

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Friday 22 November 2024**

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

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

## *Visitors*

### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome members to the final sitting day of 2024. I acknowledge the significant number of visitors in the gallery from the SP Jain School of Global Management, which has campuses in Singapore, Mumbai, Silicon Valley, London and Sydney. I welcome you all to the Chamber. While it is lovely to have you here, it is not what most people would recognise as a routine business day in the Legislative Assembly. We have been operating a limited program on Fridays so you will not see the fire of the bearpit.

## *Bills*

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

**WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

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

**STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL (NO 2) 2024**

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

**PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

**PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT (PUPPY FARMING) BILL 2024**

## **Assent**

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

**BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AMENDMENT (BIODIVERSITY OFFSETS SCHEME) BILL 2024**

## **First Reading**

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

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

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

**WITNESS PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

**REVENUE LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

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

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

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

## **Returned**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of messages from the Legislative Council returning the bills without amendment.

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

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill with an amendment. I set down consideration of the amendment as an order of the day for a later hour of the sitting.

[Notices of motions given.]

**HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT (HOSPITAL HELIPADS) BILL 2024****First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Gareth Ward, read a first time and printed.**

**Second Reading Speech**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (10:21):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Legislators often say that they cannot legislate for common sense. Well, it seems we finally found a reason with the Health Services Amendment (Hospital Helipads) Bill 2024. In my area, we are building a \$780 million brand-new hospital in Shellharbour, replacing the existing hospital, which is serving the community well but is beyond its use-by date. This brand-new hospital does not have a helipad, but the old hospital has one—\$780 million of taxpayers' money, yet the Government continues to refuse to build a helipad for the replacement hospital. It makes absolutely no sense. The Government can find money for its trade union friends. It can find \$16 million for Ultimate Fighting Championship violent fight competitions but not one Jatz cracker for an important facility that could save a life.

In regional New South Wales, minutes and seconds matter. In fact, it is also the same in metropolitan New South Wales. I cannot believe that I am introducing this legislation in this Parliament, but it is clear to me that common sense is not that common when it comes to government decision-making. The Minister should have made this decision in his capacity of not just the Minister for Health but also the Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast. When in opposition, he said that we needed that portfolio. Now in government, those opposite are just not delivering. The frustration of our community cannot be understood better than on this particular point. That is why I seek to introduce what I consider to be a simple bill that will mandate a helipad at not only this hospital site but also all new and renovated hospitals with an emergency department. One would think that that would just happen, and I will refer to some of the regulations or guidelines in a moment.

The bill that I am introducing today is very simple but clearly necessary. When we build a hospital, it is a once-in-a-generation opportunity; we do not build them every week. When we build those hospitals, we get them right. If the Government, for whatever reason, cannot see common sense, then we will seek to legislate to do that for it. A guideline entitled *Hospital Helicopter Landing Sites in NSW*, authored by Health Infrastructure, was published in 2020 and is set for review on 1 July 2025—although perhaps a review on 1 April would be more appropriate, given what we are going through at the moment. It incorporates international experience and best practice in the establishment of helicopter landing sites [HLS] both at ground level and on elevated structures.

The relevant functional subgroups are the Governance and Service Delivery and Transport subgroups of the Clinical/Patient Services functional group, and the Asset Management and Governance subgroups of the Corporate Administration functional group. The guideline applies to local health districts and the NSW Ambulance service. To be clear, it is just a guideline; it is not necessarily enforceable, as seen at this site. The guideline was distributed to the Ministry of Health and NSW Ambulance service, and was first developed in 2005 to:

Support and inform the design or placement of hospital-based HLS to ensure any new strategic HLS are appropriately located.

Identify and incorporate international, national and statewide regulations that affect the planning and design of hospital-based HLS.

Provide a process for use by health services to assess the need for a HLS.

Provide guidance to health services regarding the ongoing management of HLS.

