicine. It is a fantastic story. Members of the Ezidi community are working as mechanics, farmhands and in hospitality. We have open gardens in the Armidale community that are tended to by the Ezidi community.

People love to say that regional and rural communities are full of rednecks. I challenge those people to look at the example that Armidale has set with the Ezidi community. Those poor people have been through unimaginable suffering, and they have found a new life in regional New South Wales. They are so happy and proud to be becoming Australians. I recently attended a citizenship ceremony in Armidale. I was fortunate enough to assist in the ceremony. The absolute joy and pride of so many of the Ezidis who became Australian citizens on that day gave me great faith in our country. Too often in this place we talk about all of the negatives associated with whether you are from regional New South Wales or metropolitan New South Wales. Seeing someone who has been through such unimaginable suffering be so proud to call New South Wales their home and to become Australian gives me faith in what we do in this place.

There is more to do. I have written to the Federal Government. We need the Ezidi language formally recognised by the Federal Government, because we need qualified interpreters for the elderly members of the community. For example, the Ezidi word for gall bladder is very similar to the Kurdish word for liver. Recently, an elderly gentleman attended hospital for planned surgery, and the interpreter got it wrong. That poor gentleman thought that he was going to have his liver removed when he was there to have his gall bladder removed. There are still some issues, but hopefully the Federal Government can recognise the Ezidi language and clear those issues up. It is a great story. I invite all members of this place to come to Armidale and see those beautiful people.

### **ETTALONG CHANNEL**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:45):** The Gosford electorate is the most beautiful electorate in New South Wales. I am in the Chamber with the member for Port Stephens, but I must say that the Broken Bay area is absolutely gorgeous. Tonight I talk particularly about the Ettalong Channel, which is the gateway into

Brisbane Water from Broken Bay. It is great that there is a dredging regime in place there, but tonight I talk about setting up some of the Ettalong Channel as an area reserved for swimming and paddle craft. It is an important outcome for my community. They have been campaigning for some time. The previous Government ignored the issue. I hate to say it, but some of the jet ski riders cause a bit of havoc in the community. It has been a long time coming.

I thank the Minister for Transport and her team, as well as Roads and Maritime Services, for the work they have done to set up a 300-metre exclusion zone that will be clearly marked and signed as a paddle-craft-only zone. That recognises the popularity of Ettalong Beach and the Box on the Water cafe. I am going to try to describe it. There is a beautiful channel that runs quite quickly, which is not a very safe place to swim. A gentleman and his son were swept out to sea there. The gentleman drowned and the son was rescued by a jet ski rider. They do great work, but closer to the cafe, in front of the Ettalong Diggers on the waterfront, there is a beautiful, shallow area where kids play, and there are lots of jet skis parked there by people who go to the cafe. Unfortunately, for the jet ski riders, they will no longer be allowed to park there. They will be further along the waterfront. They will have to have anchor moorings, because that area will be exclusively for swimmers. It is a huge victory for the community.

Under the Marine Safety Act 1998, there will be \$250 penalties if people disobey the signage. That is important. It is a combination of council, police and maritime. It is a response to the increased water traffic and some unsafe water interactions that occur over summer. I clarify that it is an area for watercraft without a motor. I hope that the community gets the picture and we get that in place. There will be lots of signage. I thank Central Coast Council for preparing the signage, which should be up by the end of the week. I have written to the CEO of the council three times, and he has finally responded, which is lovely.

There is another area in Kourung Street, where, sometimes over summer, on those great sunny days, jet ski riders bring their jet skis and launch them. It is a beautiful launching area for surf ski riders, but we are going to put a gate there. The jet ski riders take that area for granted. They park across the sand dunes and upset the neighbours. The area has been quite problematic. We are taking a two-pronged approach over the summer to try to give swimmers some peace and quiet, separate the safety areas and take some of the pressure off other parts of the Central Coast so that jet ski riders can do their thing and swimmers can do their thing.

It is exciting as an MP. We work and listen to our communities and come up with solutions. We also decreased the jet ski speed limit in the area in 2020. Even though we decreased the jet ski speed, it was not enough for the community. I will read out a couple of letters from the community. The first one is from Mike. In January he said, "You phoned me a week or two before Christmas about the jet ski issue. Nothing has changed, and we need something to be done." He continued:

Yesterday there were probably 30-50 Jet ski's operating from 8am to close to nightfall off Ettalong Beach and the area called the box ... there are safety issues with these things travelling in large numbers high speed ...

I thank Mike. Thanks also to Beth, who said in December last year:

Summer is here again. So are the Jet Skis in Monumental numbers particularly at Ettalong.

The car park at the end of Kourung Street is overtaken by the jet ski owners parking there ALL DAY and the trailers in the car park—and across the sand dunes—

... it prevents me from using the car park at any stage of the day ...

I tell Beth that we are seeing some action. I also thank Scott for this communication. Scott has pretty much nailed what we are going to deliver:

After yet another summer of endless reckless and dangerous behaviour by the PWC riders frequenting the waterways of Ettalong, I suggest an exclusion zone implemented between the sand ramp car park at Ettalong Point, and the Ferry Wharf towards Booker Bay ...

We are responding to what the community needs:

Too many times recently, I have seen too many of them flout the speed rules ...

It is nice, as a local member of Parliament, to have campaigned for and listened to the community. We will trial the two big, significant changes. Thanks to the Minister for her work. Thanks to Maritime, the police and council for making changes that I hope will satisfy the community and create more safety on the beautiful Brisbane Water.

## CENTRAL WEST FLOODS

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (18:50):** Last week, 14 November marked the second anniversary of the devastating floods that hit central-western New South Wales. Across my electorate, the towns of Molong, Canowindra, Cudal, Forbes, Parkes and Eugowra were all significantly impacted by the event. At the time, it was

described by the ABC Central West as a one-in-5,000-year flood event. Its size, ferocity and subsequent damage were all unprecedented. Tragically, two local lives were lost in Eugowra on that fateful day. Over 80 per cent of homes and businesses in Eugowra were damaged by the floods. One-third of the township, or approximately 150 people, had to be rescued and airlifted from their roofs due to the rising flood waters. Seeing fellow citizens in need, spontaneous volunteers risked their own lives to rescue others.

Truly remarkable stories of heroism and bravery have come from that fateful morning. Stories of people being stranded on rooftops, scrambling up trees and holding on to anything they could to secure themselves to escape the inland tsunami that came through that morning are real stories of survival. It was reported as one of the largest air rescue operations currently in existence, with over a dozen helicopters rescuing people and pets off their rooftops in Eugowra. Some of them were in flooded water up to their chests and necks. LifeFlight posted a video on YouTube, which shows firsthand the situation, the extent of the flooding and the rescues it conducted. If it was not for LifeFlight and other agencies like it, many more lives would have been lost.

**Ms Liesl Tesch:** Amazing.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO:** It is. Special mention goes to all the spontaneous volunteers, but also—and there are too many to name—the local SES crews, the NSW Police Force, RFS, NSW Ambulance and the many other agencies that all came together that day in one of the largest rescue operations in New South Wales. In the post-flood clean-up, the Central West community banded together, helping their fellow citizens. A special thanks goes to all the community groups who based themselves in Eugowra to assist in the clean-up and get people back on their feet, many of whom had lost everything but the clothes they were wearing.

Two years on and where are things up to? The State and Federal governments each committed \$50 million for a \$100 million support package for the four local government areas affected by the floods, being Cabonne, Parkes, Forbes and Lachlan. That was broken down to \$28 million for Community Assets, \$32 million for transport infrastructure and \$40 million for the Resilient Homes Program. We truly appreciate that support. Since February this year I have been the Chair of the Central West Community Leaders Forum, along with the four mayors and Federal MPs, to look at the distribution and rollout of that funding.

On behalf of the community leaders forum and mayors, I thank the State and Federal governments for that funding commitment. But, without sounding ungrateful, I fear it will not be enough, especially the Resilient Homes Program. Applications are now open for that program. To date, I understand that a total of 116 applications have been received. The program will consider potential buybacks, retrofits and rise-ups of flood-impacted homes. However, my concern is that it will be oversubscribed and some people will miss out. I implore the State and Federal governments to consider providing additional financial support to complement the homes package.

I know the assessment of flood-impacted homes will commence shortly. That will be extremely welcome. The opportunity for experts to attend the properties and discuss resilience home measures with owners is certainly welcome. By all accounts, feedback from the Northern Rivers experience suggests that is a worthwhile component. However, time is of the essence so we must push on with those stages asap. Two years is a long time for people to wait. We still have 100 or so pods with flood-impacted residents who cannot go back to their homes while they are waiting on repairs, and it is taking its toll. I am acutely aware that those delays add a level of stress and anxiety on many of those people, including my constituents.

I raise another issue. Critical water assets to the value of about \$20 million belonging to Parkes Shire Council were damaged in the flood. They are not eligible for any funding. I implore the Government to seriously consider looking into that. I know there is an application currently before the Expenditure Review Committee. Northern Rivers received \$145 million for their critical water infrastructure assets damaged in their flood. It is only fair and reasonable the Central West gets the same.

## STATE ECONOMY

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (18:55):** One of the many challenges that Labor faced when coming to government in this State last year was an economy with slowing growth. One of the many reasons for that is the cost of living, which is one of the major contributors to slow growth. People have less money to spend and, as a consequence, that decline in spending has led to slower growth in the State. That has been exacerbated by a tightening of monetary policy by the Reserve Bank, which is aimed at reducing cost-of-living pressures overall in the economy. Key to addressing our challenges is getting growth going again. Unless we do that, we will not be able to pay down the massive debt we inherited from the Liberals and The Nationals. Key to getting growth going in our economy is improving State productivity in all its forms.

Discussions of productivity usually turn around the productivity of working people and getting them to work harder and do more with less. Very little is said in the mainstream media, including in *The Australian Financial Review*, *The Australian*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph*, about the productivity

of capital. I will talk a bit about that tonight. Before I do, I note that in this year's budget the New South Wales Government squarely addressed one of the elements of labour productivity—that is, the quality of labour productivity. The Australian Productivity Commission in 2023 found that in Australia, labour quality—that is, the health and education of the labour force—makes up about 20 per cent of any growth in labour productivity over the longer term. Labor's program to rebuild our essential services and the TAFE education system is aimed squarely at addressing the quality of our labour force.

I turn to the productivity of capital. I read an interesting Reserve Bank discussion paper by Jonathan Hambur and Dan Andrews entitled *Doing Less, with Less: Capital Misallocation, Investment and the Productivity Slowdown in Australia*, dated March 2023. The authors talk about the productivity of capital allocation within the economy. They particularly identify that investment is a key contributor to growth in output and labour productivity. They make the point that if the amount of capital that workers have to use increases—which is deepening of capital—it will generally enable them to produce more output and, by doing so, be more productive.

They looked at investment over the past couple of years. Between around 1991 and 2010, non-mining investment in the economy ran at about 12 per cent to 16 per cent. After 2010 non-mining investment collapsed to below 12 per cent. They looked at why that is happening. They have come up with a bunch of reasons that they feel need to be investigated further. They looked at a whole bunch of different theories related to why capital is being misallocated in the economy. They looked at reasons why the more productive firms are not investing as much as the less productive firms. They found that more productive firms, and firms that show evidence of increasing their prices, are less likely to make a capital investment than are less productive firms in our economy. They also highlight that less productive firms often have a lot of barriers to obtaining capital in our economy.

I guess the question I pose is: Why is capital so lazy in this country? It is a question that should be investigated more closely. We need to remove our focus on worker productivity and look at the productivity of capital. Over the past 10 years, capital has become lazy because it has got used to the easy profits from privatisation that were available under the Liberals and The Nationals. Capital needs to work harder for all the people of New South Wales and we should be focusing more on that happening.

#### PORT MACQUARIE ELECTORATE SCHOOL LEADERS

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (19:00):** Today I proudly welcome the newly elected school leaders for the Port Macquarie electorate for 2025. I congratulate each and every student who put themselves forward and took part in the electoral process. I express my admiration to each of them for considering the role, stepping up to the podium and speaking their voice. I believe that the most enriching and positive school environments are those that place great emphasis on elevating the voice of students. The role that each of them will embark on next year will be transformative. It will make a difference. It will challenge them, but it will be satisfying and rewarding. May they confidently find their voices; discover what they believe in and stand by it; practise being strong, active listeners; and, finally, be authentic and honest, even if faced with difficult decisions.

The position of student leader will provide opportunities for them to have a positive impact on school culture. They have been democratically chosen by their peers in good faith, and I trust that they will stay true to the ideals that saw them elected by their fellow students. I encourage them all to use this valuable experience as a chance to learn and grow, to lead by example and to have a positive impact on their school communities. I congratulate the following student leaders on their election and appointment to this significant role. From Hastings Secondary College, Port Macquarie Campus, the captains will be Stephanie Lawrence and Tom Gallagher, and vice-captains will be Jamie Knott and Drew De Silva.

From the Hastings Secondary College, Westport Campus, the captains will be Benji Mathews and Ashlee Foley, and vice-captains will be Tyler Siebelink and Atticus Starr. From St Joseph's Regional College, Port Macquarie, the captains will be Bonnie Clark and Jacob Hill, and vice-captains will be Esther Cummins and Gideon Marr-Grogan. From Camden Haven High School, the captains will be Raina Anderson and William Howard, and vice-captains will be Joshua Kalolo and Laura Partlett. From Mackillop College in Port Macquarie, the captains will be Cooper Lorgier and Milly McGrath, and the vice-captains will be Tyler Morris and Bindi Zimmermann.

From St Columba Anglican School, the captains will be Fleur Hillsdon and Adam Hempzell, and vice-captains will be Zalia Rose and Jack Kirk. From Hannam Vale Public School, the school leaders will be Jack Drew, Joseph Neilson, Myra Ziebell and Phillip Polglase. The Hastings Public School has elected captains Henley Fraser and Edith McLachlan, and the peer support leaders chosen are Rosie Medlin and Kailani Marzan. From Heritage Christian School, the senior school captain will be Cate Bonnet, and prefects will be Sarah McGregor, Lillian Gittins and Max Pursehouse. From Herons Creek Public School, the school leader will be Samuel Osborne. From St Joseph's Primary School, Port Macquarie, the student representative council will

comprise Tahya Collins, Leah Donovan, Heidi Lawrence, Tilly Scott, Yu Xiang Lin, Archie Rex, Spencer Searle and Kingston Shooter.

From Lake Cathie Public School, the captains will be Elka Williamson and Robbie Lucas, and the prefects will be Talula Carey, Ruby Harvey, Soteria Sese, Sunny Butler, Jacob Collins and Lachlan Hyland. Finally, from Westport Public School, the leaders chosen are Charlie O'Reilly, Ace Davies, Havanna Stirling and Lakoda Sharpe. Whether the students have been elected as school captain, vice-captain, or as a student representative council member or part of a student government team, they will all have the important role of being an active and vital link between students, principal and staff. They will be role models for students to emulate. Undoubtedly, they will surprise themselves with skills and strengths they may not realise they have.

Skills such as communication, decision-making and organisation can develop throughout the year and will stand them in good stead for possible future leadership opportunities. I take this opportunity to congratulate each and every one of them for being chosen as our student leaders for 2025. I sincerely wish them all the best as they step into this new and exciting chapter of their school journey.

### ILLAWARRA CONVOY

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (19:04):** On Sunday 17 November 2024 Convoy celebrated 20 years of raising money for sick children and their families right across the Illawarra and beyond. People from all over the Illawarra gathered in their thousands along the M1 Motorway and other local roads, such as Shellharbour Road, to catch a glimpse of the trucks and the motorbikes that make up the annual Convoy charity run. Since 2005 Convoy has been a landmark fundraising event for the Illawarra region and involves numerous initiatives aimed at raising much-needed money for the Illawarra Community Foundation. Convoy started when Marty Haynes, i98FM's fantastic breakfast show host, heard of the tragic passing of one of his listeners. In 2005, Marty had a goal of raising \$20,000 for kids and their families who were living with cancer. Nearly 20 years later, Convoy is now the Illawarra's most amazing charitable event and has raised more than \$26 million for various charitable causes.

One of the most exciting parts of Convoy is the lead truck auction because the winner becomes the truck leading the procession of trucks from Appin Road to Albion Park. The 2024 winners of the lead truck auction were Tiny Tins and the Wollongong Crane Trucks, who won the lead spot with a winning bid of \$300,020. Menai Haulage came second in the auction, but won the lead truck auction in 2023. I thank them for their ongoing support of Convoy. I also thank Alan Ross from Ross Transport for coming up with the idea that all bidders for the lead truck should donate the money they bid, even if they were not the auction winner. This has ensured a huge amount of money gets donated every single year from this important auction.

This year the Illawarra Convoy lead truck and bike auctions raised more than \$1.6 million, all of which will go towards the Illawarra Community Foundation. Convoy travels 70 kilometres from Illawarra Coal's West Cliff Colliery at Appin through the streets of the Illawarra to Shellharbour Airport at Albion Park Rail for the Free Family Fun Day. The Shellharbour Airport was overtaken with markets, rides and food stalls, and fed thousands of locals and visitors alike. This year's entertainment was headlined by rock legend Diesel, who kept the crowd entertained as they celebrated 20 years of Convoy in the Illawarra.

Money raised from Convoy provides financial assistance and respite services to families suffering financially due to a potentially life-threatening illness. Money raised also helps to fund other organisations with similar objectives, such as the purchase of medical equipment for various hospitals within the Illawarra and Shoalhaven health district. Members of the foundation are a dedicated group who organise the event and determine the best way to distribute and manage the funds raised. I thank my local shopping centre, Warilla Grove, which supported this great cause with a fundraiser barbecue on Sunday. I especially thank Warilla Grove retailers who kindly donated their time, food supplies, drinks and cooking experience to make this possible, and they include Woolworths, Mitchell's Market, Cafe Els, Moe & Co and King Chinese.

I thank all the volunteers and supporters for their amazing work in raising money for charities that support people in need right across the Illawarra. Those involved truly create a fantastic day for all involved and for an outstanding cause. I give a special thank you to all of the staff who have been involved in the Convoy Headquarters and warehouse in Albion Park Rail. I just love dropping by there every year to pick up my Convoy merchandise, which means I have 12 years worth of T-shirts and other paraphernalia. I encourage everybody from the Illawarra to put next year's Convoy in their diaries right now. The 2025 event will be on Sunday 16 November 2025. On behalf of all residents of the Shellharbour electorate and the broader Illawarra community, I thank Andrew Lancaster, Chair of the Illawarra Community Foundation, and his entire team for working tirelessly to organise this year's Illawarra Convoy.

## MACKILLOP CATHOLIC COLLEGE SCHOOL ZONE

**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) (19:09):** Last week I spoke about traffic issues around MacKillop Catholic College and said that I would read a letter from the school leaders. Tonight I have a letter from Joshua Tredinnick, who is the College Captain of the MacKillop Catholic College Warnervale. The letter reads:

Good morning/afternoon Parliament,

On behalf of the Mackillop Catholic College Warnervale community, I would like to bring the attention of an urgent matter that is currently placing students in danger and parents in a panic. The lack of school zones, pedestrian crossings and the severe and utter congestion surrounding, what is meant to be a safe place for children to reunite with their parents after a long day of education, is causing ongoing complaints and contradicts the laws of the Roads and Maritime Service (RMS) within New South Wales.

School Zones exist to provide a sense of safety to children and a peace of mind for parents knowing that the legal speed limit is 40km/h, as opposed to the regular 50km/h, so that drivers have that little bit of additional reaction time to not injure a child. Currently at Mackillop, the primary kiss and drop is connected to Mataram Road that extends around the College. This road is part of a new housing estate so there are minimum parking spaces which is also causing more congestion.

As a College community we can't act on the amount of traffic digesting through as this estate grows, but surely we could gain signage surrounding the road. There is a significant lack of signage regarding the speed limit. There is no indication as to when drivers should slow down or how cautious drivers should be. Adding to the lack of signs, there is a steep incline next to where kiss and drop is located, indirectly exceeding the already high speed limit for a school area, where they will reach 60km/h. This needs to be fixed. What we're suggesting for a long term solution is to create a school zone along Mataram Road and the surrounding area for the safety of students. In the interim until the school zone has been approved and constructed, we would like multiple signs surrounding Mataram Road to alert drivers to be more aware of children crossing.