I acknowledge that it is a highly specialised area of health operations that involves the inputs of both NSW Ambulance [NSWA] Helicopter Retrieval Services and Health Infrastructure. There is no established legislation in relation to the design, construction or placement of helicopter landing sites. The bill ensures hospitals that should have helipads do have helipads by amending section 132A of the Health Services Act 1997 No. 154, by inserting a new proposed section 132A before section 133:

**132A Helipads required for public hospitals**

- (1) The Minister must ensure that each public hospital with an emergency department has a helipad.
- (2) The helipad must be located in or near the public hospital.
- (3) The helipad must be constructed—
  - (a) when the public hospital is built, or
  - (b) for an existing public hospital that does not have a helipad—when a substantial redevelopment of the hospital is carried out.

That is pretty simple, life-saving infrastructure. It is not expensive; it is a one-off capital cost. I am almost tempted to give a slab to a couple of tradies near Shellharbour Hospital and get them to stick one in for the Minister. It is not that hard. Returning to the NSW Health guideline, section 2 is entitled "Requirements for a helicopter landing site". It states:

Any hospital which either refers patients to another hospital or receives patients by helicopter should consider how access to their hospital is achieved.

Patients may arrive from non-hospital locations via scene response or be moved from other hospitals (inter-hospital transfer).

The choice of transportation (road, helicopter or fixed wing) is made using pre-determined criteria and based on clinical urgency, distance, accessibility, weather, transport requirements, optimum transport team and vehicle utilisation. Medical Retrieval Selection Guidelines are developed and maintained by the NSW Helicopter Retrieval Service.

While tertiary hospitals receiving patients from other sites have the greatest need for a HLS, other hospitals may also need helicopter access owing to their location, number of patients transfers and services profile.

When hospitals are first built or redeveloped, it is essential that requirements for a HLS are considered. This may involve:

- inclusion of a HLS where not previously provided, either on-site or nearby
- relocating a HLS from a nearby site or on-site location
- retro-fitting an existing HLS.

When considering if a hospital should have access to a HLS, factors that need to be considered may include:

- the hospital's role in the statewide trauma network
- the hospital's role in statewide critical care network for adults, paediatrics and neonates
- local geography
- proximity to other hospitals.

Any decision to include a new hospital-based HLS, or change an existing HLS, should be made in consultation with the NSW Helicopter Retrieval Services and a small group of expert clinicians involved in the management and operation of emergency retrieval services. This group will assess emergency medical retrieval requirements for the site and consider recent data and other clinical and situational factors that will impact on the provision of safe clinical care.

The ambos and staff are calling for it. Members of the community have signed petitions in their thousands. The industrial deafness from the Minister for Health, who is also the Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast, is profound. It is disappointing that the member for Shellharbour, in whose electorate the hospital sits, is not in the Chamber during the debate because, during the campaign to get re-elected, she was quite vocal on the issue. It seems she says one thing in Parliament and says another in her electorate. Whilst these guidelines are a good start, I have been compelled to introduce the bill because, as I have said, the new \$780 million Shellharbour Hospital project will include an expanded emergency department but not a helipad. To be clear, the design includes the provision for a helipad, but on day one there will not be one open to serve the public.

Let us do a bit of a compare and contrast at some recent hospital builds. Northern Beaches Hospital at Frenchs Forest opened in 2018. Did it have a helipad after stage one? Yes—tick. Its budget was \$600 million. Maitland Hospital opened in 2022. Does it have a helipad? Yes—tick. Its budget was approximately \$470 million. The Wagga Wagga rural referral hospital, which was a redevelopment, opened in 2016. Did it have a helipad after stage one? Yes—tick. Its budget was approximately \$282 million. Bega Valley regional hospital, known as South East Regional Hospital, opened in 2016. Did it have a helipad after stage one? Yes—tick. Its budget was \$187 million. Macksville Hospital opened in 2019. Does it have a helipad? Yes—tick, and it was included in stage one. Its budget was \$73 million. The Grafton Base Hospital redevelopment opened in 2021. Did it have a helipad in stage one? Yes—tick. It included a helipad when its budget was only \$17.5 million, but Shellharbour Hospital has a taxpayer-funded budget of \$780 million and will not have a slab for a helicopter to land safely in all weather conditions.

It makes absolutely no sense. In fact, it makes a mockery of this Government's claim to be the so-called party of the Illawarra, when clearly it is not. Added to the list of hospitals that have been either redeveloped or built that have had helipads are Campbelltown Hospital, Tweed Valley Hospital and Goulburn Base Hospital. The new Shellharbour Hospital has a need just as strong as those communities, which is why I have introduced this

legislation. Building for the future of health projects should include assets such as helipads from day one. This project has raised the ire of not just me but also the broader community. I note the contributions from Shellharbour councillors Kellie Marsh and Mitch Ellis, who have had this issue raised with them and they have raised it in the community. I would rather be using the time of the House to debate other things, but it is clear that I have no choice. We have one opportunity to get this right. The Minister could make this decision now. If he agreed to have the helipad built as part of the hospital when it opens in what is expected to be 2027, I will withdraw the bill. Hopefully, other hospitals will not also need this approach.

While I am very clear that the bill targets Shellharbour Hospital, perhaps the bill would also be necessary for future governments. People would be stunned to know that a helipad is required. Because of the persistent resistance of the Minister to this request, I am left with no alternative than to come to this House to seek to make this a requirement for this development and the redevelopment of all new hospitals. It is a very simple and inexpensive ask and a very simple, inexpensive one-off capital cost. For the reasons I have outlined, I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

### *Committees*

## **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **Reports**

**Debate resumed from 15 November 2024.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that the House take note of the report. I call the member for Upper Hunter. We have been waiting for this contribution.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (10:33):** All week. You shut me down a little bit early last week, so I am glad to be here to deliver something to you.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** To be fair, the standing orders and procedures of the House shut you down, not me personally.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL:** I know, Mr Temporary Speaker. Deep down, I am sure you wanted to hear what I had to say about the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 22/58*. I update the House on the ongoing work of the committee, because some of the work done by the secretariat is amazing. These young, brilliant people really do work hard. I thank the Chair, young and brilliant as she is, for her leadership.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** I'm not sure 60 is young.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL:** I will ask for that favour back a bit later, thank you. A lot of good work has been done. Seven bills were looked at in the period under review, and five bills were identified as having issues under either section 8A or section 9 of the Legislation Review Act. The Justice Legislation Amendment (Civil) Bill 2024 was found to delegate statutory functions to a class of persons prescribed by regulations. That item was referred to Parliament. The Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill (No 2) 2024 was found to have absolute liability offences, on which the committee makes no further comment. The broad powers of the secretary, the commencement by proclamation and the wide deferral of powers to regulations were all referred to Parliament for review.

The Return of Proceeds of Crime (Gambling Companies) Bill 2024 was found to have wide regulation-making powers with retrospective effect. Again, that was referred to Parliament. The Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No 2) 2024 was found to trespass unduly on personal rights and liberties, and was referred to Parliament as a result. Finally, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Puppy Farming) Bill 2024 was found to have issues with penalty notice offences and significant maximum penalties, wide powers of delegation to the secretary or chief executive, and the incorporation of extrinsic materials.

I go into further detail about the issue of trespassing unduly on personal rights and liberties regarding the penalty notices and significant maximum penalties component in the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Puppy Farming) Bill 2024. The bill proposes the new offences that are prescribed as penalty notice offences. The committee notes the penalty notice offences allow an individual to pay a specified monetary amount instead of appearing before a court to have the matter heard. In this case, the penalty notice amounts are monetary, compared to the maximum custodial penalty listed for the offence.

The Fines Act 1996 applies to the operation of the offences in the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and allows a person to elect to pay the amount specified in the notice instead of having the matter determined by

a court. A person charged with an offence may therefore feel unduly pressured to pay the notice rather than risk going to trial. That may impact a person's right to a fair trial, specifically any automatic right to have their matter heard by an impartial decision-maker. With that, I conclude my comments on the report. I thank all those involved and recommend the report for good Christmas reading.

**Report noted.**

## LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

### Reports

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that the House take note of the report.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (10:38):** As Chair: I thank you, Mr Temporary Speaker, for your handling of this last day of Parliament for the year. I take note of *Legislation Review Digest No. 23/58*. I was a bit disappointed last night; we had a Christmas party and there was no award for the committee that has given the most committee reports in the Chamber. Given that this is the twenty-third report of the Legislation Review Committee, it was hands down who was going to be the winner anyway. It is a testament to the amount of work that the Legislation Review Committee does. It does a tremendous job.