Also, the lack of pedestrian crossings is another expanding problem for Mataram Road that requires fixing. Currently, there are refuge islands that allow students to cross the wide street. Despite this, drivers in the queue for kiss and drop will block the gap that is needed for students to safely cross. This places children in a situation where they must go around the front and back of the vehicles to reach the footpath. This is very unsafe on multiple accounts and needs to be addressed.

As a College this is very concerning for us to watch children as young as kindergarten, walk between cars that have bonnets taller than them, without the safety of a pedestrian crossing. The lack of a pedestrian crossing is a growing issue and at least one needs to be added to ensure the safety of all our students who either walk home or walk to their parents parked out in the streets. A pedestrian crossing would positively impact the road safety surrounding Mataram Road, as pedestrians would have the right of way and drivers would need to stop and wait until the pedestrian has walked onto the sidewalk.

Adjacent to the school grounds is Sparks Road, a 70km/h speed limit that endangers the Mackillop students everyday when they walk to and from school. There is an intersection on Sparks Road connecting the school, however, that does not change the speed at which drivers will travel at, especially since an 80km/h zone just finishes before the main intersection. Parents, teachers and the seniors of our College have witnessed juniors hear the sound that indicates to walk without realising it's the other side, causing the child to step out into oncoming traffic travelling at 70km/h. Luckily, the eye witnesses will pull the student back onto the footpath before anything major happens. This issue is growing and something needs to be introduced to prevent an accident from occurring. We're suggesting a speed change to 40km/h and encompassing the surrounding area into a school zone, to alter the behaviour of the driver to become more aware that students are nearby.

The road that leads to the College is Mary Mackillop Drive. As you turn off Sparks Road onto Mary Mackillop Drive there is a small refuge island situated just before a round-a-bout. Mary Mackillop Drive is the main method of entry and exit into our College. Inexperienced and young drivers that are on their red Provisional and Learner drivers licence find it difficult to navigate the complex road feeding into the traffic lights. The road is difficult because of the excessive use that the refuge island receives. Students crossing the road can think that they have the right of way and step out into oncoming traffic, endangering themselves and causing panic for the experienced or young drivers that exit the school at the same time of day. If measures are not implemented, the possibility of the hazards occurring grows with each passing day and it overwhelms us immensely.

On behalf of the College, I want to thank you all for taking the time to hear our concerns and I sincerely hope that changes will be made to create peace of mind for parents and ensure the safety of all the students of our K-12 community.

Joshua Tredinnick College Captain of Mackillop Catholic College Warnervale

## ALL SAINTS GREEK ORTHODOX PARISH

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (19:14):** Tonight I would like to acknowledge the All Saints Greek Orthodox parish in Belmore. It was established in 1964, with the church being built in 1969. This year will be the sixtieth anniversary of the All Saints Greek Orthodox Church parish, as well as All Saints Grammar. The primary school of All Saints Grammar was opened in 1990. The first year 7 class started in 1995. The first minister of the All Saints parish was the Very Reverend Father Ezekiel Kefalas, who later became bishop of Perth, Western Australia. Father Ezekiel was a major driving force behind the community committee to establish the parish.

The first church services were held in the Parry Pavilion. In May 1964 negotiations commenced for the purchase of All Saints Anglican Church, a small building on the corner of Isabel and Cecilia streets in Belmore. The Anglican name All Saints was retained for the Greek Orthodox Church of Belmore, which served a variety of uses, including as a place of worship, school and Sunday school rooms, and community events including

dances, bazaars, film nights and afternoon teas. The influx of Greek migrants dramatically increased the parishioner attendance at church, which led to further property purchases to provide a site for a new church.

The new building, which is the current church today, was designed by Constantine Papapostolou. A small-scale model of the new church was unveiled during the All Saints' Day celebrations on 16 June 1968. After some discussion, George Peponis volunteered to act as builder, with further assistance by consulting engineer Constantine Saltis. Work began, culminating in the laying of the foundation stone by Father Ezekiel on 28 February 1969. On 10 June 1972 All Saints was officially opened by the Minister for Justice, John Maddison. The Sunday of All Saints, the parish's feast day, is observed on the first Sunday after the Feast of Holy Pentecost.

I congratulate the All Saints Greek Orthodox parish, its board and the current board president, Ulysses Ntombos. I acknowledge Father Dimitri and Father Chris, who has been at the parish for close to 50 years. I thank Father Apostolos, who was there for about five years. I thank the youth committee and the ladies auxiliary for organising the many charity events over many years. More importantly, I thank the parishioners, who have worked very hard over the past 60 years, particularly those founding members. They are the pioneers who had the foresight to, first of all, purchase property, but also to establish the church, the school and early education, and the school hall, which became a health precinct a couple of years ago at which people from all across our community were vaccinated.

I was baptised at the All Saints parish at Belmore and I have a deep affection and love for the All Saints Greek Orthodox Church. I thank everyone who volunteers and puts in enormous effort. I love that the parish committee, the volunteers and the youth committee have worked so hard with other community groups across our area, whether it is the Muslim groups or the Catholic organisations, to help and support those who are most vulnerable. I congratulate the parish on its sixtieth anniversary and I hope there are another 60 years to come.

#### **GWYDIR WATER SHARING PLAN**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands) (19:19):** I raise some of my concerns about the draft *Water Sharing Plan for the Gwydir Unregulated River Water Sources 2025*, which was released on 4 November. In my electorate, water plays a crucial role, from a social and cultural perspective and also an economic perspective. Water sharing plans, as most in this House would know, provide the framework by which all users of water—be it stock and domestic water, town water, industrial water, environmental water or irrigation water—can access their lawful entitlements. The plans outline conditions designed to equally share water between licensed users, to ensure that each user of water in each valley has access to their separate water entitlements. The water sharing plans are designed to facilitate long-term limits and to ensure that socio-economic, environmental and cultural outcomes are achieved.

Water is a difficult policy area. Everyone in this place would agree on at least that point. One issue has arisen in the draft water sharing plan for my valley, the Gwydir Valley, whose headwaters are at Copeton Dam, outside of Inverell, and which is essentially a flat river delta that terminates west of Moree, towards Collarenebri. The issue is that that plan has included an additional 327 wetlands within that valley. The mapping used to identify those 327 additional wetlands has not been based on ground truth. Quite frankly, it could not be. The difficulty this raises is from not only a water user's perspective but also a primary production perspective, particularly in circumstances where the Government is planning to give the native vegetation regulatory [NVR] map legal effect. The plan identifies an additional 327 wetlands, most of which are on private property, which will have flow-on effects—no pun intended—for the NVR map, particularly because those wetlands are located in areas that are otherwise unregulated country as defined by the NVR map.

A number of water users in my electorate have written to me and the Minister. As a result of that correspondence, a webinar was offered on 19 November, which is great. I thank the Government for that. There will be a meeting in Bingara on 27 November 2024 about entitlement holders and access rules. That meeting will be useful but, unfortunately, will not address the issue of the 327 new wetlands, whose basis no-one can understand. No-one can understand how they have been defined as wetlands, or why areas that include stock and domestic dams that have been there for many years are now classified as wetlands.

This issue is in not only my valley. I am told that, for example, in the valley in the electorate of the member for Barwon, south of mine, an additional 273 wetlands have been identified in the draft water sharing plan for the Namoi, which will have impacts for water users right across that valley. So it is an issue. This Parliament does not have a good history when it comes to mapping. I will be writing to the Minister, but we need to make sure that these new wetlands are, in fact, wetlands because, if they are not and if they are mapped incorrectly, it will have huge issues for communities across my electorate.

## IVAN WONG

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (19:24):** On behalf of the Parliament, I acknowledge and thank the wonderful Ivan Wong. Ivan has dedicated over 30 years of his life to serving our community through his work with the Chinese Australian Services Society [CASS]. Ivan will be retiring as the general manager of home ageing services and strategic support. Ivan has witnessed and contributed to CASS's growth from a small organisation to a comprehensive service provider offering a wide range of community services, from child care to aged care. As the head of the community service directorate, he played a key role in developing CASS's home ageing and disability services and has coordinated with over 350 active volunteers from diverse Asian backgrounds, all united in their dedication to supporting disadvantaged members of our multicultural community. Ivan's work at CASS has been inspiring. He has led with vision, dedication and a strong commitment to helping others.

I absolutely love and respect Ivan Wong. He is a very kind man. His sense of responsibility, his dedication and his hard work have a profound impact on many people, within both CASS and the wider community. He is a dedicated community leader and has been part of CASS's evolution and growth as a well-respected leading community organisation. CASS provides a wide range of services to not just me but also other organisations in our community. As the local member, I know a number of members in this place have made contributions about CASS. I acknowledge that Ivan has been a leading service provider, working with councils and the State and Federal governments. Particularly during COVID, I worked closely with CASS, NSW Health and other multicultural community organisations. I thank Ivan for his contribution in helping thousands of local Chinese community members and Chinese students who required assistance with vaccination at the time. We were able to work together, and he was always there and dedicated.

Ivan consistently approaches every task with care and compassion, setting an example for all of us to follow. Under Ivan's leadership, CASS has grown into a strong and caring organisation that meets the needs of our diverse multicultural society. He has achieved significant milestones, from launching new programs and expanding services to establishing robust support systems. He has built real connections, forged friendships and left a lasting legacy that will continue to guide CASS and the broader community for years to come. I give my true love and appreciation to Ivan Wong. I thank him for his commitment to, love for and dedication to our local community and also for the support for local volunteers. We will miss him, but I know that he will continue to contribute and dedicate himself to community service.

## MODERN SLAVERY

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (19:28):** I report to the House on my attendance at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch's workshop on Legislative Strengthening Seminar to Address Gender-Based Violence and Modern Slavery in Supply Chains, held in London from 22 to 24 October. I attended with my colleague the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine from the other place. We were nominated to attend by the Modern Slavery Committee of the Parliament. The workshop followed a successful initial workshop held in Nairobi last year. I presented to the workshop on the current state of legislation in New South Wales and Australia and presented and participated in a panel discussing the challenges of gathering evidence. Dr Kaine participated in a panel on legislating against modern slavery in supply chains, sharing experiences and lessons learnt.

The keynote speaker was former British Prime Minister Theresa May, who is leading the recently established Global Commission on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. There were more than 50 parliamentarians in attendance, representing more than 17 Commonwealth jurisdictions. Several key points emerged during the workshop. The week before we arrived, the House of Lords released a review of the United Kingdom [UK] Modern Slavery Act 2015, which has not been as successful as originally hoped. Theresa May herself acknowledged that the issue had "fallen down the political agenda". The House of Lords review highlighted requirements for due diligence for companies, with proportionate sanctions when they are not completed; a central enforcement body for labour rights and standards; and recognition of the need for different treatment of migrants who have been trafficked.

In addition, there was discussion that the UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner should have a greater focus on prevention and raising awareness in the wider community and industry, rather than prosecution. In fact, one speaker noted, "We cannot prosecute our way out of this." It was commented that recent UK legislation actually ran counter to the operation of the anti-slavery Act. In relation to due diligence, there was recognition that the reporting by companies was positive to begin with but that now more needs to be done, especially around requirements for companies to not only report but also apply due diligence. There was much discussion about what due diligence looks like.

It was very encouraging to note that *Guidance on Reasonable Steps: NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner's Guidance on Reasonable Steps to Manage Modern Slavery Risks in Operations and Supply-Chains*, which was

published in December 2023, is an excellent resource to assist organisations in meeting due diligence requirements. It genuinely appears to be world leading. Due diligence must involve hearing directly from the voices of affected workers and close scrutiny of financial reporting and practice. This should be truly independent and not just a tick-box audit. Clearly, we need to use these reasonable steps to guide the assessment of New South Wales agencies. It will be interesting to monitor the Australian Government's response to the review of its legislation because it is talking about due diligence, and New South Wales is leading the way.

There was also a sense that the investment community is looking for better assurance that there is no evidence of modern slavery in the supply chains of companies. Certainly, the European Union Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, which entered into force in July 2024, has brought renewed interest in due diligence. Businesses that wish to do the right thing are suffering an unfair disadvantage, compared with competitors that do not, and are looking for stronger action. Another interesting concept that emerged was the use of mainstream legislation to focus on modern slavery—for example, by incorporating specific prohibitions around modern slavery into work health and safety, industrial relations and corporation laws. That would not only bring a greater focus because it is in mainstream legislation but also create additional capacity to monitor and enforce through mechanisms in those Acts.

Temporary migration worker exploitation is also an issue across the world. Our own Modern Slavery Committee's review is very timely. There was much discussion of an employer-pays principle for recruitment of overseas workers, which would mean that the recruiting employer is responsible for all costs required for the recruitment, including travel and accommodation. That means those costs would not be borne by the workers, which would help to eliminate debt bondage with labour hire firms that recoup the costs. There is very exciting work being done around the use of open-source data to create a single coherent source of intelligence on trafficking across the world. Finally, delegates at the workshop signed an open letter to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Samoa to ask for specific action to combat modern slavery. Modern slavery is a humanitarian issue that should be of concern to all of us. It is encouraging to know that New South Wales is leading the way. We must continue our work on this important issue.

#### HOUSING SUPPLY

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (19:33):** The cost of living is a significant issue felt deeply by many in communities across New South Wales. My electorate of Charlestown is certainly no different. Clearly, a major contributor to the cost of living is the cost of having somewhere to live. There is no doubt that the actions and inaction of the former New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government have contributed to considerable pain in the cost of housing. For many years, New South Wales has been staring down the barrel of a significant housing supply and affordability challenge. Clearly, the former Government's policy of leaving solutions to the free market has not worked. Housing has been an issue I have pushed time and again since I was first elected. I know the electorate represented by the Deputy Speaker feels the same pain. Housing is an important issue for me and an important topic for my community.

Rental trends in the Charlestown electorate make it clear: From October 2019 to October 2024, median rents in the 2290 postcode, which covers a broad part of my electorate, increased by more than 40 per cent. It is a similar situation in the 2282 postcode, on the northern shore of Lake Macquarie, and the 2305 postcode that covers New Lambton, where rents have gone up nearly 45 per cent. Property prices have likewise skyrocketed. In the last quarter of 2019, the median house price in the 2290 postcode was \$630,000; now it is a shade under \$900,000. It is even worse in the postcodes of 2282 and 2305. In the fourth quarter of 2019, the median house prices were \$715,000 and \$738,000, respectively. Today, it is more than \$1 million in the 2282 postcode and nearly \$1.2 million in the 2305 postcode.

According to figures from the 2021 Census, 4.8 per cent of households in the electorate of Charlestown live in public housing. That is much higher than the New South Wales average of 3.2 per cent. I hear from vulnerable people in the community who are struggling to pay rent or languishing on years-long public housing waiting lists. I hear from older, more established members of the community who are concerned that their children and grandchildren may never afford to own a home or live comfortably. There are many reasons we have reached this point, and we can debate them endlessly. But no matter which way we look at it, housing affordability and availability is the biggest single pressure facing the people of my electorate and the people of this State.

The fact of the matter is that when this Government came into office, it had a plan to correct the years of inaction and tackle the problem, which affects almost every member of our communities. Our plan to ensure that everyone—no matter who they are, how much money they earn and how much money they have—has a place to call home is well and truly underway. We made it easier to build medium-density housing in areas where people have access to public transport, social amenities, shops and schools through the transport oriented development planning reforms. We delivered an unprecedented investment in social housing with the \$6.6 billion Building

Homes for NSW program. This is a once-in-a-generation chance to build homes across the State and rebuild our public housing system after years of neglect.

We will make it easier for the thousands of renters in the Charlestown electorate with the country's first portable rental bond scheme. In the past few weeks, we introduced the most significant rental reforms in more than a decade. We balanced the needs of renters with the needs of landlords. We clarified a system that was often too difficult or overwhelming to navigate. We empowered NSW Fair Trading to make sure that breaches of rental laws are taken seriously. We helped to ensure that wherever a person happens to live in this State, in whatever form of housing they live, they are able to make a home.

Just this month the Minns Labor Government announced the establishment of a new State-led approval pathway for major residential housing projects. In the regions, it will be available for developments that cost \$30 million or more, with 40 or so homes in each development. It will cut approval times and speed up the delivery of new homes. It will allow market supply to meet demand and put downward pressure on the price of homes. After the State suffered 12 long years of inaction and negligence, my colleagues and I are delivering for the people of New South Wales. Members on this side of the House understand that everyone deserves a home.

### COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (19:38):** Today I highlight the significance of funding for infrastructure and the importance of a government that recognises the needs of communities. As the member for Goulburn, I am committed to the betterment of my electorate and every council, village and community group. In regional New South Wales, it is so crucial to recognise the role that grassroots funding plays in shaping our communities. Safe, accessible community infrastructure forms the backbone of our communities and makes them vibrant and strong. I speak to a range of essential facilities that are fundamental to the prosperity of regional communities. From parks and playgrounds to community halls and sportsgrounds, infrastructure assets facilitate social interaction, drive engagement, support health and emotional wellbeing. The former Liberal-Nationals Government understood this.

We also dedicated ongoing funding programs for these communities; they were not just election commitments. The former Government funded new playgrounds in Moss Vale, Berrima, Wingello, Marulan, Goulburn, Crookwell, Gunning and Yass. We saw to sports facility upgrades in Yass, Murrumbateman, Crookwell, Goulburn, Marulan, Penrose, Bundanoon and Moss Vale. That meant lighting upgrades, playing surface restorations, and new and refurbished clubhouses, as well as special event funding. It was not just sports clubs that were supported. The Goulburn electorate benefited from community hall refurbishments too, with paint, floor and ceiling refreshes for Bookham, Binalong, Yass, Penrose and Burrawang, and Collector and Penrose both got their halls rebuilt. But there is more to be done.

By allocating resources to communities, allowing them to take ownership, to build and maintain their own infrastructure, we lay the foundation for not only the social cohesion, general wellbeing and overall prosperity of those communities but also sustainable economic growth. Consistent, reliable funding directed towards a well-developed infrastructure network enhances the liveability of our communities. Those grants attract spending to local businesses and investment, creating job opportunities and, best of all, fostering social connections across every single one of those communities. These types of projects once had a plethora of funding opportunities, including Everyone Can Play, Stronger Country Communities Fund, Growing Local Economies Fund, Regional Sport Facility Fund, Multi-Sport Community Facility Fund, Female Friendly Community Sport Facilities and Lighting Upgrades Grant Program, and more.

At the time of writing this speech, of the 46 regional and infrastructure grants open on the "Grants and funding" section of the New South Wales Government's website, only one grant would apply to any of those projects, and that is the "Regional Growth Initiative Election Commitments 2023/24"—of course, by invitation to apply. In the case of Goulburn, the invitation appears to have been garnered from the Labor candidate for my electorate. The New South Wales Government says bad luck to every single one of the 308 grant seekers who have contacted my office seeking funding since my election, 100 or so of who reached out this term alone. I ask the New South Wales Labor Government whether it only funds community infrastructure if it comes with the promise of a vote—or are the grant opportunities only for friends of the Labor Party?

If this Government walked the walk, it would ensure that adequate infrastructure funding is accessible, regardless of geographical location or socio-economic status across the State of New South Wales. Crookwell needs to finish its aquatic centre, and Yass desperately needs a new pool. Avoca and Medway villages need funding for their community halls, Taralga Showground needs a new amenities block, and Riding for the Disabled needs a new permanent home. Yet, despite the undeniable importance of those projects, a lack of funding opportunities will hinder every one of these communities from progressing each of these projects. Further to

Crookwell, the Upper Lachlan Shire Council has found it impossible to compete with city councils that seem to have been successful in gaining a bailout when the small country council is ignored. The mayor recently said:

The difficulties we have is a low population, hence low voting area when we compare ourselves to city councils. I refer to the refurbishment of the North Sydney pool which had a budget of \$86 million. This project blew out and in Feb 2024, a further \$20 million was committed by the State Government to rescue this project, bringing the total cost of this refurbishment of over \$100 million.

...

We should all be asking the State Government why it continues to ignore the NSW regional Councils and their communities.

Insufficient investment will lead to deteriorating infrastructure, and bad infrastructure will compromise safety. It will result in reduced members and diminish the number of volunteers. Neglecting regional community infrastructure will exacerbate the disparities that our regional constituents already face. We already pay more for petrol, have less public transport, smaller schools, smaller hospitals and less services.