On Tuesday the committee tabled its twenty-third digest of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament, in which it examined eight bills that were introduced during the last sitting week. It also reviewed six regulations and statutory instruments, one of which it reported on with comment. The five regulations examined and found not to reach the reporting threshold under the Legislation Review Act are at part three of the digest. I draw members' attention to the key issues raised in the digest. The committee reported on the Transport Administration Amendment (NSW Motorways) Bill 2024, which seeks to amend the Transport Administration Act 1988. The amendments would establish a new government agency and corporation known as NSW Motorways, allow the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to monitor toll prices and establish an independent tolling customer ombudsman to deal with disputes and complaints between customers and toll road operators.

In its report, the committee highlighted the wide delegation of the powers of NSW Motorways to an "authorised person". A person who is delegated powers may further delegate to an "authorised person" if they are authorised to do so in writing by NSW Motorways. The committee noted that the bill would therefore provide for a wide delegation of statutory functions to a class of unknown persons. This could enable private persons to exercise functions under the Act which may be expected to be performed by public officials or authorities. The committee acknowledged that allowing regulations to prescribe the persons who may be delegated functions may allow for flexibility in the administration of the statutory regime, and also that such regulations are subject to disallowance under the Interpretation Act 1987. However, the committee ultimately prefers that the classes of persons who may be delegated statutory functions are set out in primary legislation to provide clarity over the exercise of Executive and public functions. For this reason, the issue was referred to Parliament for further consideration.

Turning now to private members' bills, the committee reported on the Cannabis Legalisation (Plebiscite) Bill 2024. The bill proposes to set out provisions to hold a plebiscite on the date of the next general election for members of the Legislative Assembly following commencement of the proposed Act. The plebiscite would be used to determine whether the people of New South Wales support the development of laws to legalise the use, possession and sale of cannabis. The bill sets out the question to be presented, the form of the plebiscite, the requirement for the NSW Electoral Commission to publish approved case documents on its website and provisions for the making of regulations. In its report, the committee highlighted that the bill would create wide regulation-making powers and includes Henry VIII clauses. The bill provides that the plebiscite must be conducted in accordance with the Constitution Further Amendment (Referendum) Act 1930, with any "necessary modifications". Proposed section 6 (2) (d) specifies that regulations can prescribe those modifications. However, it is not clear what modifications might apply to the plebiscite—for example, whether voting is compulsory.

In its report, the committee considered that allowing regulations, without limitation, to modify the referendum Act would result in broad regulation-making powers. Further, as the referendum Act is not the parent piece of legislation, the regulation-making power may amount to indirect Henry VIII clauses, as it could enable the Executive to amend the operation of the referendum Act without reference to Parliament. The committee reported that it generally considers Henry VIII clauses to be an inappropriate delegation of legislative power, as regulations are not subject to the same level of parliamentary scrutiny as primary legislation. It acknowledged that these types of regulation-making powers are not uncommon and can provide flexibility in the administration and running of a plebiscite. However, given the broad nature of the regulation-making powers and their potential to amount to indirect Henry VIII powers, the committee referred the matter to Parliament for further consideration.

Finally, the committee reported on the Police Amendment (Police Officer Support Scheme) Regulation 2024. The regulation enhances the police officer support scheme by providing further regulatory guidance on compensation payments to police officers for certain injuries or death benefits, as well as setting out procedural issues regarding the determination of claims and disputes related to those determinations. The new regulation allows the Personal Injury Commission to make rules about how a police officer or former police officer may dispute a determination of the commission. It also allows the commission to make rules regarding medical and expert evidence used in disputes and determinations.

Those rules can limit the number of medical reports used in connection with a claim and restrict the calling of expert witnesses. The committee found that the ability to make those rules may impact on a person's procedural rights. For example, a person may be restricted in their capacity to gather evidence to support a challenge to a decision. However, the committee noted that, because the clauses apply equally to the commission and a person who is disputing a decision made about them, no one party is disproportionately disadvantaged. For those reasons, the committee made no further comment.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (10:45):** I make a contribution to debate on the *Legislation Review Digest No. 23/58*. The Legislation Review Committee is a very busy committee at the moment. The award does go to this committee for the most take-note contributions to reports in the Parliament. I update the House on the work of the committee. In this review period, there were eight bills looked at overall. Four of those bills were identified as having issues. The first was the Crimes Amendment (Obstructing a Railway) Bill 2024. It was found to have issues relating to freedom of assembly and association. The second was the Inspector of Custodial Services Amendment Bill 2024, which was found to have issues relating to its commencement by proclamation, about which we made no further comment.