### LEPPINGTON ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (19:43):** As we near the end of the parliamentary year, this is an opportune time to reflect on what a fantastic year it has been for the people of Leppington. Last year was a very special year as they had a dedicated State member of Parliament for the first time in their history, and things have only gotten better from there. This year has certainly been a year of progress, and I will touch on some of the things that have happened over the past 12 months. Education has been a big one, as I have reflected on in this House on a number of occasions. After 12 years of neglect by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government and the housing growth during that time, there is not a single public high school in Austral, Leppington and Denham Court. But I am on the job, as is the Minns Labor Government, and we are working hard to deliver.

Last week we announced that on day one of term 1 in the 2027 school year Leppington High School will open. Concept designs have gone out for public display, and we will have a community consultation session next door at Leppington Public School in early December. That is not all. The Minns Labor Government is investing in education across the Leppington electorate. Next door at Leppington Public School, we have invested \$90 million to upgrade a school that has grown exponentially over the past few years, where we are also planning one of five preschools across the electorate. Greenway Park, Kearns, Robert Townson and Eschol Park will get the other four preschools. We are getting what is effectively a pre-K to 12 education precinct in the town centre, where parents can drop off their kids of any age, cross the road to the train station and then be on their way to work.

People in Leppington care deeply about education, and we are certainly delivering on that. It is not just Leppington High School and Leppington Public School. We are investing \$90 million at Austral as well, and we are also investing at Dalmeny and Greenway Park, as set out in today's media release. We are getting on with the job on education. Our growing community is being developed on what was once the outskirts of Sydney. There are rural roads with no curbs or gutters, so we have to upgrade them. None is more important to me than Fifteenth Avenue, which I have worked hard on previously as a councillor and now as a member of Parliament. I am pleased to see the \$50 million that I secured in the 2023-24 budget as part of my election campaign is starting to take shape.

The traffic boffins have been doing analysis and assessments, and they have worked out that one of the most effective ways to ease some of the traffic congestion on Fifteenth Avenue is by putting an extra lane on Cowpasture Road. Those who are familiar with the area will know that it goes from three lanes to two lanes where the KFC is—anyone who loves their Zinger burgers will know where that is. Work will start early next year to put in an extra lane all the way to the M7. We will see some much-needed traffic congestion on Cowpasture Road, Hoxton Park Road and—an important road in this State—Fifteenth Avenue, which I know has the attention of the roads Minister and the Premier.

It is not just roads; it is not just education. Open space and parks are a big issue for many of the people living in or moving to Leppington. We have a lot of young families and a lot of new housing. Anyone who has been to some of the new housing areas will know that they are on smaller lots. The backyards are a bit smaller, and there is not much of an area for people to play and kick a ball. That is why we have decided that we cannot wait for Liverpool council any longer and are investing \$4½ million in Leppington Park. It is 7.6 hectares of open space that will have cycle paths, play spaces, basketball courts, a youth hub and barbeque facilities. That is another project that will start early next year, and I am sure that we will see plenty of families in the area for many years to come.

That is just a taste. As we get to the halfway point, it will not just be announcements and concept designs. We will see shovels in the ground and ribbons being cut. I look forward to the next two years as the member for Leppington as I deliver on my commitments for my amazing community. Merry Christmas and a happy new year!

## NORTH SHORE ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (19:48):** As we head towards the end of the year, it is a great opportunity to reflect on our local communities and their needs and what we are delivering for them. It is a privilege for me to serve as the member for North Shore. I thank my local community for their ongoing support as I work alongside them to deliver outcomes. I am always proud to be their voice, and I am always proud to advocate on the issues that our community cares about. Reflecting on the year that has been, there are many highlights and wins for my community, but I also acknowledge some of the key issues and concerns facing our local area and reflect on the work that I am undertaking on their behalf.

It was with immense pride that I worked alongside our school communities to deliver transformative upgrades at local schools, including North Sydney Demonstration School and Mosman High School. The upgrades that opened this year were new classrooms, new administration and staff facilities, new libraries, new school halls, new canteens and increased outdoor play space. That is paramount in an incredibly dense area like my electorate, where it is hard to access space. At Mosman High School, there was a truly extraordinary use of rooftop space for a basketball court and play space. How amazing is it that we can have public education with the envious views of Sydney Harbour, the city and Balmoral, all at Mosman High School?

A third public school, Neutral Bay Public School, is currently undergoing a major upgrade and will open next year. The upgrade will deliver 19 new and refurbished classrooms, a new library, new administration and staff areas, a new canteen, improved out-of-hours school care facilities, upgraded play space with the removal of demountable classrooms, and refurbishment of the heritage buildings. Good things come to those who wait. Jillian Skinner advocated for the project for many years. When I was elected, I pushed for it very strongly. I think when I was pregnant with my first child, we got the commitment that the then Liberal Government would invest in the upgrade. This year my baby is in kindergarten and will be the beneficiary of this wonderful piece of public education into the future.

We have also seen our major upgrade to South Mosman Wharf get underway. The new pontoon, lift, gangway and roof structure are all currently being installed and are expected to be completed early next year. The new facilities will make catching a ferry safer and easier for all passengers. Cremorne Point Wharf has had a lot of issues, with the roof removed a number of years ago. The delay has been a source of frustration for my local community. It is currently closed during the daytime for repair works to be undertaken, which will enable the roof installation in the first quarter of 2025. I will stay on top of that to ensure it is delivered in a timely fashion.

One of the most exciting projects that has come to fruition is the opening of the Sydney Metro. My community has two new stations, at Crows Nest and Victoria Cross in North Sydney. The project has completely transformed the way we travel into the CBD and the four corners of Greater Sydney. Victoria Cross station is helping to revitalise North Sydney. We have seen amazing new businesses and retail opportunities, and a whole raft of new restaurants and food and beverage offerings. North Sydney is absolutely thriving. People should get down there to check it out and enjoy the vibrancy the area now offers to people who work there, live there or want to visit.

A number of major projects are happening in my community that are disruptive and impactful. I recognise that the Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway upgrade will continue to be disruptive for a number of years. One of the big challenges facing locals is the upcoming closure of Alfred Street North, which is the very last exit—as well as the last untolled exit—heading southbound on the Warringah Freeway before going over the bridge. That will be closed for seven months starting this week. I have met with the Minister's office and advocated very strongly for toll relief for people who are pushed onto the toll road at Military Road. It is still the most expensive toll road per kilometre in the entire world. People should not be forced to utilise a toll when they need to access their community.

Locally, the Minns Labor Government has slashed projects in my local community, including the much-needed Beaches Link and the Lavender Bay high line. It has also cut \$150 million from local school budgets, cut 50 allied health jobs at Royal North Shore Hospital and cut cost-of-living support for families. Those are all issues I am passionate about, and I will keep fighting for them. Unfortunately, North Sydney Council is looking to tear up a local park for a road in Neutral Bay. After years and years of delay, it has pushed back the reopening of North Sydney pool to the end of next year. The cost has blown out to almost double, at over \$110 million. To compensate for that, the council is also pushing for a dramatic rate increase next financial year. I strongly believe council should be considering options that do not further dip into ratepayers' pockets.

I say to members of my community that 2025 can be the year of opportunity. Together we can build on the progress we have made and face the challenges ahead with determination and optimism. I ask them to please keep sharing their ideas and aspirations for our community. Being in opposition does not change my resolve. I will

continue to work hard. I will keep knocking on the doors of Ministers to try to get outcomes for the people of the North Shore electorate.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 19:54 until  
Wednesday 20 November 2024 at 10:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

**MAITLAND AQUATIC CENTRE**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to the Maitland Aquatic Centre pool team who have taken out two awards at the recent 2024 Aquatic and Recreation Institute NSW Awards of Excellence. The team won the Environmental Sustainability Award and also the Accessibility Award at the event. This is the third year in a row that Maitland Aquatic Centre has taken out a top award. The Environmental Sustainability award comes in recognition that water consumption at Maitland Aquatic Centre has been reduced by 23,224 kL over the last four years, which is more than nine Olympic swimming pools. Greenhouse gas emissions at Maitland Aquatic Centre have also been reduced by 12.56 per cent over the last four years and electricity usage has been reduced by 25 per cent. The Maitland Aquatic Centre will also be running on 100 per cent renewable energy from January 1, 2025. Congratulations to Maitland City Council, Suellen Goyne and the Aquatic Centres team on this recognition.

**MADDI HARPER**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Maddi Harper is a remarkable young Maitland athlete who represented Australia at the recent International Powerlifting Federation sub-Junior World Championships in Malta, placing 7th out of a field of 17th. More remarkable is that she is just 15 and was competing against athletes up to three years older than her. The Year 10 student from St Bedes Catholic College not only set personal records at the championships, but also 2 Australian records whilst competing as the youngest ever Australian at these championships. Maddi now holds 4 Sub-Junior Oceania records in her weight division, only one short of all possible records available to her. This from an athlete that took up the sport little more than 18 months ago. Maddi has used powerlifting to take her mind off the stresses of school, and it has helped her discover a second passion in nutrition and how food affects her body and performance. Of course, Maddi's success comes with the support of her family with her mum, dad, older sister and younger brother all watching her compete. Congratulations to Maddi on her amazing results in Malta.

**MAITLAND REGIONAL ART GALLERY**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Over the weekend, I was delighted to attend the Maitland Regional Art Gallery to experience the powerful storytelling and collaborative generosity of Yankunytjatjara/Arrernte artist Robert Fielding. We also celebrated the opening of works made through an incredible week of collaboration between artists and community facilitated by Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council, Mimili Maku Arts and master printmaker Trent Walter. The exhibition – 'tjintu kutu, kililpi tjuat', 'one sun, many stars' – contains printworks by the Elders and men from the Mindaribba community and is a stunning celebration of storytelling from our community. I thank the sponsors Boydell's Wines and Heaps Normal and acknowledge the Rotary Club of Maitland Sunrise for keeping all who attended well fed. Thank you to the Maitland Regional Art Gallery for their continued support, curation and celebration of art and artists within our Maitland community.

**KATH KOSCHEL**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Cronulla's Kath Koschel who is the 2025 NSW Australian of the Year. Kath's story is inspiring. She was a high achiever as professional cricketer and ironwoman before having her life upended by tragedy and physical challenges. When aged in her twenties, Kath broke her back and was told she may never walk again. Shortly after that Kath lost her partner to suicide and while piecing her life back together, she was hit by a four-wheel drive and had to learn to walk again for a second time. Kath showed incredible courage and resilience to overcome these hurdles and see good in the world such that she founded Kindness Factory in 2015. The not-for-profit organisation, now based across three countries, has inspired more than 7.8 million acts of kindness. Its curriculum teaches the power of kindness to children at more than 3,500 schools across Australia, the US and UK, and it has been downloaded at least 60,000 times globally. The National Australia Day Council said Kath has demonstrated the power of kindness through her own lived experience and now empowers others. I congratulate Kath on this award and for inspiring kindness in the world.

**SAOIRSE O'BRIEN AND AMELIE SANCHEZ**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I recognise the actions of two Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club [SLSC] cadets Saoirse O'Brien and Amelie Sanchez who potentially saved the life of a woman last Wednesday. As lifeguards were caught up with another beachgoer, the two young women who were training after hours saw the woman caught in the southern rip at Cronulla Beach. Saoirse and Amelie were said to have performed a flawless rescue to get the woman in trouble safely back to the beach. Cronulla SLSC says it is proud Saoirse and Amelie have the skills and confidence to perform the rescue. These cadets have showed great commitment to surf lifesaving as club members, and both were part of the winning patrol team for 2023-24 with 100% patrol attendance records. I congratulate Saoirse and Amelie on their selfless act and for demonstrating great composure and competence in a challenging situation. They are shining examples of the dedicated lifesavers from our local clubs who give their time to train and patrol our beaches to help the community safe.

**PAUL TINDALL**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Burraneer Bay Public School teacher Paul Tindall who's been honoured with the prestigious Sydney East School Sport Robert Stone Award. Paul has been recognised for his dedication, integrity, and unwavering commitment to student participation in sport as a passionate advocate for inclusive sport and physical education in our public schools. The award citation says Paul's dedication to sport extends to all schools within the Cronulla Zone. He is known for his outstanding organisational skills and oversees the coordination of teams, carnivals, and school sport with meticulous attention to detail. Paul fosters leadership among students and encourages them to embrace sportsmanship and commitment, creating a culture of respect and enthusiasm. Paul has been part of the Cronulla Zone executive for 10 years and he is a trusted mentor thanks to his approachable, decisive, and supportive way. In congratulating Paul, Burraneer Bay Public School says it was incredibly proud to announce he had won the award and thanked him for inspiring students and the community through his commitment to sport and education. Paul is highly respected within our local schools, and I join his school and colleagues in congratulating on being a worthy recipient of this award.

**BIRTHDAY MESSAGE - JOHN TAY**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in wishing John Tay a joyous 42nd birthday! Annie asked me to share these heartfelt words in the Parliament: "Happy birthday John. You've been announcing your birthday to us all week, sometimes as a reminder, other times as a tool for getting what you want. We haven't forgotten your birthday and would like to broadcast it to the whole Parliament. Happy birthday, lots of 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 John'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 John!

**BIRTHDAY MESSAGE - FRANCIS KRSTIC**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in wishing Francis Krstic a joyous 70th birthday! Francis' wife, Helen, asked me to share these heartfelt words in the Parliament: "Wishing you a happy 70th birthday, with all our love from your wife and daughter Olivia. May you have a wonderful day with good health for the future. We want you to know that we appreciate everything you do and that we 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 Francis' 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 Francis!

**GRADUATION - ISAIAH LEE**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Isaiah Lee on their recent graduation from Ryde Secondary College. Having attended the ceremony in person, I witnessed the culmination of Isaiah's years of dedication and hard work. Completing Year 12 is an impressive achievement, and Isaiah should be incredibly proud of this significant milestone. I am hopeful that they are pleased with their Higher School Certificate results, and wish them every success as they move into the next phase of life's journey. The HSC is a demanding time for all students, and I commend Isaiah on their continued determination to succeed. Undoubtedly, their perseverance and commitment will serve them well in all of their future endeavours. On behalf of the Ryde community and this House, I extend my best wishes to Isaiah and congratulate them on this exceptional achievement. May the future be bright and prosperous for Isaiah and their family.

**ALAN COOPER**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Alan Cooper, from the Shellharbour City Suns Senior AFL Club, in being awarded Club Person of the Year for 2024. Alan was awarded this achievement for helping to manage their premier side on Saturdays to running their post-training soup kitchen on Fridays. Alan was also named the AFL 2024 South Coast Volunteer of the year which is very much deserved. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Alan on this this wonderful achievement and wish him all the best.

**MELISSA SPERO**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Melissa Spero, PDHPE teacher at Warilla High School, who was part of the Roosters support staff that achieved victory in the NRLW grand final on 6 October 2024. The NRL Telstra Women's Premiership is an elite competition that features the world's best female rugby league players. The Roosters were victorious over the Sharks 32 to 28 in the 2024 grand final. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate the Melissa on this this wonderful achievement.

**IAN HAINES**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Ian Haines, Year 10 student at Corpus Christi High School, who was awarded the Commanders Commendations Award from the SES Shellharbour Internship program. Ian was commended on his exceptional leadership, professionalism and teamwork throughout the 10-week internship. The program is designed to provide students with experience in various roles within the NSW SES, exposure to other emergency services within the local area, enhanced leadership qualities and development and the opportunity to develop skills working in a team. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Ian on this this wonderful achievement.

**40 YEARS OF MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2024**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—Recently, I had the privilege of attending an event to celebrate 40 years of Mental Health Month, with the theme "Let's Talk About It". This milestone was a powerful reminder of the ongoing importance of raising awareness about mental health and encouraging open conversations. The event featured a range of inspiring speakers, including NRL legend Greg Inglis, who shared his deeply personal journey of navigating mental health challenges. As the founder of Goanna Academy, Greg spoke candidly about his lived experiences, highlighting the struggles many face in private and the importance of seeking support. Greg's story was both inspiring and impactful. It was a privilege to hear from someone so influential, using his platform to encourage others to seek help and break the stigma surrounding mental health issues. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Emily Suvaal, Wayahead, and the Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health for organizing such an important event. Their efforts in raising awareness and providing support for mental health are truly commendable. Mental health affects us all, and events like these are vital in fostering understanding and compassion in our communities.

**MR SA-NGA BOUTKASKA**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—Following the fall of the Kingdom of Laos in 1975, Mr Sa-Nga Boutkaska, an army captain of the Royal Laos Army, was forced to endure a decade of hardship in the labour camp. After escaping from the prison camp, he successfully fled to Australia in 1986 with the support of the Lao community, where he was joyfully reunited with his wife and children who had already been brought here in Australia from refugee camp in Thailand. Since his arrival in Australia, Mr Boutkaska has devoted himself to serving the Laos community. He played an important role in fund-raising and overseeing the construction of the Laos Cultural Centre (Laos Buddhist temple) in Edensor Park, where he served as a secretary and treasurer. By working towards advancing the Laos community, Mr Boutkaska embodies the spirit of humility and selflessness. The lifelong contributions he has made will undoubtedly leave a lasting impact on the Laos community. On behalf of our local community, I acknowledge Mr Boutkaska for his dedicated service and thank him for the invaluable contributions he has made over the years.

**MR KHAMBOUNE INTHAVONG**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—Mr Khamboune Inthavong is a distinguished leader dedicated to serving the Laos community in my Cabramatta Electorate. Arriving in Australia in 1988 with his family, Mr Inthavong quickly became an integral part of the Laos community. Driven by a profound passion for Human Rights, Australian Values, social cohesion, and harmony, Mr. Inthavong actively engaged with the Laos Community Advancement Cooperative NSW [LCAC] shortly after his arrival. Since 1989, he has served on the Board of Directors of LCAC, including over 10 years as Secretary. In addition to his dedicated role with the LCAC,

Mr Inthavong is a dedicated supporter of Buddhist religious and cultural events. His lifelong service and tireless contributions to uplifting the Laos community and fostering harmony within our diverse electorate are truly commendable. On behalf of our local community, I extend my sincere appreciation to Mr Inthavong for his significant contributions and dedicated commitment to advancing the mission and positive impact of LCAC.

#### **TERRY JOB**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, the future of the Rural Fire Service in Parkes looks healthy thanks to brigade member Terry Job. A long-serving RFS member, Terry was recognised at the NSW RFS Young Volunteer Awards for 2024 with a special award marking his two decades of involvement in the Secondary School Cadet Program. The award, delivered at a ceremony at the RFS Headquarters at Sydney's Olympic Park, recognises Terry's outstanding dedication to his brigade, its future, and his community through his amazing work mentoring brigade cadets. With unwavering commitment, Terry has helped recruit young volunteers and then guide and mentor them through training. Through this work, Terry has had an immeasurable impact on his community and the long-term future of the Parkes RFS. As with all rural fire service brigades and their SES counterparts, Parkes RFS is a critical service for this rural township and Terry's commitment to keeping it robust and flourishing must be commended. I congratulate Terry on this RFS special award and thank him for his work within this amazing organisation.

#### **PARKES EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I would like to express my gratitude to the Parkes Early Childhood Centre for providing 70 years of quality care for the children of its community. Parkes Early Childhood Centre opened its doors in November 1954 as a two-unit preschool built by community members. It catered for 60 children with a fee of seven shillings and sixpence per week for kids to attend two half-days. In 1994 the preschool merged with the township's occasional childcare centre to address the changing needs of families in its district, including long day carer places. The PECC now caters for around 200 children with an average of 60 a year moving through to kindergarten. It employs 40 staff, meaning it usually doubles the required ratio of staff to children. The importance of early childhood learning cannot be over-emphasised. The rapid change facing future generations is well documented from not just technology but the world in general. Every advantage we can provide for children to adapt and grow with this change must be provided and I congratulate Parkes Early Childhood Centre for being at the forefront of early education and childcare for 70 years.

#### **IAN GUIHOT**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, the charitable acts of everyday people is what makes a community resilient and today I wish to recognise Canowindra's Ian Guihot. The local taxi driver, Ian has taken his roll way past providing transportation from A to B for Canowindra residents. He has always approached his job with care and respect yet would be the last person to expect recognition for his over-and-above service. An example of such service is doing a patient's shopping after dropping them off at a doctor's appointments or popping inside to change a lightbulb for elderly members on arriving at their home. He's happily on hand to do a quick odd job while also conducts unofficial welfare checks on people not as mobile as they used to be. A member of Canowindra Masonic Lodge, Ian actively supports his community with his fellow lodge members but is best known for doing what needs to be done for its more vulnerable members. Ian has taken his role as a taxi driver and turned it into a true community service. As a result, he is a much-loved member of Canowindra's community and I thank him on its behalf.

#### **NAMBUCCA VALLEY PHYSIE STATE SUCCESS**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—The Nambucca Valley Physie team shone at the Senior State Championships in Sydney, taking home their first-ever State Championship win in the Intermediate Seniors Teams division, alongside a coveted Dance Award. Competing against nine other teams, the group's dedication, skill, and hard work shone through, bringing these prestigious honours back to Nambucca Valley. This victory highlights the extraordinary talent within our community. The excitement didn't stop there for the senior team. Seven dancers competed in the individual championships, with five securing a spot in the EP Physie Grand Final, ranking among the top 12 in the state in the Intermediate Seniors 1 and 2 divisions—a remarkable achievement. In addition to the senior success, 17 out of 27 junior performers, aged 5-16, advanced to the Junior State Championships grand final, showcasing the incredible depth of talent at the club. Congratulations to the entire Nambucca Valley Physie team for their outstanding achievements. Your hard work and passion have paid off, and the community is behind you as you head to the finals.

#### **LOCALS WIN NSW OFF ROAD CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—In a thrilling and hard-fought season, local Kempsey racers Ben Scott and his navigators, Jamie and Dylan Scott, have claimed the 2024 New South Wales Off Road Racing Champions

title, capping off an impressive year of determination, grit, and skill. The road to the championship wasn't without its challenges. A dramatic roll-over during the final race threatened to derail their chances, with the team unsure if they had enough points to secure the title. Despite the setback, the Scott team's earlier success during the season proved enough to see them through, with the points tally confirming their spot as the 2024 NSW Off Road Champions. Kempsey's dominance didn't end there. In a remarkable display of local talent, the second and third places in the championship were also claimed by members of the Kempsey Macleay Off Road Club. This victory not only marks a personal triumph for the Scotts, but also highlights the strength and spirit of the Kempsey community in the world of off-road racing. It's a testament to the hard work and commitment that local racers bring to the track. Well done!

#### **MACKSVILLE'S RISING STAR IN REGIONAL AND RURAL HEALTH**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Macksville Medical Centre's Practice Manager, Casey Shorter, has been crowned the Rising Star in Rural/Remote Health at the prestigious National Rural and Remote Health Awards, held last Wednesday at the National Press Club in Canberra. The event brought together 180 rural health professionals and distinguished guests to celebrate excellence in rural healthcare. Casey emerged victorious in a highly competitive field of over 200 nominations across ten award categories. Her exceptional leadership and dedication to improving health accessibility on the Mid North Coast were key factors in securing the award. Casey has been the driving force behind the transformation of Macksville Medical Centre. What started as a semi-retired, one-person practice is now a buzzing medical hub. Today, the centre boasts two GPs, two psychologists, an audiologist, and a children's occupational therapist. Congratulations, Casey! This award is a testament to your hard work and passion for making healthcare accessible for everyone. You're an inspiration, showing what's possible when dedicated people step up to improve life in rural communities. Well done!

#### **SYDNEY HOSPO FOR PALESTINE**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown Electorate, I want to congratulate Sydney Hospo for Palestine for their recent bake sale event raising funds for charities providing humanitarian support for Palestinians. Organised by Inner West local legends Bloodwood, Lulu's, and 3 Tomatoes, the bake sale saw over 50 local hospitality venues come together at Addi Road Community Centre and sell more than 2,000 delicious baked goods for a very good cause. Over just three hours, the event raised an incredible \$25,000 for Palestine Australia Relief and Action and the Palestinian Australian New Zealand Medical Association [PANZMA]. Both organisations lead crucial work supporting Palestinian migrants and refugees and providing medical relief and aid to Palestinians in need. It was fantastic to see so many in the community turn up on a sunny Sunday and show solidarity with the people of Palestine in a distinctly Inner West way – the line of people waiting and wanting to show support was impressive. I congratulate Sydney Hospo for Palestine on their successful event and commend the organisers for their commitment and leadership in pulling together – and pulling off! - this wonderful initiative.

#### **WINDANG PUBLIC SCHOOL BOOK LAUNCH**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces)**—Two years in the making, "The Island and the Bridge", is a children's storybook, proudly crafted by three generations of students at Windang Public School. The recently launched book is a fictional retelling of how Windang Bridge was built. It depicts a story of two girls, whose friendship blossoms on Windang Island, when the tide is low. To stay connected, the girls dream of building a bridge to unite their worlds, and with the support of their community, their shared dream becomes a reality. Windang is in the southern part of the Wollongong electorate on the edge of Lake Illawarra. This story is a celebration of the essence of Windang Public School and the wider Windang community. "The Island and the Bridge" was written by Windang local resident, Angelina Maranese, who is also a current teacher and proud Alumna of Windang Public School. The book contains illustrations by current students and was brought to life with the help of renowned local artist and alumna Melissa Ritchie. This book is a must read and I congratulate everybody who was integral in its production.

#### **EVERY HOME GLOBAL CONCERN**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I rise to thank Greg Bondar and the organisation of which he is the CEO, Every Home Global Concern [EHGC], for inviting me to deliver a Christmas message at their Christmas Spectacular held on Wednesday 13 November 2024 at NSW Parliament. I commend EHGC for a successful event which included various nativity presentations, songs, performances, prayers and giveaway show bags for all attendees, especially for the kids. I also recognise the important work EHGC has been doing for 30 years in providing opportunities for disadvantaged individuals and communities around the world to build better lives for themselves through education, healthcare, vocational training and micro enterprise. On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I thank all involved with EHGC and wish them the very best as they continue their important mission.

### YAVUZ YALCIN AND JAMES ERSKINE PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I commend and thank the James Erskine Public School community and all involved for supporting 10 year old Yavuz Yalcin following his diagnosis with Ewing sarcoma, through a fundraiser the school community held on 13 November 2024 called 'Rise up for Yavuz'. The fundraiser involved five students and five teachers shaving their heads, a sausage sizzle and bake sale, staff and students wearing the colour yellow, performances from students and a visit from NRL representatives with the NRL trophy. Further to the funds raised by the school community, a GoFundMe page has been arranged to assist Yavuz and his family. Anyone wishing to donate may visit <https://www.gofundme.com/f/littlewarrior-yavuz>. I wish Yavuz a full and speedy recovery.

### MCHAPPY DAY

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—Saturday 16th November 2024 was McHappy Day. I commend and thank all McDonald's franchisees and their staff in my electorate of Badgerys Creek for marking the occasion by raising funds for Ronald McDonald House Charities Australia, which supports families with seriously ill children. I also thank and commend everyone in our community who took part in this important initiative. I wish the franchisees and staff the very best.

### KURRAJONG LIFESTYLE CHOICES

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Kurrajong's team member Hayley Winnell is a dedicated and passionate team leader at Kurrajong's Lifestyle Choices, Narrandera. Hayley's previous career of 15 years was as a police officer in Griffith and Leeton however, four years ago she took the step to become a disability support worker. This was a massive change for her however, the support she received from her manager, team leaders and clients made it a smooth transition. Hayley brings an energy to her team leading role and enjoys seeing the excitement and joy of her team's clients when they achieve their NDIS goals. Kurrajong and the clients she supports through the service fills Hayley's days with purpose and variety. She can be engaging directly with clients and the next moment she is organising unforgettable activities to enrich people's lives. At Kurrajong, Hayley thrives in a supportive upbeat environment fuelled by a strong team spirit. She describes the positive impacts make in people's lives every day as simply amazing.

### TEMORA BASKETBALL HONOUR BOARD

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—The Temora community owes a profound debt of gratitude to the late Bernie Crowe, a visionary who introduced basketball to the town in November of 1958. His dedication and foresight have paved the way for the sport's growth, from the days of playing at the Railway Institute to the present, where games are held at the Temora Recreation Centre. It is with great pride that the Temora Recreation Centre now hosts the Temora Basketball Life Membership board, a symbol of the community's gratitude. This board, recently unveiled, acknowledges the invaluable contributions, passion and dedication of Brian Kelly, Rhoda Michael, John Sutton, Bill Harpley, John Sandgren, Shirley Goesch, Lorraine Reid, Wendy McCrone, Jenny McRae, Allan Breust and Denis Breust. Without these long-standing members, Temora Basketball Association would not be where it is today. Their unwavering commitment, leadership, and passion for the sport have been the driving force behind the club's success, and I am proud to see the club has honoured them with the Temora Basketball Life Membership.

### CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I wish to acknowledge and recognise the Grenfell Christian Bookshop as it recently passed the extraordinary milestone of 50 years in operation. Over the years, the bookshop has grown from a small local store into a trusted community hub, serving generations of Grenfell residents and visitors. Its shelves are filled with, Christian literature, devotionals, thousands of gift cards and during the celebrations, the guests heard how that at one stage in the early 1990's the Bookshop sold over 1500 Christmas cards which helped fund the annual Christmas carols in Grenfell. More than 40 supporters gathered for a sumptuous morning tea and shared memories, with awards handed out for the longest serving manager, Mrs Elizabeth Ranger who served as manager for 21 years. The 50th anniversary is a celebration of the dedication of the volunteers, staff, and patrons who have supported the bookshop through the years. It's also a reflection of the bookshop's ongoing mission to provide encouragement, spiritual growth, and fellowship. As the Grenfell Christian Bookshop reaches this milestone, it remains committed to its vision of serving as a beacon of hope, faith, and community support in Grenfell for years to come.

### REDEEMER BAPTIST SCHOOL ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping)**—Today, I would like to highlight the incredible academic achievements of Redeemer Baptist School students in 2024. These students have demonstrated exceptional talent

and dedication across a wide range of disciplines, setting high standards of excellence. A standout among them is Anubhav Ammangi, a Year 12 student who has been with Redeemer since Kindergarten. Anubhav's academic success includes winning multiple prestigious awards, such as gold medals in the Australian Informatics Olympiad and the French-Australian Regional Informatics Olympiad, along with a top score in the RACI International Chemistry Quiz. He has also earned distinctions in the Australian Mathematics Competition and the Australian Science Olympiads. In addition, Redeemer students excelled in the NESA WriteOn literacy competition, with Kaine Ochieze and Faith Kim receiving Gold awards, and Dylan Sun earning Silver. Faith Kim was also recognized as the Upper Primary winner in the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards, showcasing the creative talent nurtured at Redeemer. These academic accomplishments reflect the hard work, dedication, and passion for learning that permeates through schools in the Epping electorate.

### **REDEEMER BAPTIST SPORTING ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping)**—I rise to celebrate the outstanding sporting achievements of Redeemer Baptist School students in 2024. These young athletes have excelled in a variety of sports, making their school and the Epping community proud. At the NSW Combined Independent Schools athletics carnival, Year 6 student Diego Ndongo-Empesa won a Silver medal in the 14 years 100m race, while Tsawm Laphai was selected to represent NSW in the National School Sport Australia Golf Championship. Darren Candra, Year 12, achieved remarkable success at the National Youth Archery Championships, winning Gold and three Silver medals. Redeemer students also shone in fencing, with Joshua Sun (Year 4) winning Gold and Braden Chen (Year 6) taking Bronze at the NSW Fencing Roberta Nutt Shield. Joshua Sun further distinguished himself by securing a Silver medal at the Australian Open Karate Championship. Additionally, Lavinia Liu (Year 6) claimed 3rd place in the Intermediate NSW Optimist Sailing Championships. Redeemer Baptist School also triumphed in the SWISSA secondary zone carnivals, winning in swimming, cross country, and athletics. Congratulations to the Redeemer students on the hard work and discipline in achieving these great successes.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICE AT REDEEMER BAPTIST SCHOOL**

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping)**—I am proud to speak today about the remarkable community service efforts of Redeemer Baptist School students in 2024. These young individuals have demonstrated a strong commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of others, embodying the core Christian values taught at their school. For the second year in a row, Redeemer Year 10 students raised over \$30,000 through their Gala Day program. With these funds, they travelled to Condobolin, where they worked with local Indigenous Pastor Sharon Wright and volunteer tradies to build a basketball court and upgrade church facilities. This effort was recognized with a Nomination Award at the Central Sydney NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards, highlighting the students' dedication to serving communities in need. Additionally, Redeemer raised \$4,000 to assist the Ugandan Watoto orphan villages when the Children's Choir visited the school. This generosity and commitment to others are hallmarks of the Redeemer Baptist School experience, showing that academic and athletic success are not the only measures of achievement. These students truly understand the importance of community, and their work will have a lasting impact on those they have helped. You have made the Epping community proud.

### **ALLAN HAYMAN – 50 YEARS OF NSW GOVERNMENT SERVICE**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to offer my congratulations to Allan Hayman who has achieved a remarkable 50 years of service with the NSW Government. Mr Hayman began his NSW Government career in 1971 when he became a trainee engineman for what was previously known as the State Rail Authority. Mr Hayman continued to spend a number of years between the 1970's and 2000's working for the State Rail Authority and also the Department of Main Roads. After a short break, in 2012 Mr Hayman stepped into the role of School Crossing Supervisor for Transport for NSW and has continued to enjoy the rewarding role ever since. Mr Hayman has received an honorable NSW Public Service Medallion for his dedication of 40 plus years of meritorious service and will enjoy a special presentation in celebration of his 50-year milestone. What admirable service and commitment Mr Hayman has shown over the last 50 years. I must say thank you and congratulations on your achievements. I hope you continue to enjoy the great work that you do.

### **BRAD PEARCE DENTAL WELCOMES NEW DOCTORS**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to extend a warm welcome to two new Doctors, Dr Nirjyot Gill and Dr Harjot Nahal, who have recently started at Brad Pearce Dental in Grafton. Dr Nirjyot Gill brings a passion for providing high standards of care while ensuring a supportive environment and enjoys putting to use her empathetic nature to keep patients at ease. Dr Gill was born and raised in a regional Queensland farming community and graduated from James Cook University in Cairns with a Bachelor of Dental Surgery in 2020. Dr Harjot Nahal's meticulous work ethic and dedication to his profession enables him to enjoy focusing on patient education of good oral health practice. Dr Nahal was born and raised on a banana farm near Coffs Harbour, and after making the journey to Far North Queensland, has also graduated from James Cook University with a

Bachelor of Dental Surgery. Both Dr Gill and Dr Nahal are pleased to now be living and working within the local community. I would like to welcome our new Doctors and wish them all the best for their new roles.

#### **TARTAN BRUSHY CLUB NONAGENARIAN CELEBRATION DAY**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to make special mention of the Tartan Brushy RSL Day Club's Nonagenarian Celebration Day that was held in September. Held at the Brushgrove-Tyndale Community Hall, the celebrations recognised valued members aged between 90 and 99 years. A delicious morning tea and luncheon, an exercise class, a performance by the students from Cowper Public School and a tree planting ceremony were highlights of the celebrations. Most importantly, there was a special cake cutting ceremony in honour of Nonagenarians Jean Freeman, Eileen O'Keefe, Colleen Hardy, Maggie Combley, Melva Thorley, Mona Bowles, Irene Rudder and Viva Mason. Some of the Nonagenarians have been members of the Tartan Brushy RSL Day Club for over ten years and feel blessed to have been able to enjoy the social meetings and friendships made over the years. The Nonagenarians in attendance held a remarkable 800+ years of knowledge and experience. Clarence Valley Councillor Peter Johnstone and NSW State Coordinator for RSL Day Clubs, Tom Barnsley, joined in on the celebrations. I do hope that everyone enjoyed the day and wish all the members the very best.

#### **HELEN LEDFORD**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government)**—I recognise and commend Eleni 'Helen' Ledford for her decade of exceptional service to our community, having dedicated herself to the South Sydney Police Area Command and its predecessor, the Botany Bay Police Area Command. Helen's legacy is one of reliability and dedication, having navigated the merger of the Botany Bay and Redfern PACs with grace and ensuring continuity during this significant transition. As an Executive Officer to successive Superintendents, she has played a pivotal role in supporting the Command's operations and ensuring seamless communication between Police leadership and the community. Helen has been instrumental in ensuring that my representations on behalf of my constituents were never lost by acting as a reliable and efficient conduit between my office and the Commanders. Her professionalism, efficiency, and commitment have left a lasting impact on the officers she worked with and the communities she served. As she embarks on a well-deserved retirement, I thank Helen for her invaluable contributions and look forward to interacting with her as a Mascot resident. I wish her all the best for this exciting new chapter in her life.

#### **PAM'S BIG PINK BREAKFAST**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to congratulate Pam Mitchell from Narromine on the recent success of her event "Pam's Big Pink Breakfast". Held on Saturday, 26 October 2024, as part of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Pam opened her home and beautiful garden to host this special event. More than just a breakfast, it was a fun-filled day dedicated to raising awareness and support for an important cause. All profits raised from the event were donated to National Breast Cancer Foundation Research. With the aim of encouraging the conversation about breast cancer, and importantly how it can affect both females and males in a fun and relaxed environment, Pam certainly achieved this! Guests who attended on the day enjoyed a delicious bacon and egg roll for breakfast, cold drink, a gift bag, live music from talented local musicians Amity Gordon and Jacob Darren. Guest speakers also inspired those attending on the day. Congratulations Pam on such a successful event. Your warm hospitality and the event's vibrant atmosphere made it a memorable gathering for all who attended.

#### **JOHN RODIS**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge the outstanding commitment of John Rodis to the NSW Junior Bowls committee for more than twenty years. At the recent Bowls NSW AGM, John stepped down from his role, marking the end of a chapter defined by his tireless efforts and unwavering commitment. John has been a loyal member of the West Dubbo Bowling Club, consistently advocating for inclusiveness in sport at all levels. His dedication and passion have played a key role in establishing Club Dubbo's reputation as a leader in lawn bowls across NSW. His coaching expertise, umpiring skills, and constant support and encouragement have not gone unnoticed by existing and new members of the club. His commitment to nurturing players and fostering a welcoming environment has been invaluable. John, your contributions are truly worth celebrating. Thank you for your dedication and tireless efforts over the years, and the positive impacts you have made. Your commitment has left a lasting legacy, and I hope you now have the time to simply enjoy the game you love!

#### **LEANNE EVERETT**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge Leanne Everett of Narromine who was recently recognised as a finalist for the Liquor Store Manager of the Year at the Retail Drinks

Australia Awards Night. The Retail Drinks Industry Awards are the peak awards for Australia's retail liquor industry. The annual awards program is developed to recognise the success and hard work of people and companies within the industry. Leanne was nominated for the prestigious Liquor Store Manager of the Year Award for her outstanding leadership skills, dedication to personal and professional growth, and her commitment to developing her team. Her genuine focus on the overall success of the business distinguishes her as an exemplary leader in the industry. Leanne underwent a rigorous judging process. This included an independent audit, a mystery shop evaluation, an interview by a select judging panel and an assessment against a set of key criteria. Although Leanne did not win the award, being selected as a finalist from over two hundred nominations Australia wide is a testament to her dedication and commitment. Her recognition reflects her exceptional work as Store Manager at Liquorland Narromine and the effective leadership of her team. Congratulations Leanne!

#### **OXI DAY AT ST EUPHEMIA**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I would like to acknowledge the celebration of 'OXI' day at St Euphemia College, which was celebrated on 28 October 2024. 'OXI' Day is the anniversary of the 28th of October, the day in which Greece stood firm against the Axis powers' demands, with a simple yet powerful word "OXI" - meaning "NO". This moment in history marked a pivotal stand for freedom, sovereignty and resistance against tyranny. St Euphemia proudly celebrated this day, remembering Greece's refusal to surrender, and the courage that shines through history. This celebration of OXI Day not only serves as a remembrance of a crucial moment in Greek history but also as a powerful affirmation of the enduring spirit of liberty and justice. In the spirit of this remarkable day, St Euphemia College honoured those who fought for the freedom that Greece enjoys today – the veterans, the families and the generations who have carried the legacy of the "NO" forward. During this celebration of OXI Day, St Euphemia reflected on the lessons that it teaches – that even in the most difficult times, the power of people, united in purpose and spirit, can overcome great challenges.