The Transport Administration Amendment (NSW Motorways) Bill 2024 was found to have issues relating to the wide delegation of powers to unspecified persons, and was referred to Parliament. The final bill identified was the Cannabis Legalisation (Plebiscite) Bill 2024. It is one of my favourites—not because of the cannabis content, of which I am not a fan, and not indeed because of the bill itself, of which I am also not a fan, but because I am a fan of the fact that this bill has broached the Henry VIII clause, which is a very serious intrusion. I love to speak about it. The bill has indeed invoked some of the wrath of Henry VIII by permitting regulations to modify the referendum Act.

**Ms Janelle Saffin:** His ghost.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL:** I can feel his ghost right now looking down on this bill with a lot of anger: "Off with its head!" As the referendum Act is not the parent Act for these regulations, that approach could amount to an indirect Henry VIII clause, as it could enable the Executive to amend the operation of the referendum Act without reference to the Parliament. The committee generally considers Henry VIII clauses in bills to be an inappropriate delegation of legislative power. Unlike primary legislation, regulations are subordinate legislation that are not required to be passed by Parliament and are instruments that the Parliament has no control over when they commence. So Henry VIII has spoken again and set foot in the New South Wales Parliament. With that, I conclude my comments on this bill. I thank all involved and wish a merry Christmas to all.

**Report noted.**

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### Reports

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that the House take note of the report.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (10:48):** As Chair: In relation to the contribution by the member for Upper Hunter about the Legislation Review Committee's examination of the Cannabis Legalisation (Plebiscite) Bill 2024, I am not sure Henry VIII would have opposed that clause. I think he would be all too happy. The idea of Jeremy Buckingham and Henry VIII behaving the same way is interesting. As chair of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure, I contribute to debate on the report entitled *Critical transport infrastructure supporting the Western Sydney International Airport and Western Sydney Aerotropolis*, which was tabled on 20 November. This is the committee's third report in the Fifty-Eighth Parliament. We heard from key stakeholders through submissions and three public hearings, including local councils, government agencies, transport experts and members of the public.

While Western Sydney is currently car dependent, it is important that, from its opening, public transport becomes the modus operandi for those using the new airport. We recommended a significant program of public transport works to link communities in Western Sydney to the airport and aerotropolis and to reduce strain on the road network. We also recommend that the New South Wales Government provide rapid bus services from major

Western Sydney centres to the airport and aerotropolis in time for the opening of the airport. These services must be supported by infrastructure, such as dedicated bus lanes, to make buses competitive with car trips.

As a priority, we recommend that the South-West Rail Link, which currently ends at Leppington, be extended to the airport and aerotropolis to provide rail access to the major centre of Liverpool and the rapidly growing suburbs of the south-west. We were pleased to hear that this is currently the subject of a business case. I encourage the New South Wales Government to deliver the extension as a priority. In the medium term, we recommend initially extending the Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport line south to Oran Park and Macarthur, and then north from St Marys to Tallawong. This would connect communities which are not currently served by public transport to the airport and aerotropolis.

In the longer term, we recommend that the New South Wales Government investigates extending Sydney Metro West to the airport to connect people to jobs in both the airport and Parramatta CBD. We heard of the need to build and upgrade roads to support the significant freight traffic that the airport and aerotropolis will generate. We recommend that the M12 Motorway include an interchange with Mamre Road and Elizabeth Drive to allow trucks to access industry in the Mamre Road precinct. While we understand the New South Wales Government is delivering and planning several road upgrades, we recommend that timelines and completion dates for these projects are published to provide certainty for communities and industry.