#### **BANKSTOWN SPORTS CLUB DONATION TO BANKSTOWN BRUINS**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I would like to acknowledge Bankstown Sports Club for hosting the exciting "Shoot your Shot" Chicago Bulls VIP Experience Promotion that brought the members and local community together for an exciting event that showcased Bankstown's own version of an All-Star weekend. Filled with live music, a buzzing crowd and an exciting free-throw shootout, NBL-1 and WNBL-1 players from the Bankstown Bruins Basketball Association demonstrated their shooting skills in the free-throw shootout. With each successful free-throw made within one minute, Bankstown Sports Club donated \$100 towards the association, contributing towards the development of basketball in the local area. The six players from the NBL-1 and WNBL-1 collectively made 48 successful shots, resulting in a \$4,800 donation from the Bankstown Sports Club. CEO of Bankstown Bruins, Christian Gobolos, highlighted that the funds would be used towards fitness and strength equipment for their squads. It is heartwarming to see the commitment of Bankstown Sports Club in supporting the sports community in Bankstown and this support to the Bankstown Bruins not only supports their squads but also positively impacts the wider community by encouraging youth participation in basketball and promoting health and fitness.

#### **PUNCHBOWL BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL – HSC ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I would like to recognise and celebrate the outstanding achievements of two Year 12 students from Punchbowl Boys' High School – Yehya Suryantokyo and Ridwaan Hossain - whose hard work, dedication and commitment to their studies have been outstanding. Firstly, congratulations to Yehya Suryantokyo who received a Round 1 offer from the UNSW Gateway Program for Bachelor of Science. This achievement reflects Yehya's passion for science and his academic dedication. Yehya's perseverance and determination have set him on a strong path to success in his future studies and beyond. Congratulations also to Ridwaan Hossain, who has been awarded the prestigious HSC True Reward Early Offer for the Bachelor of Health Science (Sport and Exercise Science). This offer reflects Ridwaan's academic excellence and his dedication to pursuing a career in the health and sports sciences. Both Yehya and Ridwaan have demonstrated exceptional focus and resilience throughout their schooling, and these offers are a direct result of their hard work and passion for learning. Our community is incredibly proud of their achievements, and we wish them every success as they embark on the next exciting chapter of their academic journey at university.

#### **GWC COMMUNITY SERVICES – CROWS NEST**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—The Greek Orthodox Church makes an immense contribution to our society, not least to my community of Willoughby through its welfare arm, GWC Community Services. The mission of GWC Community Services is to provide services and programs that enable and empower individuals

and groups from the Greek community and the community at large to participate in all aspects of Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse society. GWC provides essential everyday services for seniors, children and families, immigrants, and people living with a disability. These services include home care packages, disability services through the NDIS, community education, mental health support, counselling, marriage preparation seminars, and volunteer training & support. Providing not only welfare but encouraging independence, the mission of the GWC, in the words of the former Greek Orthodox Archbishop Stylianos, 'is not simply to give people fish but to help them so as to learn to fish on their own'. The GWC has one of its offices in Crows Nest and I am proud of the contribution this wonderful charity makes to my local community.

#### **IKEBANA INTERNATIONAL SYDNEY - CHATSWOOD**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—The Australian-Japanese community of Willoughby does so much to enrich our local culture, and one of the many ways they do this is through the Sydney Chapter of Ikebana International. Based in Chatswood, this local branch of Ikebana is dedicated to the Japanese art of flower arranging. Ikebana literally means 'giving life to flowers'. The origin of Ikebana dates back to the ancient Japanese custom of erecting evergreen trees and decorating them with flowers. This ancient Japanese art was introduced to Australia by the late Norman Sparnon OAM who had visited Japan after WWII and learned both the Sogetsu and Ikenobo schools of Ikebana. He returned to spread the art of Ikebana throughout Australia and New Zealand. The practice of Ikebana is prized for its long tradition, its fostering of individual artistic expression, and its promotion of 'friendship through flowers'. Dedicated to introducing the beauty of this niche art to the local community, the Sydney Chapter of Ikebana is a non-profit organisation run almost entirely by volunteers. I applaud its long contribution to the cultural kaleidoscope of Willoughby.

#### **LOWER NORTH SHORE MULTICULTURAL AGED DAY CARE PROGRAM**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—The Dougherty Community Centre is a wonderful resource for the people of Willoughby and one of the important programs they run is the Lower North Shore Multicultural Aged Day Care Program. Catering for people over sixty-five from culturally diverse backgrounds, it runs each Wednesday at the centre from 10am-3pm. The Program is a wonderful opportunity for the seniors of Willoughby to meet new friends and enjoy fun activities including craft, painting, music, interesting talks, bingo, board games, gentle exercise and monthly bus outings to concerts and scenic destinations. The Wednesday Program is catered for with morning tea and lunch provided. Transport assistance is also available on request. Many seniors live alone in our community and their day-to-day lives can be quite isolating, especially if they are from a non-English speaking background. I applaud the work that the Multicultural Aged Day Care Program does to provide that much needed companionship and stimulating activities for our older people. It enriches the social capital of our community and I thank Willoughby City Council for its ongoing support of the Program.

#### **BERT EVANS APPRENTICE SCHOLARSHIP KEIRA RECIPIENTS**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I am proud to inform the house that two extremely worthy Keira recipients have been recognised for their dedication and resilience while undertaking their trade, receiving the Bert Evans Apprentice Scholarship. This funding provides life changing support to those who are facing financial hardship, whilst completing their apprenticeship. The scholarship includes \$15,000 over three years and is awarded to 150 apprentices in NSW who continue to show exceptional skill and commitment to their training, despite overcoming significant challenges. It is great to see that out of the 150 recipients, two are from the Keira Electorate. Since the program was introduced in 2014, it has continued to provide opportunities to apprentices who are working to overcome financial barriers and achieve their goals. Not only does this program provide financial relief to apprentices who may be experiencing hardship, but this also empowers them to focus on their training and ensure that they have the possibility to complete their qualifications and secure their future. I warmly congratulate all scholarship recipients and wish them the best for their future endeavours.

#### **WALK TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise members of the Moree community who joined together for a 30km walk from Moree to Pallamallawa recently, as part of the One Foot Forward initiative to raise awareness for mental health and raise vital funds to support the Black Dog Institute. In doing so, the 45 walkers raised a staggering \$40,554.60 through their amazing and selfless efforts. I congratulate the organisers of this event, participants, supporters and volunteers for contributing to the success of the day. Special thanks to Luke Woods for being the driving force and coordinator of the walk. Thank you also to the many sponsors and to those donating their time, goods and services, including: Jocks Hire; O'Dempseys Charters and Tours, Reado's Meats, Mobas Batteries, Coles, Johnson's Concrete and Quarries, along with T & FS Woods of Moree. I commend all involved in this wonderful initiative, which has provided support to those suffering from mental health issues

and to remember loved ones and friends who have lost their lives to suicide. The Northern Tablelands Electorate says thank you!

### **THE BIG CHILL FESTIVAL**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of Armidale Regional Council [ARC] for staging the Big Chill Festival and for being named winner of the NSW Business Awards, in the Outstanding Economic Visitor Collaboration category. This award recognises visionary projects developed over the past year by Local Business Chambers, Local Governments, Visitor Information Centres, Tourism Industry Associations, or collaborative groups dedicated to enhancing their local and regional visitor economies. I congratulate all on the success of this year's festival which celebrated local food, music genres and craft beers, whilst bringing some 3,400 attendees to the event. Thank you to the driving force behind the festival, including the ARC Activation team: Maddie Fleming, Renata Davis, Catherine Creagan, Camille Jones and Denise Palmer; Parks Team: Billy Hyde, Andrew Styles, Brodie Davies, along with collaborations with Arts North West, NERAM, BBQ Battalion, Hardwood Swim School, Highcows Swimming, SES and Rams Rugby Club. I commend all involved in this wonderful accolade, for their hard work and commitment to the project, as well as giving of their expertise and generosity of time, ensuring the event is a success and an enjoyable experience for the whole community.

### **KIMBRIKI OPEN DAY 2024**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, on November 16th, the Kimbriki Resource Recovery Centre will host its Open Day to celebrate 50 years of operations in the waste management and resource recovery industry. The Kimbriki site is a state-of-the-art recycling and waste management facility located on the Northern Beaches. The open day will provide a rare opportunity for locals to witness firsthand the circular economy in action. Activities on the day will consist behind the scenes bus tours of the site, worm farming and composting demonstrations, giveaways, and an all-day sausage sizzle to raise funds for Boomerang Bags, Bikes4Life and Peninsula Toy Recyclers. Kimbriki was originally established as a landfill in 1974. However, through the establishment of complex resource recovery operations on site, the Kimbriki site today recycles close to 80 percent of all waste it receives annually. At present, more than 4 million tonnes of waste have been diverted from landfill. This significant shift from waste disposal to recycling and resource recovery has earned Kimbriki national and global recognition as a pioneer in waste disposal and resource recovery excellence and innovation. I congratulate Kimbriki Resource Recovery Centre on this historic milestone.

### **PIONEER CLUBHOUSE 30TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to highlight the 30th Anniversary of the Pioneer Clubhouse at Balgowlah, within my Electorate of Manly. The Pioneer Clubhouse provides a restorative environment for people with mental illnesses who have had their lives drastically disrupted and are in need of access to critical support services and structures. Through participation in the Pioneer Clubhouse, individuals are given the opportunity to seek help to rebuild their lives and rejoin the worlds of friendships, family, employment, education. The idea of membership is fundamental to the Clubhouse concept, as having membership in an organization means that an individual has both shared ownership and shared responsibility for the success of that organization. To have membership in an organisation means to belong, to fit in somewhere, and to have a place where you are always welcome. As the Pioneer Clubhouse celebrates its 30th Anniversary with a Christmas Party on 12 December, I wish them well for both the event and the future, as they continue their valuable service to those in our community suffering from mental illness.

### **THE RETIREMENT OF ST GEORGE PAC'S SENIOR CONSTABLE SONIA KRCALOVIC**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I would like to recognise a local hero who has recently retired after 15 years of service with the St George Police Area Command. Sonia became a Crime Prevention Officer in 2018, where she was highly involved in annual initiatives like the No Domestic Violence Walks, Migrant Information Day, Seniors Week and Harmony Day. Originally a community nurse, Sonia decided that she wanted to help serve in a different way before entering the police force. While working with the St George PAC, she was a massive advocate for safety and held quarterly meetings with local Councils to discuss crime prevention and community relations. Her contributions to the local culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] community has been at the forefront of her service – receiving many well-deserved community finalists' awards that recognised her hard work. Having known and worked alongside Sonia for some time, I must say that her commitment to the community is commendable. I would like to thank Sonia for her service and wish her all the best in this next chapter of her life.

### BIENNE TERITA'S OLYMPIC DEBUT

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I would like to recognise Bienne Terita, an incredible local resident who has recently made her debut for Australia in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. At just 21, Bienne has already achieved remarkable success in rugby, representing Australia in both Sevens and 15-a-side formats. Bienne grew up playing in high-levels of competitive Oz-tag and later found her passion for Rugby Sevens when she was 14 years old. While attending Georges River College Peakhurst – Bienne was able to pursue a more serious level of the sport, where she was scouted for the Australian national team. Bienne's rise began as captain of the Australian team at the 2019 World Schools Sevens, where she was named MVP. She debuted for the national Sevens team in 2022, later making an impact at the Women's Rugby World Cup. Despite injuries, Bienne returned to form in 2024, earning a spot on the Paris Olympic team, where her incredible contributions helped Australia advance to the semi-finals. I would like to commend Bienne on her inspiring effort and dedication to the sport and congratulate her on these many achievements.

### CONGRATULATING TAHLIA COULTON

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to meet a remarkable young talent from my local community who has recently achieved many outstanding sporting achievements. Tahlia Coulton is a student at Georges River College Peakhurst who aside from making academic strides there, competes in competitive Gymnastics. Tahlia recently flew to Hong Kong, where she competed in The Grand Trophy Cup as part of a team, representing Australia in Aesthetic Group Gymnastics, where her team was placed third in preliminaries and the finals. Individually, Tahlia was crowned Ribbon Champion, winning first place in the Ribbon apparatus. She also placed second in the Ball, Freehand, and Clubs apparatus. Overall, placing second the Cup. What an amazing achievement! Tahlia is now travelling to New Zealand in December to compete in the 2024 United Cup and is working with her team towards competing in the 2025 Four Continents Championships in Canada next year. I would like to thank Tahlia for sharing her outstanding successes with me and congratulate her on these achievements. I wish Tahlia and her team the best of luck in their upcoming competitions, representing Australia on the world stage.

### GREAT LAKES ART SOCIETY

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge the reopening of Forster Gallery. Thanks to a \$51,704 Infrastructure Grant from the NSW Government, the gallery has undergone impressive renovations, making it a more accessible and welcoming space for residents and visitors. This project was an incredible effort by the Great Lakes Art Society, with 983 volunteer hours dedicated to upgrading windows, renewing the facade, and enhancing the overall functionality of the space. The Forster Gallery Gala Night celebrated this achievement with over 150 guests, showing the strong support for the arts in Myall Lakes. I thank all the volunteers who contributed. Congratulations to the Great Lakes Art Society on this accomplishment. The renewed Forster Gallery will continue to inspire creativity and connection in our community for years to come.

### INCLUSIVE HAMPERS

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge the Inclusive Co Hampers, a collaborative initiative of Dundaloo Enterprises, Valley Industries, and Willing & Able. I had the privilege of joining Colin Steber, David Isbel, and Penny Poulton, along with their teams, to promote this inspiring program. The Inclusive Co brings together three social enterprises to provide meaningful employment for people with disabilities. These beautifully curated hampers feature high-quality, locally sourced products from the Mid North Coast and are assembled by individuals who take great pride in their work. Priced at \$85, the hampers make ideal corporate, Christmas and birthday gifts, with each purchase supporting inclusive work opportunities. I thank Dundaloo Enterprises, Valley Industries, and Willing & Able for supporting inclusion and providing opportunities for people with disabilities in our community.

### TINONEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise the Tinonee Historical Society as it celebrated 21 years of preserving and sharing the rich heritage of our region. The society operates from a building with its own unique history, originally built as a broom factory in the 1940s by Monty Williams. In the early 2000s, the site was turned into a museum with notable additions including the relocation of the old gaol cell and stables from the former police station and courthouse, along with the iconic picket fence that now frames the property. The society's efforts have created a space where residents and visitors can connect with the stories of Tinonee's past. Their 21st birthday celebrations last weekend brought together past and present members, along with the wider community, to mark this milestone. I extend my congratulations to the Tinonee Historical Society on 21 incredible years and thank them for inviting me to join in on the celebrations.

### REDLANDS WELCOMES NEW HEAD OF JUNIOR SCHOOL

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—At the commencement of the 2025 schooling year, Redlands is thrilled to welcome Mr Michael Quach as its new Head of Junior School. In this new role, Michael will lead the newly unified Junior School as they merge the current separate Preschool to Year 2 and Years 3 to 6 structures into a single, cohesive Junior School. This marks a significant milestone for Redlands, with Michael becoming the first Head of Junior School. Michael joins Redlands from his position as Deputy Head of Knox Grammar School's Preparatory School. He has a proven track record as a passionate, dedicated and progressive-thinking educator, and I am confident that he will foster and support the academic and personal growth of the staff and students at Redlands Junior School. I look forward to collaborating with Michael to ensure a smooth transition as Preschool to Year 6 students transition into a dedicated Junior Campus. I wish Michael all the best in his new role, and I have every confidence he will make a fantastic Head of Junior School who embodies and furthers the school's ethos and ambitions.

### INDIGENOUS ART EXHIBITION AT COAL LOADER

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Indigenous Art Exhibition at Coal Loader I want to acknowledge the passion and dedication of the artists whose work was featured at the Indigenous art exhibition at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability in Waverton. The exhibition, Keep the Fire Burning, showcased a collection of works by Indigenous artists who have a connection to Cammeraygal country. The collection of artworks explores the transformative and enduring power of fire and is a call to preserve and pass on generational knowledge and stories. I thank North Sydney Council for supporting local artists in such a tangible way, and I congratulate the North Sydney Council team on the work they put into organising the exhibition. Supporting artists is a powerful way to support the diverse cultural richness that makes the North Shore community so vibrant. It is also great to see the Coal Loader being used as a venue for such community-focused events. I congratulate the nine artists; Amanda Jane Reynolds, Dr Virginia Keft, Kieran Satour, Lucy Simpson, Courtney Marsh-Currie, Nathan Mudyi Sentance, Dr Emma Hicks, Amethyst Downing-McLeod and Jodie Dowd.

### UNITED NATIONS DAY GALA DINNER

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I want to acknowledge the incredible work of the United Nations Association of Australia NSW Division in organising a magnificent United Nations Day Gala Dinner here at the NSW Parliament. The event commemorated the 79th anniversary of the official creation of the United Nations. The United Nations Association of Australia aims to inform, inspire, and engage Australians in the work, goals, and values of the United Nations. Through its efforts, the UNAA encourages us to contribute to building a fairer, more sustainable world. The theme of the evening was Peace and Security, a focus that could not be more timely or relevant. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the United Nations Association of Australia NSW Division for the effort they poured into making the gala dinner such a successful event. I want to especially thank and acknowledge Dr Patricia Jenkins, President of UNAA New South Wales Division. She is an impressive and dedicated woman, and the effort she puts into the organisation is nothing short of herculean. Thank you, United Nations Association of Australia, the organisers, and all of you for your continued dedication to building a better world.

### MARYLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Students from the Hunter were recently acknowledged for the 2024 Newcastle Permanent Primary School Mathematics Competition. From Maryland Public School, The Year Six Division winner in first place was Haoru Jin. Ved Arunkumar Chhanya achieved third place. A Year Six District Award went to David Evdeev. Major award winners were presented with their prizes in a ceremony at the Newcastle Permanent Centre of Excellence. District Awards were presented at local branches across NSW. The event continues to celebrate the talents of primary school students across the region. The competitors are following in the footsteps of more than 500,000 peers since 1981. Students needed to solve 35 questions without calculators or rulers. Participants were then awarded high distinction, distinction, merit or participation certificates based on their performance. District winners received an additional reward of a bank account credit. All first-place winners across both age groups scored 100% on their tests. Seeing these students excel shows how important it is to invest in public education and to create opportunities for our young people to grow and thrive. Congratulations Haoru, Ved and David!

### WALLSEND PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Students from throughout the Hunter were recently acknowledged for their efforts in the 2024 Newcastle Permanent Primary School Mathematics Competition. Year Six Division winners included Kevin Zhang from Wallsend Public School who achieved third place. Major award winners were presented with their prizes in a ceremony at the Newcastle Permanent Centre of Excellence. District Awards

were presented at local branches across NSW. The event continues to celebrate and nurture the talents of primary school students across the region. The competitors are following in the footsteps of more than 500,000 peers since 1981. Kevin and the other students needed to solve 35 questions without the use of calculators or rulers. Participants were then awarded high distinction, distinction, merit or participation certificates based on their performance. District winners received an additional reward of a bank account credit. All first-place winners across both age groups scored 100% on their tests. Seeing these students excel shows how important it is to invest in public education and to create opportunities for our young people to grow and thrive. Congratulations Kevin!

#### **WALLSEND SOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Students from throughout the Hunter were recently acknowledged for their efforts in the 2024 Newcastle Permanent Primary School Mathematics Competition. Safana Mehwish from Wallsend South Public School was awarded first place in the Year Five Division. Major award winners were presented with their prizes in a ceremony at the Newcastle Permanent Centre of Excellence. District Awards were presented at local branches across NSW. The event continues to celebrate and nurture the talents of primary school students across the region. The competitors are following in the footsteps of more than 500,000 peers since 1981. Safana and the other students needed to solve 35 questions without the use of calculators or rulers. Participants were then awarded high distinction, distinction, merit or participation certificates based on their performance. District winners received an additional reward of a bank account credit. All first-place winners across both age groups scored 100% on their tests. Seeing these students excel shows how important it is to invest in public education and to create opportunities for our young people to grow and thrive. Congratulations Safana!

#### **FELICITY CAHILL – OUTGOING CHAIR BUSINESS WOMEN ALBURY WODONGA 2024**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge Felicity Cahill for her remarkable leadership as Chair of Business Women Albury Wodonga [BWA]. Last night, at the annual Gala night, November 15, Felicity handed over the reins to new chair Jess Vlaskic. Felicity has dedicated nearly six years to BWA, playing an important role in the establishment of the BWA Grant in 2022 and the BWA Scholarship in 2024. The Gala event celebrates the achievements of women in our community. The night featured the announcement of this year's scholarship winners, Ashleigh Porritt and Shannon Carmody, who were recognised for their outstanding contributions. Felicity - I thank you for your invaluable contributions and commitment to Business Women Albury Wodonga. You have truly made a difference with your commitment and leadership to empowering women in our community. May you thrive in your next venture. To Jess and the BWA committee, best wishes for the year ahead as you inspire growth within our community, continuing to uplift and empower one another.

#### **CALLUM O'NEILL**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Callum O'Neill is a 9-year-old Narrabri local who competed in the two-day PSSA NSW Athletic Championships at Sydney Olympic Park in October. Callum competed in his heat for 9 years boys 100m dash, securing a place in the semi-finals after placing second in the heat. I would like to congratulate Callum on his sporting achievements. I look forward to hearing of your next sporting achievement, as it is clear you have a talent.

#### **NORMA ALBURY EARNS FIRST HAT**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate "Norma", a wine and pasta bar located in Albury, owner Matt Carrington, head chef Tess Rafferty, sous-chef Brielle Pedler and staff, who have gained recognition by earning their first Chef Hat from the Australian Good Food Guide [AGFG]. This accolade was awarded to the restaurant for its exceptional culinary offerings, particularly its focus on simple yet delicious Italian dining. The recognition highlights Norma as a destination that stands out for food lovers and is known for its inviting atmosphere where visitors can unwind with locally sourced wines, as they enjoy the creation of essential authentic flavours, made in-house. Well done Matt and team - may you continue to create a welcoming and culinary experience for years to come.

#### **NSW PREMIER'S AWARDS FINALISTS**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—I acknowledge the 12 Northern Rivers schools named as finalists in the NSW Premier's Awards for their efforts in supporting students' wellbeing and community recovery after the 2022 floods, and particularly the five schools on the Ballina electorate. The schools took a flexible, innovative and collaborative approach to building strong community relationships and ensuring every child had access to a quality education during a time of great need, and the dedication to their purpose was exemplary. Their work brought together schools from Broadwater to the Tweed, to assist students recover from the crisis through education and engagement. The schools in the Ballina electorate awarded were Mullumbimby Public School, Mullumbimby High School, Cabbage Tree Island Public School, Wardell Public School, and Empire Vale Public

School. Our schools were obvious candidates for the State Premier's Awards, which celebrate excellence in the delivery of public services across NSW in the World Class Education and Training category. Congratulations to the students, staff and families across the five schools for this recognition.

#### **LAUREN PARKER**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—Congratulations to local Paralympian Lauren Parker for her nomination as a finalist for the prestigious 2024 Australian Institute of Sport [AIS] Sport Performance Awards [ASPAs]. Lauren is in contention for both the 'Performance of the Year' and 'Female Para-athlete of the Year' awards following her outstanding achievements at the Paris Paralympic Games. Medalling in the women's H1-3 Cycling Road, women's PTWC1 Triathlon, and women's Paralympic H1-4 Road Race, Lauren made history as Australia's first dual-sport Paralympic medallist at the same Games in 48 years. Furthermore, Lauren was honoured as an Australian flag bearer at the Closing Ceremony alongside fellow Paralympian James. Lauren's incredible achievements are a testament to her courage, tenacity, and resilience, and I'd like to thank her for her outstanding contributions to women's sport.

#### **HIGH TEA WITH MRS WOO**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—A huge congratulations to Newcastle fashion designers High Tea with Mrs Woo for presenting their designs as a part of the Seamless Circular Economy Showcase at Parliament House last week. Established in 2004, High Tea with Mrs Woo is a creative collaboration between sisters Rowena, Juliana and Angela Foong. Centring their distinctive designs around slow fashion practices, the brand bridges the space between fashion, art and sustainability. The brand has been recognised by Seamless Australia as a leading innovator in changing the way we choose, enjoy, and recycle clothing. Additionally, the designers were awarded a City of Sydney Ideas and Innovations Grant to partner with the Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Fashion and Textiles and Dempstah to turn garment offcuts into recycled yarn. High Tea with Mrs Woo's success is a testament to the designer's passion, dedication, and innovation, and I can't wait to see what fabulous clothes they will design next!

#### **ST. GABRIEL'S PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations and recognition to St. Gabriel's Primary School as it proudly celebrates 85 years of inspiring contributions to education in NSW. Established in 1939, St. Gabriel's evolved into a cherished institution within our community, dedicating itself to fostering not only academic excellence but also personal growth and social responsibility. Throughout its history, St. Gabriel's has played an essential role in the local community, organising a variety of engaging events such as fetes, Hooplas, movie nights, and tennis afternoons, that foster a spirit of camaraderie and joy among students, families, and staff. St. Gabriel's also demonstrates its commitment to community service through programs such as Gabbies Sewing Angels, which brings together students and volunteers to create handmade items for those in need, and Operation Christmas Child, which encourages students to gather and donate gifts that will brighten the holidays for underprivileged children. These initiatives reflect the school's dedication to instilling values of empathy, compassion, and community service in its students. I commend St. Gabriel's Primary School for their remarkable achievements over the past 85 years, and their ongoing efforts to make a profound and lasting impact on the local community.

#### **ADDI ROAD WRITER'S FESTIVAL**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—I congratulate Addi Road on holding their wonderful Addi Road Writer's Festival, which is now in its fourth year. I encourage everyone to get down to Addi Road in Marrickville on 23 November to enjoy this family-friendly and social day for everyone; authors, performers and audiences alike. Thank you to this year's festival Artistic Directors, Sheila Ngoc Pham and Mark Mordue, who are supported by Addi Road CEO Rosanna Barbero and Inner West Mayor Darcy Byrne. This year's theme is 'Cost of Living' and will feature talks and panels about books, writing, politics and ideas, accompanied by spoken word and music performances on site at the Addi Road community centre. There will be something on offer everyone and plenty of room for picnics and play. Food, drinks and coffee will be on-site with mobile cafes, vegan food and a sausage sizzle. Get down to Addi Road on 23 November to enjoy this unique and thought-provoking festival! All proceeds will go to Addi Road Food Relief.

#### **CLR TIM STEPHENS**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—I would like to say thank you to former Inner West Councillor Tim Stephens for his hard work and dedication during his term on council. Elected in 2021 to the Leichhardt –Gulgadya Ward, Tim quickly become known and respected both in his local community and across the wider inner west due to his committed work ethic and thoughtful, considered approach. A long-time Haberfield local, Tim brought not just a deep knowledge of his community, but also his wealth of experience as

an internationally renowned environmental lawyer, to his time on Council. Tim provided passionate advocacy for the protection of Haberfield's heritage, was a tireless advocate for the GreenWay, and moved to establish a new Great Inner West Walk. An avid cyclist, Tim also worked hard to improve cycling infrastructure across the inner west and was a valued member of the Cooks River Alliance. Thank you, Tim and congratulations on a job well done.

#### CATHERINE HARBURY

**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 celebrate Catherine Harbury, a passionate and dedicated dietitian who has made a tremendous impact on the health of our community. Through her work, Catherine has helped countless people improve their dietary knowledge, transform their lifestyles, and embrace healthier habits. Catherine recently earned her PhD for her research on how dietary knowledge affects health outcomes, especially for those managing higher weights. Her findings are making a difference in understanding the connection between nutrition and wellbeing, helping many in our community lead healthier lives. Her dedication doesn't stop there—she regularly shares her insights at national and international conferences and serves as a mentor for other healthcare professionals. Catherine's exceptional expertise was recently recognised with the Advanced Accredited Practising Dietitian Credential, an honour awarded to only 2% of dietitians in Australia. Her commitment to our community's health and her support for patients is truly commendable. Thank you, Catherine, for your dedication and the positive change you bring to the lives of our community members.

#### CHARLESTOWN SWIM CENTRE

**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 the Charlestown Swim Centre's remarkable Splash of Colour program, an innovative learn-to-swim initiative that is making waves in our community. This free, 12-week program, launched in February 2023, provides culturally sensitive swim lessons tailored for international women of all ages. For many participants, it's their first time learning to swim, and often, they are the first in their families to take this step. Nine nationalities are represented in the course's current class, with women from Kenya, Zimbabwe, India, Peru, China, Venezuela, Rwanda, Nigeria, and Colombia taking part. Due to its success, Splash of Colour has expanded beyond Charlestown, with classes now available in Lake Macquarie, Maitland, the Central Coast, and Newcastle. Congratulations to Charlestown Swim Centre for fostering inclusion and water safety in our diverse community through this life-changing program. I would also like to acknowledge the program's founder, Ennia Jones, whose holistic approach to learning to swim has made all the difference for so many local women of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

#### ABBIE SMITH

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Today, I'm proud to recognise Abbie Smith for her outstanding work at Cardiff High School. Abbie's unwavering commitment to her students and the broader community is evident in everything she does, fostering a deep sense of culture, pride, and opportunity within the school. In her work at Cardiff High, Abbie has established an Indigenous dance group that shares the richness of Aboriginal culture, not only with Cardiff High but also with other schools. Abbie also organises key cultural events such as NAIDOC Week and Star Struck, bringing the whole school together to celebrate and learn. Abbie's mentorship extends far beyond the classroom, supporting Indigenous students in their HSC journey and helping some rise to leadership roles like School Captain. Her dedication to coaching sports, leading study groups, and assisting with after-school hubs uplifts students and strengthens the school community. Thank you, Abbie, for your incredible work in shaping and developing our future generations.

#### BLOOM FESTIVAL PICTON

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—It was wonderful to see such a large crowd at this year's Bloom Festival held today at Picton Botanic Gardens in Wollondilly. There was plenty to enjoy and plenty of enjoyable conversations, from the market stalls and the local nurseries' potted garden displays with plants for sale, to botanic-themed info booths and hands-on gardening activities for young people. To name a few of the services present today, thanks to Greater Sydney Landcare, WIRES, and Greater Sydney Local Land Services for their informative displays and to OSCA - One Stop Community Assistance Inc. for the delicious scones with jam and cream. Congratulations to all the Spring Garden Competition winners Landcare Australia for their tremendous work. Well done to everyone involved at Wollondilly Shire Council for a terrific Bloom Festival 2024.

### KAREN MURRAY

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Karen Murray, a dedicated volunteer with the Community Circles Eating Disorder group, has made a remarkable difference across various areas in the community. Known for her energy and compassion, Karen's outreach spans a wide range of activities. She creatively encourages children to read by hiding books in ziploc bags throughout Wingecarribee for them to discover. She also organises a local social group that regularly meets for coffee and lunch, creating a warm space for connection and conversation. Karen also finds time to visit elderly residents, bringing them much-needed companionship. Karen runs a podcast dedicated to preserving and sharing the rich historical stories of the Southern Highlands. She has been a constant source of encouragement and support for so many, and her efforts have not gone unnoticed. Currently, Karen is working to establish an anxiety support group and has been essential in assisting with the Community Circles' School Refusal Group. Volunteers like Karen truly transform lives and help build a stronger, more connected community. Her unwavering dedication serves as a testament to the power of community service.

### ASHLEA ALLEN

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Ashlea Allen has demonstrated remarkable growth in her role as the facilitator of the Yerrinbool Playgroup. Ashlea's confidence has flourished with her embracing of this responsibility, and she leads the group with assurance and warmth. Her dedication to connecting local families has made her a vital part of the Yerrinbool community. Ashlea is passionate about providing a space where children can play, explore, and develop social skills, while parents can connect with others and build their support networks. She sees the playgroup as a way to ease the isolation that many parents of young children feel. The Yerrinbool Playgroup is supported by the Council's Community Resilience Small Grants scheme. Through collaboration with Playgroup NSW, Community Circles, and the Yerrinbool Village Group [YVG], Ashlea's leadership will help create a lasting resource for parents and toddlers in the area. Thank you Ashlea for dedicating your time to such an important group.

### KU-RING-GAI ORCHID SOCIETY

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I recognise the Ku-ring-gai Orchid Society in the Parliament of NSW. Since its establishment in 1947, it has been a source of education and inspiration for those dedicated to growing orchids. They hold monthly meetings at West Lindfield Hall and publish monthly newsletters, sharing the best tips and tricks for successfully growing orchids. I recognise the annual St Ives Orchid Fair that gives our community the opportunity to see the wonderful orchid displays, seek expert advice and meet orchid vendors. This year, it was held on 16-18 August 2024. I recognise the Ku-ring-gai Orchid Society committee: Dennys Angove, Jenny Richardson, Lina Huang, Jim Brydie, Herb Schoch, Jessie Koh, Stuart Ruthven, Julie Iyengar and Adrian Zderic, whose enthusiasm and dedication is what makes our community stronger and inclusive.

### CHRISTMAS LIGHTS AT BORGNIS STREET IN DAVIDSON

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I recognise in the NSW Parliament the residents of Borgnis Street in Davidson who annually create and display the BEST Christmas community light displays in all of Sydney. In 2024, the Christmas lights will officially be switched on Saturday 7 December at 7pm. I thank the residents for their passion, dedication and investment in lighting up their homes for all the community to enjoy. The Christmas lights are joined by music, interactive displays, lasers and bubbles, smoke and snow machines, light projections and food trucks along the street. It makes it a truly community inspired event. In 2024, the Christmas lights also support raising funds and awareness for Bear Cottage, the only dedicated children's hospice in NSW. Along with hundreds of thousands of Sydney-siders, I look forward to celebrating Christmas on Borgnis Street in Davidson in 2024 and beyond.

### SIMON LENNON: KU-RING-GAI COUNCILLOR 2021 - 2024

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I recognise Simon Lennon, who served our local community as a councillor on Ku-ring-gai Council from 2021 to 2024. Simon represented Gordon Ward, which includes the residents, constituents and ratepayers of Gordon, Killara and East Killara. I recognise his wife, Alicia, and their six children. I often saw and caught up with them at community events. I saw firsthand that they were a wonderful support to Simon. Thank you, Simon, for your community service. I look forward to seeing you continue your service to our community in the months, years and decades ahead.

### NEWBRIDGE HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I would like to recognize and commend the 2024 Year 6 Leadership Team at Newbridge Heights Primary School for their outstanding dedication and contributions to the school community. This exceptional group of students has consistently displayed remarkable leadership throughout the year, taking on a variety of responsibilities with enthusiasm. It is with great pride that I acknowledge the members

of the 2024 Year 6 Leadership Team: Jesinta Davies, Blake Waugh, Elena Djurdjevic, Aymen El Masri, Lilah Dao, Alisha Khan, Angad Aujla, Wael Khaled. These students have set a high standard of leadership, demonstrating initiative, integrity, and a strong sense of responsibility in actions. Through their collaboration and teamwork, the Year 6 Leadership Team has played an instrumental role in the success of many school events and initiatives. Their influence has been felt throughout Newbridge Heights Primary School, and their example has paved the way for future leaders to follow. As these students continue to develop their leadership skills, I have no doubt they will continue to leave a lasting mark on the school community. I wish them all the best as they take on new challenges and continue to grow in their roles.

#### **TUMBULGUM PUBLIC SCHOOL, PREMIER'S AWARD FINALIST**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I Wish to congratulate Tumbulgum Public School on being among 12 Northern Rivers schools nominated as a Premier's Award finalist. The Premier's Awards highlight and celebrate the world-class services delivered by the NSW public sector to the people of New South Wales. By recognising excellence today, the awards hope to inspire a brighter future for New South Wales and Australia. The World-Class Education and Training Category, in which the 12 Northern Rivers schools group is nominated, is about recognising the importance of lifelong education and training opportunities with a focus on improving positive outcomes for the people of New South Wales. Their Initiatives to Support Flood Recovery nomination reads: Twelve schools in the rural northern NSW region worked together to address student wellbeing needs to provide support during natural disaster response and recovery. Specialised programs were implemented across 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 a quality education at a time of great need. As NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery, I again offer my warm congratulations.

#### **CRABBES CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOL, PREMIER'S AWARD FINALIST**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I Wish to congratulate Crabbes Creek Public School on being among 12 Northern Rivers schools nominated as a Premier's Award finalist. The Premier's Awards celebrate the world-class services delivered by the NSW public sector to the people of New South Wales. By recognising excellence today, the awards hope to inspire a brighter future for New South Wales and Australia. The World-Class Education and Training Category, in which the 12 Northern Rivers schools group is nominated, is about recognising the importance of lifelong education and training opportunities with a focus on improving positive outcomes for the people of New South Wales. Their Initiatives to Support Flood Recovery nomination reads: Twelve schools in the rural northern NSW region worked together to address student wellbeing needs to provide support during natural disaster response and recovery. Specialised programs were implemented across 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 a quality education at a time of great need. As NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery, I again offer my warm congratulations.

#### **CONDONG PUBLIC SCHOOL, PREMIER'S AWARD FINALIST**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I Wish to congratulate Condong Public School on being among 12 Northern Rivers schools nominated as a Premier's Award finalist. The Premier's Awards highlight and celebrate the world-class services delivered by the NSW public sector to the people of New South Wales. By recognising excellence today, the awards hope to inspire a brighter future for New South Wales and Australia. The World-Class Education and Training Category, in which the 12 Northern Rivers schools group is nominated, is about recognising the importance of lifelong education and training opportunities with a focus on improving positive outcomes for the people of New South Wales. Their Initiatives to Support Flood Recovery nomination reads: Twelve schools in the rural northern NSW region worked together to address student wellbeing needs to provide support during natural disaster response and recovery. Specialised programs were implemented across 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 a quality education at a time of great need. As NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery, I again offer my warm congratulations.

#### **THE HILLS MENS SHED, OPEN DAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2024**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I recently had the pleasure of attending the Hills Men's Shed Open Day. The Hills Men's Shed was formed in 2009. It is located within the Eric Mobbs Reserve at Castle Hill. It has about 100 members but is always looking for more shredders. The president of the Hills Men's Shed is Graham Metcalfe. Graham recently observed, "The Men's Shed movement has now become one of the most powerful tools in addressing health and wellbeing. The Open Day provided the opportunity for members of the

community to visit the Shed, for the community to purchase some of the great wooden products which have been carefully crafted or just to allow the members to have a great chat. I thank Elaine Georges and Graham Metcalfe for organising a fantastic Men's Shed Open Day.

#### **GLENHAVEN CAROLS, 08 DECEMBER 2024**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—Glenhaven Carols By Candlelight is a free community event that takes place every year in December. It is a great opportunity to get into the Christmas spirit and enjoy some festive cheer. This year Glenhaven Carols by Candlelight will take place at Glenhaven Oval on 08 December 2024. The Glenhaven Carols this year will host the 24th annual Glenhaven Carols by Candlelight, Glenhaven Oval will be filled with thousands of residents to celebrate the festive season. There will be rides, amusements, food trucks, Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service, Police, and great carols. . The event will start at 4.00pm. The night will conclude with a grand fireworks finale starting at 9.00pm. The Glenhaven Carols is organised by a dedicated group of volunteers. I recognise and thank the Glenhaven Carols Committee for service to the Glenhaven community. The members of the Committee are Louise Hedges, Donna Fraser, Kaye Amies, Radha Shah, Rory O'Connor, Sarah Didsbury, Barry Phillips, James Langan and Mitchell Blue. I encourage the community to support the fantastic Glenhaven Carols by Candlelight.

#### **AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS, CASTLE HILL BRANCH**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I recently had the pleasure of attending the Australian Red Cross, Castle Hill Branch, Christmas Party. The Castle Hill Branch has an active presence in the local communities in the Hills and Hawkesbury areas of Sydney. The branch consists of about 26 members who are all engaged in fundraising through their regular craft stalls in Dural and Winston Hills, and other opportunities, selling beautiful handmade crafts such as baby layettes, blankets, childrens' clothes and cards. Since its commencement in 1989 the Branch has raised an amazing \$1,177,324.00 as at the end of June 2024. Members meet on the second Friday of each month in a room made available to them at the Wesley Church in Showground Road. Several members are also involved in knitting and finishing the cuddly Red Cross Trauma Teddies. Teddies are distributed to local hospitals such as Westmead Children's Hospital and Ambulance stations as well as other agencies who deal with distressed children and older people. On behalf of the Castle Hill community, I thank the Branch President, Donna Fraser and all members of the wonderful Australian Red Cross, Castle Hill Branch for everything Branch does to support our community.

#### **OVENS AND MURRAY NETBALL – SOME OF OUR LEAGUE'S BEST THIS SEASON**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate the extraordinary achievements of our Oven & Murray League's remarkable athletes this season. Three standout players have truly sparked the spirit and excellence of the Ovens & Murray Netball. Maddi Lloyd (Lavington Panthers) continues to shine as a two-time Toni Wilson Medallist. Her midcourt leadership guided Lavington's young squad to five impressive wins, demonstrating remarkable maturity and consistent performance. Tayla Furborough (Lavington Panthers) reached a significant milestone, playing her 200th game while securing her A-grade Best and Fairest award. Tayla's defensive statue has been the key to her team's success. Lily Kelly (North Albury Hoppers) dominated the goal shooter position, scoring an incredible 523 goals. Her growing confidence and skill have made Lily a formidable player on the court. Congratulations to all the players for an outstanding 2024 season!

#### **GOOD IN THE HOOD**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I acknowledge the work of Good in the Hood, a local volunteer organisation I'm proud to be a part of, based in Rozelle. Good in the Hood began in March 2020 when Marco De Angelis, owner of Our Place on Darling restaurant, contacted Vinnies Rozelle and offered to provide 20 meals free of charge to residents who were doing it tough during the pandemic. From this small beginning, a wide range of businesses in Balmain, Birchgrove, Rozelle and Lilyfield now work together to deliver over 280 meals plus hampers and snacks every week to people struggling in our neighbourhood. Their mission has expanded too. Noticing that despite a thriving and mostly affluent community, they were meeting many locals who felt isolated and alone, they started calling on the power of our neighbourhood to deliver support and value back to community. Volunteers treat every interaction as an opportunity to listen more, understand more, and do more. Congratulations to Marco D'Angelis, Yulika Silva & Carly Freel for all your hard work to address loneliness, social isolation, and community inequality in our community.

#### **NSW YOUNG GREENS CAMPAIGNING AND ORGANISING FELLOWSHIP**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House the important work of the NSW Young Greens Campaigning and Organising Fellowship program. Twenty young people under the age of 31 participated in the Fellowship to learn how to build the skills, relationships and confidence to organise campaigns. I was lucky enough to take part in a public speaking workshop with the participants and left confident

they will inject new ideas and perspectives into politics, shaping a more inclusive and representative democracy. Congratulations to the NSW Young Greens and to fellowship organisers Manon O'Neill and Monique Tovo, for the hard work you do to involve more young people in politics. You are energizing the political process and nurturing the next generation of leaders who will shape a more equitable and sustainable world. Congratulations also to the hard-working participants Aava Adhikari, Allister Claasz, Baran Sogut, Bonnie Harvey, El Rose, Ethan Hrnjak, Isabella Rivett-Carnac, Jacaranda Sammut, Jane Sheedy, Kylee Crowle, Lachlan Smart, Lalla Nugent, Laura Koefeld, Maddie Godsell, Maddy Barry, Mossy Cluney, Muhammad Rey Dwi Pangestu, Nabilah Chowdhury and Takoda Mossman.

### **RISING TIDE: THE PEOPLE'S BLOCKADE**

**Ms KOBİ SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House Rising Tide's People's Blockade, which begins today in Newcastle. Rising Tide is taking climate justice into their own hands, with thousands of individuals and organisations coming together to take mass direct action this week in defence of the planet. It's a massive protest and a family friendly festival, all in one, with the aim of drawing attention to and exercising their right to protest Australian coal leaving the world's largest coal port. Despite continuing attempts from authorities to prevent this event from going ahead, the 2024 People's Blockade will be a powerful challenge to business as usual. In a healthy democracy, the right to protest is essential, and I can't think of a better cause than the future of our planet. Congratulations to all of the Rising Tide organisers and volunteers involved in pulling this protest together, and to everyone committing their time over the next ten days to the success of this massive action.

### **SEVEN HILLS RSL – REMEMBRANCE DAY**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Monday 11th October, I was honoured to address local veterans, officials, school leaders and families at the Remembrance Day commemoration at Seven Hills/Toongabbie/Wentworthville RSL Sub-Branch, giving the Commemoration of the Fallen ahead of the official wreath laying ceremony. The RSL is one of two RSL Sub-Branches in our local Prospect Electorate community. The RSL has a remarkable history of veterans and their families who gave so much for us, including combat in both World Wars. At the ceremony, Sub-Branch President, Ross Coughran gave the welcome address, followed by Graham Larkham, Greg Fleming, Neil Snowdon and Parliamentary colleague Mark Taylor. Ross Coughran recited the Ode and Bugler, Raphael Harvey sounded The Last Post. The 202 Army Cadet Unit guarded the cenotaph during the wreath laying ceremony, as catafalque party with heads bowed in respect for the fallen. I was proud to be joined by guests and supporters from our local Prospect Electorate, including students from Toongabbie Christian College and The Hills Sports High School. Thank you to Graham Larkham, President, and all office bearers, veterans and volunteers at Seven Hills/Toongabbie/Wentworthville RSL Sub-Branch for a truly moving service. Lest we forget.

### **ST ANTHONY'S MERCY DAY AWARDS – YEAR 2**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to Leon Haramis and Aagnya Arora on receiving a 2024 Mercy Award on 27th September 2024, at St Anthony's Primary School, Girraween. An exceptional student in the 2G Class at St Anthony's Primary School, Leon received the Mercy Award for Respect, recognising his courteous and thoughtful interactions with others. Leon acts with kindness and consideration, making a positive difference in the school community. Aagnya is an outstanding member of the 2W class at St Anthony's Primary School. She was awarded the Mercy Award for Service, recognising the kind and caring way she engages with others. In the classroom and on the playground, Aagnya is always willing to lend a helping hand. Mercy Awards recognise students who embody the Mercy values of hospitality, justice, compassion, respect, service and courage. Leon and Aagnya were selected as the Year 2 winners of this important award. Congratulations once again Leon and Aagnya. You are commended for the example of respect and service you set to your peers. Thank you as well to Principal Patricia Reilly, and the dedicated teaching and support staff for guiding our students through their Catholic faith.

### **ST ANTHONY'S MERCY DAY AWARDS – YEAR 3**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to Ethan Peiris and Aurora Thant on receiving a 2024 Mercy Award on 27th September 2024, at St Anthony's Primary School, Girraween. An exceptional student in the 3G Class at St Anthony's, Ethan received the Mercy Award for Hospitality, recognising his kind and inclusive nature. With his friendly face and warm heart, Ethan sets an example for us, modelling how to welcome all people with fairness and care. Aurora is an outstanding member of the 3W class at St Anthony's, who was awarded the Mercy Award for Service. A kind friend to all, Aurora often steps beyond her comfort zone to help others. In class and on the playground, Aurora never misses an opportunity to support and guide her peers to achieve their best. Mercy Awards recognise students who embody the Mercy values of hospitality, justice, compassion, respect, service and courage. Ethan and Aurora were selected as the Year 3 winners of this important

award. Congratulations again Ethan and Aurora. You are commended for the example you set for your peers. Thank you to Principal Patricia Reilly, and the dedicated teaching and support staff for guiding our students through their Catholic faith.

#### **WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—I want to acknowledge the amazing work of the entire team at Women and Children First, which supports many in the Pittwater community. They help save lives on the Northern Beaches as a refuge for women and children seeking to escape domestic violence. They have been powerful advocates at the local, state and federal level and instrumental in seeing the wider roll out of programs like Staying Home Leave Violence. Women and Children First shelter services close to 1,000 women and children every year. Sadly, on average they turn away 10 women with children every week and that number is not letting up. I will continue to echo calls from the community for funding to be made available to deliver the proposed upgrade of the shelter – this will double its capacity and it is needed urgently. The impactful work is known and it is valued by many in the Pittwater community, which has resulted in deeply meaningful change for so many women and children in their times of desperate need.

#### **ETHAN WARNER**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—I want to acknowledge the great success of Ethan Warner from Avalon Public School. Last month he travelled to Queensland to compete in the School Sport Australia National Touch Football Championships. He was selected in the New South Wales U12 boys' team after playing for Pittwater and then Sydney North. It was his first time representing New South Wales in a team sport and Ethan was really excited to play with those selected for the team. The tournament was played over a week against other teams from all across Australia. Ethan enjoyed being able to meet players from other teams after the matches, when they swapped pins. His team qualified undefeated for the Grand Final against Queensland. They played exceptionally well, winning Gold in the final game 10 tries to 6 and thus being crowned the National Champions. Ethan himself was a big part of this success, scoring four tries alone in the final. Ethan was so proud to be able to travel interstate and represent New South Wales as an Avalon Public School student and is truly grateful for the experience. Well done, Ethan!

#### **JAMES SPITHILL**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—I want to acknowledge and congratulate local Pittwater legend James Spithill who has recently been inducted into Australian Sailing Hall of Fame. Growing up in Elvina Bay, one of our amazing offshore communities, he seized the opportunity of living on Pittwater. He is a two-time America's Cup winning skipper, world match-racing champion and multiple Sydney to Hobart Champion. Just last month, James raced in his eighth consecutive America's Cup. He now holds the honour of winning the most races in the history of the America's Cup as a skipper. James has also raced five Sydney to Hobart races with his results including a line honours win in LDV Comanche in 2017. During his truly fantastic career he won Australian Male Sailor of the Year twice in 2006 and 2010 and was named Rolex World Sailor of the Year in 2014. He's known in Pittwater as a great role model for younger aspiring sailors and is keen to foster the next generation of talent that can follow in his inspiring footsteps.

#### **ABI PFEIFFER**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I recognise Abi Pfeiffer from Leeton for her tireless efforts towards fundraising for children facing cancer. Abi is involved with Camp Quality, an Australian children's cancer charity that has been dedicated to improving the quality of life for kids with cancer for 40 years. Last year, Abi walked an impressive 300 kilometres—about 10 kilometres each day on average—to raise funds for Camp Quality. Every dollar she raised went directly to support the camp's services and programs, providing crucial assistance to children navigating their cancer journey. This year, as part of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, Abi is participating in the Big Walk for Little Kids, an initiative that brings fun, positivity, and laughter back into the lives of young cancer patients. Abi's commitment went even further as she cut off her long hair, donating her locks to Wigs 4 Kids in support of those who've lost their hair to illness. Abi deserves commendation for her hard work and dedication to a charity that brings hope and support to children in need.

#### **KERRIE & ROB MANGER**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I recognise Robert and Kerrie Manger of Buronga for their volunteering roles with the region's community radio networks. Rob is an enthusiastic and long-time supporter of community radio and is the technical expert for Hot FM who maintains the audio to ensure the broadcast is live 24 hours a day. Rob trains the volunteers with all things tech – to bring their extensive listening audience their live shows. Kerrie has been part of the network more than ten years, currently the secretary and treasurer, including back up technical support to Rob. Their weekends are often full of setups of live

broadcasts for basketball, local football, and community events. Together, they are a major part of the 'volunteer team' that keeps 53 presenters /volunteers who broadcast with the station on a weekly basis on air! I congratulate Kerrie and Rob for their unselfish contribution to the HOT-FM Community Radio network - presented for the community, by the community.

#### **CARLA BRYANT**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Glen Innes Public School teacher Carla Bryant, on winning the prestigious Red Cross Humanitarian Partner Award for her exceptional commitment to the Red Cross Youth program. This award recognises outstanding service to the organisation by an external humanitarian partner, where there is a close relationship over a substantial period and service of an exceptional nature, which has greatly enhanced the work and reputation of the Red Cross. I congratulate Carla on this wonderful accolade and thank her for dedication in teaching children the value of helping others, aligning with the values of the Red Cross. Carla has achieved this through involving the children in many fundraising and community events, including: RED Day and Race for Humanity fundraisers, collecting food, donations and raising funds for flood relief, along with encouraging students to participate in ANZAC day alongside senior Red Cross members, instilling in the children a sense of tradition and respect. I commend Carla on this well-earned accolade, for the hard work and commitment she has shown the students and importantly, for laying a foundation of kindness, giving and respect in the young adults of tomorrow.

#### **PETER AND ELIZABETH COLTHORPE**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr Speaker – I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to Peter and Elizabeth Colthorpe who will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary on Saturday the 7th of December. A wonderful achievement we can all aspire to; I wish them many more years of happiness together.

#### **LANE COVE THEATRE COMPANY**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr Speaker – I would like to congratulate Lane Cove Theatre Company on their recent production of Shrek the Musical. Receiving an enthusiastic reception from the theatregoers it was by all accounts a fantastic production. I, like many, are looking forward to seeing which production the Company puts on next, as I know it will be a smashing success!

#### **SYDNEY COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr Speaker – I wish to congratulate Sydney Community Services on the launch of their new Memory Centre. Sydney Community Services works tirelessly to support members of our community with dementia, and this new Memory Centre will provide a supportive environment for dementia patients and their carers. Thank you, Sydney Community Services, for all the work you do in our community.

#### **SARAH PHYLLIS**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise the outstanding contributions of Sarah Phyllis to the Goulburn electorate and Southern Highlands Community. For the past fifteen years, Sarah has been at the helm of Rosnel Hostel, which offers an alternative for individuals who are ambulatory but require assistance with daily living. Many of the residents at Rosnel live with disabilities and face significant mental health challenges, making them some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Sarah has been described as resilient and commendable in her role. She tirelessly advocates for her residents, ensuring their well-being and creating opportunities for them to connect meaningfully with others. Thank you, Sarah, for your unwavering dedication and the profound impact you have made on the lives of so many in our community.

#### **MARK LEIBLER AC PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Mark Leibler AC who has been announced as a recipient of Israel's prestigious Presidential Medal of Honour. This medal is Israel's highest civilian honour. It is awarded "to those who through their talents, service, or any other means, have an outstanding contribution to the State of Israel or to humanity". Mr Leibler was honoured for working extensively for human rights, Israel and the Jewish community in Australia. He was also recognised for his work combatting antisemitism, defending Israel's reputation and fighting boycotts. I'm proud that Mr Leibler has been appropriately recognised for his services to the Jewish Community both here at home and abroad. Congratulations Mark Leibler AC.

#### **SIR FRANK LOWY AC PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Sir Frank Lowy AC who has been announced as a recipient of Israel's prestigious Presidential Medal of Honour. This medal is Israel's highest

civilian honour. It is awarded "to those who through their talents, service, or any other means, have an outstanding contribution to the State of Israel or to humanity". Mr Lowy was honoured for his philanthropy, his impact on the ties between Israel and Australia and promoting the well-being of Israeli society in the fields of health, education, and social welfare especially. I'm proud that Mr Lowy has been appropriately recognised for his services to the Jewish Community both here at home and abroad. Congratulations Sir Frank Lowy AC.

#### **MATTHEW ELY JEWELLRY**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Matthew Ely Jewellery who celebrated their 10-year anniversary on the 26th October, 2024. Opening in 2014, the store produces handcrafted, impeccably designed and simply irreplaceable works of art. Matthew Ely Jewellery has an important place in our community. In addition to providing memorable pieces, it regularly contributes to charity auctions and last year received the hall of fame prize of the QSWWA Christmas Window Display Competition. We are lucky to have businesses such as Matthew Ely Jewellery that take an active and positive role in our community. Congratulations to Matthew and everyone involved on your diamond (10th) anniversary.

#### **GARY CHAPMAN MEMORIAL DEEP SEA COMPETITION**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I acknowledge the annual Gary Chapman Memorial Deep Sea Competition held on 5-6 October, offshore of Crowdy Bay. The Gary Chapman Memorial Deep Sea Competition is a statewide fishing championship attracting elite anglers from across NSW. Coordinated by NSW Fishing Club Association President Bob Smith, the event saw a fleet of 27 boats set sail from Crowdy Bay, with a total of 69 anglers registered for the championship. The weekend of fierce competition saw 1,778 fish caught, weighing an average of 1 kg. Junior angler from Port Macquarie Henry Ferguson caught a very impressive genus Thunnini, commonly known as a tuna. One of the major catches on Saturday was a snapper (lutjanidae) pulled in by Mark Cooper of Beechwood weighing a massive 6.8kg. The Gary Chapman Memorial Competition honours a champion Australian freestyle swimmer of the 1950s who tragically drowned with a fishing mate off Sydney's Maroubra Beach in 1978, aged only 40. Gary was also renown in the fishing world taking out numerous fishing titles. A brilliant event hosted by the oldest affiliation of fishing clubs in Australia, I congratulate Bob and his committee for hosting another successful championship.

#### **CHRIST CHURCH LORD HOWE ISLAND 65TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I would like to congratulate the Christ Church Anglican Church congregation celebrating their 65th Anniversary on Sunday, 17th November to mark a special occasion of discipleship, worship and service on Lord Howe Island. The history of the Christ Church Lord Howe Island dates back to 1861 when the first Anglican service was held by retired Captain William Spurling. As the congregation grew a church shelter was constructed near Windy Point in 1875. The Anglican Church congregation has served and supported five generations of Islanders overseeing baptisms, confirmations, ordinations, marriages, life celebrations and general worship services and Holy Eucharists (Communion). The first church building was constructed on land adjoining the LHI Central School, where the cenotaph stands today. The church then relocated to its current site on Middle Beach Road in 1959, thanks to a land provision made by the then Anglican Church Warden Charlie Retmock. Acknowledged as a foundation for the community in times of trial and turmoil, the church is there providing prayers and spiritual guidance, pastoral care, financial support and service to those in need. Congratulations to everyone involved in this significant milestone.

#### **PORT MACQUARIE ART & CRAFT CENTRE**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—The Port Macquarie Art and Craft Centre recently celebrated 50 years since its establishment in 1974. Now located at Oxley Vale Lifelong Learning Centre, the members have enjoyed a place to develop their creative skills and be inspired amongst likeminded artists and enthusiasts. To celebrate this incredible milestone, a special day of celebration was held on 16th November at Oxley Vale showcasing the organisation's activities including live demonstrations, arts and craft exhibitions and a display of a private collection of pottery by renowned artist, Dorothy Hope. I was honoured to attend the official opening of the Oxley Vale Lifelong Learning Centre on 4th December 2023 with new facilities for both the Art and Craft Centre and the Hastings Men's Shed. This is a fabulous community asset supported by a contribution of over \$3.4 million by the former Liberals and Nationals Government. The new art studio offers a space for a range of artistic disciplines including pottery, painting, lapidary, weaving, spinning, woodwork, leatherwork and much more. Congratulations to past and current members of the Arts and Crafts Centre and the marking of your 50 years in our community.

#### **IL GLOBO**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to acknowledge the Il Globo, a fantastic media organisation for Italian's abroad. Il Globo began reporting online in 2016, delivering news stories in both Italian

and English to break down language barriers and keep our community informed. Their service provides invaluable support for residents of our electorate, and the wider Italian-Australian community who rely on these services to connect with their heritage. Il Globo recently launched their streaming service Il Globo TV in the USA and Canada. Il Globo TV provides Italian television services across Australia, Europe, Asia and now North America, ensuring that the Italian community stays informed and closely linked to Italian culture. Radio, through ReteItalia is also available across Australia, and internationally via the Digital Radio network and online streaming. I sincerely thank the hard-working staff of Il Globo for delivering such an essential service for Italians living abroad. Your dedication to serving our community is truly commendable and your continued success is a testament to your high standard of reporting. Thank you to all who have helped shape Il Globo into the integral support network it has become. I look forward to seeing your continued advocacy for our Italian-Australian community.

#### **BOTTEGA D'ARTE TEATRALE**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to acknowledge the work of Bottega d'Arte Teatrale, who recently hosted The Great Recital at the Italian Forum Cultural Centre. The Great Recital is a celebration of Italian music, featuring performances from the Il Coro Dei Piccoli – the children's choir. The students put on a wonderful display of traditional Italian songs, highlighting the incredible Italian culture we are so fortunate to host in our community. Events such as The Great Recital are so important in preserving our rich Italian traditions, art and music. This event would not be possible without the efforts of Director Santo Crisafulli and the extended Bottega d'Arte Teatrale team, including Tatiana Cagnola. I sincerely thank them for their hard-work and dedication to supporting our Italian community. I extend my sincere thanks to all parents, volunteers and students who participated and supported The Great Recital. It is wonderful to see our community actively involved in cultural celebrations. Thank you to all involved at Bottega d'Arte Teatrale, your efforts in sharing our Italian culture with the wider community are truly commendable. I wish you all the best and look forward to future performances.

#### **LA FIAMMA**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to acknowledge the incredible work of La Fiamma, a valued local news outlet who support our Italian-Australian community through their bi-weekly newspaper editions. Since 1947, La Fiamma has served as an opportunity for Italians living abroad to connect with their cultural background. Their articles promote current social, political, and sporting events both locally and abroad, ultimately preserving the rich traditions of our Italian community. Their work has played a pivotal role in bringing stories, news, and entertainment from Italy into our homes. I sincerely acknowledge Group Managing Editor Dario Nelli, Manager Giuliano Pedano and the hard-working staff at La Fiamma including Gianluca Buttarello, Dora Famularo, Marcella Marziani, Matteo Erriquez and Giovanni Pontieri for their dedication to supporting our community. Your stories play such an important role in ensuring Italian-Australians remain connected with their cultural background and I commend you for your efforts. Thank you to all who have helped shaped La Fiamma into the wonderful pillar of our Italian-Australian community that it has become. I wish you all the best in the future and look forward to seeing your continued success.

#### **MCHAPPY DAY**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—Thank you to the incredibly friendly and welcoming team at McDonald's Rosehill on Saturday 16th November for hosting me at McHappy Day – the annual fundraiser for Ronald McDonald House Charities. Since 1991, Ronald McDonald House has raised over \$72 million for seriously ill or injured children and their families, undergoing treatment or surgery in hospital. In 2023, \$64 million was raised to provide over 40,000 nights of home away from home treatment for sick children and their families. I had great fun at McDonald's Rosehill, meeting the hard-working crew, having a tour of the restaurant and serving customers in the drive-thru with their orders of Grimace Thickshakes, Frappes, Big Macs and more. Every \$2 from a Big Mac was donated directly to Ronald McDonald House along with proceeds from the sale of Grimace socks plus donations from customers – all with the objective of helping sick kids and their families. Thanks to Robert and Lou Lancaster, Tony Samuel and the rest of the team at McDonald's Rosehill. You made my visit great fun and ensured that everyone driving through or visiting your restaurant got to take part in an important initiative to support a very worthy cause.

#### **PORTLAND GOLF CLUB**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—I extend my congratulations to the Portland Golf Club on their Centenary Celebrations. Commencing in 1925 with a 'Golf Paddock' purchased by Mrs Amy Tweedie, it would not have been envisioned this invaluable community resource would be celebrating 100 years of operation. Commencing with just a small three hole course it has expanded into eighteen holes. Now known as the Portland Golf and Community Club the current committee are looking at further developing the site as a community hub to service the village of Portland and become more family orientated. I commend these endeavours and congratulate the

Portland Golf and Community Club on their vision and on being an integral part of the Portland community for 100 Years.

#### **MR REGINALD FITZPATRICK OAM LITHGOW**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—I would like to recognize Mr Reginald Fitzpatrick who has been made an Officer of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his selfless service and contribution to the community of Lithgow. This prestigious acknowledgement follows decades of volunteer work and fundraising across the Lithgow area. Reginald was a serving member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society for 56 years. Reginald was often seen entertaining aged care residents playing records for them, raising funds at local fetes working the chocolate wheel for the local parish. Personally enriched through working in the community, Reginald sought no level of recognition further than loving his community and wanting to enhance the lives of others and this is what makes his award so deserving. I congratulate Reginald on this outstanding achievement and the endowment of an OAM.

#### **JILLIAN LONG OAM**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—I would like to acknowledge Jillian Long of Bathurst on receiving an OAM in recognition of her outstanding services to hockey. Jillian has made a significant and immeasurable contribution to Hockey and has dedicated many hours of service to the association not only in Bathurst but through roles such as a State Selector and Technical Convenor in NSW and as a judge and technical officer for Australian Hockey to name a few. This level of meritorious service spans over 50 years of dedication to hockey – from a very young player to becoming president, secretary, grant writer, vice-president and umpire convenor for the Bathurst Hockey Association. Jillian continues to play and umpire the game she loves. She is an inspiration to not only young players and local clubs but to the whole of the community as a volunteer of such long standing service. I congratulate Jillian on her outstanding achievements and the endowment of an OAM and thank her for her service and contributions to the community.

#### **PAIGE HEYWARD – WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—I rise to congratulate Paige Hayward on joining the Western Sydney Wanderers. After a fantastic career across the United States, Austria and Adelaide, playing with the Lady Tigers, University of Texas, Texas Southern University, Houston Aces, Houston Dash, FFC Vorderland, the Central Coast Mariners and Adelaide United – Paige has found her way to Western Sydney. It's great to see women participating and succeeding in professional soccer. I am sure that the Paige will be great addition to the Western Sydney Wanderers. Having grown up in a timewhere female sporting heroes were few and far between, it's great to see that Western Sydney has it's own female soccer team. What an inspiration this must be to all the young girls across Western Sydney dreaming of sporting success. Best of luck to Paige and the Wanderers this season, I am sure all my colleagues in the House will be cheering them on.

#### **STORIES OF HOPE**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—It was an honour to represent the Premier at the Stories of Hope event on the 10 November. Cancer Council fundraisers like Stories play an important role in raising money for disease research and prevention and allowing sufferers and survivors of cancer to voice their experiences. I was moved by how articulate and earnest the testimonies of survivors of cancer were. It was truly an honour to bear witness to the impassioned speeches of survivors, researchers, and medical professionals. I want to thank Unity in Diversified Optimistic Youths and their President, cancer researcher, Dr Laila Arzuman. Hats off to Laila and her team. You embody and role model young, diverse, and passionate leadership. UDOY is such an inspiring example of young people who step up and stand out, working hard for a good cause. I hope to see many youth across New South Wales follow in your footsteps. Special mention also to UDOY General Secretary Dharrini Balachandran and Treasurer Anastasia Kiaos. Best of luck to the team at UDOY in all their future endeavours.

#### **MEL WIYA**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise Mel Wiya. Since its commencement in April 2023, Community Circles Wingecarribee has been a transformative initiative. This pilot project supports isolated and vulnerable individuals by fostering meaningful connections that recognise their uniqueness and empower them to lead more connected lives. Mel has been a standout contributor to this initiative, going above and beyond to support members of the Aboriginal community. Her efforts have enabled individuals to reconnect with their culture, find their mob, and access essential support such as financial assistance and housing. Described as a quiet achiever, Mel has provided steadfast advocacy over many years, helping countless people build and maintain vital connections. Her work has not only transformed individual lives but has also contributed to the overall well-being of the community. Thank you, Mel, for your unwavering dedication and the significant impact you continue to make.

### CELEBRATING GERRINGONG LIONS

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today, the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Gerringong Lions Club and their incredible contribution to our community. The Gerringong Lions Christmas Parade is a much-loved tradition that brings joy to families and visitors alike. This event marks the beginning of the festive season in Gerringong, with colourful floats, cheerful music, and a true sense of community spirit filling the air. Beyond the parade, the Gerringong Lions embodies the spirit of giving all year round. Their unwavering dedication to supporting local projects and charities has made a real difference in our region. From scholarships for local students to vital donations for organisations in need, the Gerringong Lions Club ensures no corner of the community is overlooked. I would also like to acknowledge President Steve Pottie and members of the Gerringong Lions Club for their work, passion, and selflessness. Their efforts enrich our community, bringing people together and supporting those in need. To everyone involved in the Gerringong Lions Club, thank you. Your contributions remind us of the power of community and the importance of giving back. Gerringong is lucky to have you.

### KIAMA HIGH SCHOOL – 70 YEARS OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today, the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Kiama High School as it proudly celebrates 70 years of academic achievement, community involvement, and student success. Established in 1954, this remarkable institution has been a cornerstone of the Kiama community for seven decades, producing young people equipped to face the challenges of the world. I particularly acknowledge the contributions of Principal Catherine Glover and former Deputy Principal Darell Shephard. Through their leadership, guidance, and dedication, they have helped mould countless students into confident, capable, and compassionate individuals ready to take on the world. This milestone is a testament not only to the school's excellence in education but also to its role in fostering a vibrant and connected community. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all past and present staff, students, and families who have made Kiama High School the exceptional place it is today. Thank you to everyone involved in this significant celebration—your contributions to 70 years of success is inspiring! I wish all the students and staff well as they complete Term 4. 'Ad Altiora' is their motto, and here's to many more years of excellence in Kiama. Go higher.

### SOUTH COAST ULYSSES CLUB ANNUAL SOUTH COAST TOY RUN

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today, the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the South Coast Ulysses Club for their annual South Coast Toy Run, a community event that brings festive joy and support to those in need. Now in its 34th year, the Toy Run will take place on Sunday, December 1, with motorbike riders journeying from Nowra to Berry, delivering toys and donations for local children and families. A special thank you to event organiser Narelle Mousdale and club president Peter Zdjelar for their dedication in making this event possible year after year. The Toy Run will support Family Services Australia Shoalhaven/Illawarra, with donations of toys, grocery vouchers, and non-perishable food items helping families in crisis over the holiday period. This event is an example of community spirit, entirely run by volunteers and funded by local businesses. The South Coast Ulysses Club's commitment to helping others is inspiring, and I commend all involved for their work. Whether you ride or donate, your contribution to the Toy Run makes a meaningful difference. Thank you to the South Coast Ulysses Club, and may this Christmas be brighter for those in need. Safe travels to all!

### SOUTH COOGEE FIESTA

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—It was fantastic to recently attend the South Coogee Fiesta held by South Coogee Public school. The South Coogee Fiesta was held by the P&C with Jodie Steele leading volunteer efforts as well as the wider executive team made up of Hellen Randall, Melissa Bramich, Leane Economou, Jenny Conell, Simon Griffin, Jacqui Busby, Jaime Bohm, Mai Zhou, Jen Forde. The whole team ensured that there was a large array of fun for all ages. The fiesta had amazing stalls, as well as many prizes to be won and great food for everyone. It was really great to see the South Coogee community be back with each other socialising after a five year break. With the fantastic and hard working P&C community the South Coogee Fiesta was better than ever and it was a great pleasure of mine to have attended and been in the atmosphere of it all.

### SURF LIFESAVING SEASON OPENING

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I wish to congratulate and wish the best of luck to the surf clubs of Bronte, Tamarama, Clovelly and Coogee on the opening of their surf lifesaving season. Surf lifesavers patrol our beaches from September through to April on every weekend and public holiday. During this time they spend countless hours providing a safe aquatic environment for all. Surf lifesavers are a critical part of our community and it is important to remember that surf lifesavers spend countless hours learning new skills, techniques and procedures to ensure our safety. The work of surf lifesavers is breathtaking and should never go unnoticed so I would like to congratulate them once again and wish them the best of luck in their new season as they continue to keep our beaches safe and ensure no lives are lost in the water this summer.

### ACF ART SHOW

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I would like to congratulate the amazing work by the Australian Conservation Foundation. The Australian Conservation Foundation holds a Wild at Art threatened species art competition each year. This is Australia's largest wildlife art competition for kids. The competition is very fun while also bringing recognition to the fact that 2,200 Australian plants, animals and birds are threatened with extinction. The show was held in the beautiful venue of Bondi Pavilion. It was an all around fantastic night with beautiful displays of art submitted from across Australia. This wouldn't have been possible without the hard work and dedication from The Australian Conservation Foundation and especially Jane Gardner the ACF engagement director and Stephen Lightfoot the ACF eastern Sydney convenor. Once again another big congratulations to them on their hard work and their very successful art show.

### MILTON'S HERITAGE BAKERY

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to recognise the owners of Milton's Heritage Bakery in Shoalhaven, Bryan Wareham and Linda Jackson, for embarking on a special project that transformed an iconic building into a space dedicated to raising awareness and funds for those touched by cancer. As work began to replace the building's roof, Brian and Linda saw an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the Shoalhaven community. They reached out to suppliers for sponsorship, covering the roof with cancer-related billboards, establishing two memorial walls, and hosting a series of talks, events, and displays over a four-week period. Residents were encouraged to engage with the cause while picking up their daily bakery supplies, achieving two main goals: raising awareness about cancer and providing a platform for people to openly share their cancer experiences. Nearly \$20,000 was raised through this heartfelt project, with all funds going to the Milton-based Cancer Support Foundation. I applaud Bryan Wareham and Linda Jackson of Milton's Heritage Bakery for coming up with such an ingenious initiative and for giving back to the community that has supported it for so many years.

### JOEL SLEEMAN

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—Mr. SPEAKER: I am honoured to recognise Joel Sleeman of Shoalhaven for an extraordinary 60-year career in football refereeing, which has left a lasting impact at both grassroots and professional levels. Joel's football journey began in 1964 as a player, but soon discovered his true passion was refereeing. Joel's unwavering commitment to fairness, integrity, and the spirit of the game led him to officiate thousands of matches, retiring in his 70s due to physical limitations. Beyond the field, Joel has been an invaluable leader in the Shoalhaven District Football Referee Association [SDFRA], holding multiple pivotal roles and recognised with life membership in 2019. At 77 years of age, Joel's passion for the game remains as strong as ever, continuing to inspire not only players and referees but the entire football community. At the recent Football NSW Annual Awards, Joel was recognised for his remarkable efforts in promoting and developing football across New South Wales. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Joel on receiving this well-deserved recognition. Joel's contributions have enriched the sport, and his legacy will be felt for generations to come.

### LAKE TABOURIE MUSEUM

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—Mr. SPEAKER: The Lake Tabourie Museum is one of the Shoalhaven's hidden gems, featuring a remarkable collection of over 12,500 items that offer a unique glimpse into our past. The museum features an eclectic mix of exhibits, including Victorian artefacts, geological specimens, and preserved snakes, spiders, and fish. Among its most unusual items include a scale model of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, wisdom teeth, and even an appendix. The highlight for many visitors is the telephone room, where they can plug in old phones and enjoy a fun, nostalgic experience. Founded in 1965 by Jack Nicholson, a passionate local anthropologist and avid traveller, the museum's collection was meticulously catalogued and displayed by Nicholson himself. In 1983, he generously handed the museum over to the Shoalhaven City Council, ensuring his life's work would continue for generations to come. The museum's ongoing success is driven by its dedicated team of volunteers, whose passion brings each exhibit to life by sharing the stories behind each collection. Their efforts keep the museum thriving, preserving the history of Lake Tabourie and inspiring future generations to connect with and appreciate the past.

### WATTLE GROVE PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I would like to commend the 2024 Year 6 Leadership Team at Wattle Grove Public School for their outstanding contributions to the school community. This group of students has consistently demonstrated exceptional leadership, fulfilling important responsibilities with dedication and commitment. It is with great pride that I acknowledge the members of the 2024 Year 6 Leadership Team: Kai Azoum, Amilia Srbinovski, Mason Tighe, Harriot Warner, Darcy Bemrose, Lucy Caldwell, Josh Galloway, Macey Hanratty, Flynn Hussey, Danny O'Dea, Charlie Sellars, Shawn Sumesh, and Bronwyn Napa'a. Each of

these students has exhibited exemplary leadership throughout the year, earning recognition within the school for their skills, initiative, and positive influence. Their collective efforts have not only set a strong example for their peers but have also fostered a spirit of school pride and unity. Through effective teamwork, they have contributed significantly to the success of numerous school activities and initiatives. I encourage these students to continue building on their leadership abilities, as their influence will undoubtedly leave a lasting impact on the Wattle Grove community. I extend my best wishes to the Year 6 Leadership Team as they continue their journey and take on new challenges.

#### **DUNCAN DEY**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today, I acknowledge the extraordinary work of Duncan Dey, a dedicated councillor who has served the Byron Shire for a remarkable ten years. Throughout his tenure, Duncan has consistently demonstrated a genuine commitment to the community and the environment. He has been a tireless advocate, listening attentively to the concerns of residents and responding with intelligent, thoughtful solutions. Duncan's legacy is marked by his unwavering defence of the environment. He played a crucial role in protecting the ecologically significant Wallum and opposed excessive development in flood-prone areas. His expertise in engineering was invaluable in supporting residents affected by the 2022 floods. Moreover, Duncan's dedication to social justice is evident in his advocacy for First Nations rights and his efforts to ensure water security for the Mullumbimby community. As early as 2004, he was instrumental in the adoption of the Byron Shire Greenhouse Action Strategy, an initiative that contributed to the preservation of numerous species. It has been great to have such a dedicated councillor on Byron shire council. On behalf of the Byron Shire community, I extend my heartfelt thanks to Duncan for his contribution and look forward to seeing him continue with his advocacy in the community.

#### **AHA NSW HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the newest Australian Hotels Association NSW Hall of Fame inductees, Central Coast residents Peter and Jane Harris, and Gary and Kerry Narvo—two remarkable couples who have redefined what it means to be dedicated publicans. In fact, it's the first time in AHA NSW history that two married couples have been inducted together, receiving a well-deserved standing ovation as they received the Cyril Maloney Medal. The AHA NSW Awards represent the highest level of recognition in the hospitality industry, celebrating exceptional achievements in accommodation, dining, entertainment, and more. Receiving this recognition is a testament to their resilience, vision, and commitment to the industry and broadly the Central Coast community. Both couples have an extensive record as publicans and in addition to their individual ventures, jointly own the Lakes Hotel at The Entrance, Jesmond Hotel Newcastle, and The Banjo Patterson Inn at Jindabyne. They've transformed each establishment into iconic local pubs, investing their hearts and resources into creating welcoming and vibrant spaces. Congratulations once again to Peter, Jane, Gary, and Kerry on this fantastic recognition.

#### **TAKE 3 FOR THE SEA**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate a remarkable milestone—the 15th anniversary of Take 3 for the Sea, an environmental organisation born on the Central Coast that has grown into a global force for change. Founded in 2009, Take 3 for the Sea began as a grassroots movement with a simple yet powerful message: take three pieces of rubbish when you leave the beach, waterway, or anywhere else, take three actions to reduce your plastic footprint, and take three people on the journey with you. This inspiring call to action has mobilised millions worldwide. Thanks to the dedication of Take 3 for the Sea and its followers, an estimated 50 million pieces of rubbish have been removed from our environment, sparing marine life, and keeping our oceans cleaner. And through its educational programs, the organisation has reached over a million students, empowering them to become environmental stewards and advocates for our planet's future. As plastic pollution continues to threaten our oceans and marine life, the work of Take 3 for the Sea is more important than ever. Congratulations Take 3 for the Sea, for 15 incredible years of action, education, and commitment.

#### **FERTILITY FIRST**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Fertility First, a leading fertility clinic located in Hurstville, for being recognized as the Australian IVF Clinic of the Year. This prestigious honour was awarded during the 2024 Australian Surrogacy and Donor Awards, an event that highlights and celebrates the remarkable achievements and contributions of those involved in surrogacy and donor programs throughout Australia. Founded in 1997, Fertility First has consistently provided personalised and compassionate fertility healthcare and treatment options to individuals and couples facing fertility challenges. As a trailblazer in the reproductive health field, Fertility First was one of the pioneering clinics in Australia to offer immediate access to donor sperm and to establish a donor egg program, significantly enhancing the options available for patients. Being part of the renowned Genea fertility network, Fertility First has built a reputation for

excellence and innovation in fertility treatments, underscoring its commitment to helping patients of all kinds navigate their unique journeys toward parenthood. This recognition is not only a testament to the clinic's dedication to quality care but also reflects the passion and hard work of its staff in making a meaningful impact in the lives of their patients.

#### **BELLA ROSE-THEIL, SCHOOLS SPECTACULAR**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations and recognition to Bella-Rose Theil from St. George Girls High School for her invaluable contribution to this year's "On Country Day" as part of the Schools Spectacular, which brought together more than 60 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from across the state. This initiative aims to deepen the understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture and develop the acknowledgment of country in a meaningful way for the 2024 Schools Spectacular show. The "On Country Day" served as a pivotal platform for students to engage with Aboriginal culture and traditions, sharing culture and making connections with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students. This enriching experience was facilitated by Deadly Ed, an organisation renowned for its commitment to Aboriginal education. Through various activities, workshops, and dances, students fostered a greater awareness of the significance of country and the rich history that accompanies it. Bella-Rose's involvement in this event not only showcased her dedication but also highlighted the importance of integrating Aboriginal perspectives into our educational framework. Congratulations once again to Bella-Rose for her outstanding contribution to this significant initiative.

#### **DARREN PERCIVAL WINGECARRIBEE COMMUNITY CIRCLES**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise Darren Percival. Community Circles Wingecarribee commenced in April 2023. The pilot project assists people within the community who are isolated and vulnerable to connect with their communities. This connection aims to recognise the uniqueness of the person and shapes the connections to enable people to live meaningful and connected lives. Darren has taken charge of Community Circles Raising the Bar, Pub Choir. For almost two years, he has dedicated time each month to this initiative, which has proven to be life-changing for many. Darren's efforts have drawn people from across the community to share in the joy of music and song. I take this time to recognise Darren's His commitment, altruism, and musical talent have not only brought people together but also enriched the community's collective spirit. This choir has had a profound impact, strengthening individual well-being and fostering a deeper sense of community connection. Congratulations, Darren, and thank you for your significant contribution to making your community a more vibrant and connected place.

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