The committee heard that the airport requires 43 fuel tanker trucks daily, which creates congestion and safety risks. We recommended that the New South Wales Government investigate the viability of a fuel pipeline to service the airport. We encourage the New South Wales Government to plan and investigate future links, including rail links to the Wollondilly and Illawarra regions via the Maldon to Dombarton Railway and the Outer Sydney Orbital. To support our recommendations, robust planning and funding arrangements need to be successfully delivered. Therefore, we recommended that the New South Wales Government commit to a scheduled program of transport infrastructure projects to be built in the coming years and to fast-track land acquisition.

Value capture levies should be used to help fund public transport projects to reduce reliance on inequitable user charges such as tolls and station access fees. We heard that the best infrastructure decisions are made in partnership with the affected local communities. The New South Wales Government must consult and update the public on planning and decision-making for transport infrastructure to the airport and aerotropolis. We also recommended that the New South Wales Government publish the full business case for the Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport project. The committee has consistently advocated for transparency for major transport projects, and it previously sought the release of the Sydney Metro West business case. The airport and the aerotropolis have the potential to allow for vastly improved transport infrastructure in Western Sydney.

Our recommendations aim to improve transport access in Western Sydney and connect the region to the airport and aerotropolis. As we heard, it is not just, "Build it and they will come." The Government must build for the communities who are already there. I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their collaboration and assistance on this committee, including the deputy chair, the member for Leppington; the member for Wollondilly; the member for Riverstone; and the member for Kellyville. I also thank the secretariat for its support. We extend our thanks to all the stakeholders who have made an enormous contribution participating in the inquiry. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (10:53):** As the deputy chair of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure, I contribute to the debate on the report entitled *Critical transport infrastructure supporting the Western Sydney International Airport and Western Sydney Aerotropolis*. I am very pleased to see this report tabled and published. We went on an excellent adventure creating this report. We took two excursions: one was to the existing airport, Sydney Kingsford Smith Airport, and the other was to Brisbane to check out the Brisbane Metro. The report is important for my neck of the woods because the airport is in the neighbouring electorate to mine. Many people are moving to my area in anticipation of the potential opportunities that will come from the airport. The key finding of the report states:

There is a risk of insufficient public transport connections between the airport, aerotropolis and the rest of western Sydney, which can contribute to existing car dependence and road congestion in western Sydney.

The report is important to establish where we are at and where we need to get to in order to ensure that the airport and the aerotropolis are a success, not just for my neck of the woods but also for the State and the national economy. I call out a couple of the key recommendations in the report. The committee assessed all the options for future transport links that were on the table and assigned a priority to those projects based on the feedback we received and where we think we will get the most bang for buck. Recommendation 11 states:

That Transport for NSW as a priority deliver a rail link from Leppington to the airport and aerotropolis.

It goes without saying that, as the member for Leppington, I think it would be fantastic for that to happen in the short term, as does everyone in Leppington. But that rail link would benefit all of Sydney. Understanding the way the rail network operates, it would also allow people to get to the other airport relatively quickly and to other areas of Sydney as well. I have been working with the transport Minister on this recommendation and would like to see it come to fruition.

We also made a recommendation concerning what comes next after Leppington. We found that connecting Campbelltown and Macarthur is a priority, and then closing the link between Tallawong and St Marys and, effectively, closing the link on the existing metro. We also recommended looking at extending the currently under construction Sydney Metro West from Westmead to the airport. That is probably more of a long-term priority. It is fair to say that Parramatta has pretty extensive public transport coverage, whereas areas like Riverstone, Leppington and Macarthur are dying for some good-quality public transport links that will benefit everyone. Those projects will be very expensive, and anyone who has chatted to the Treasurer knows that the budget is not in good shape thanks to members opposite. Recommendation 2 is important. It states:

That the NSW Government fast-track land acquisition on corridors for transport infrastructure for the airport and aerotropolis.

Certainly, land prices have gone through the roof in my neck of the woods for obvious reasons. The sooner we acquire that land, the sooner we will put the budget in a better position. More importantly, it will give certainty to the existing owners of the land. A few of them have come to see me and they are happy to progress, but they would like some certainty. I thank the committee staff. This is a wonderful report and a great read. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (10:57):** I take note of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure report entitled *Critical transport infrastructure supporting the Western Sydney International Airport and Western Sydney Aerotropolis*. I had the privilege of sitting on this committee and listening to multiple stakeholders provide feedback. Frankly, much of that feedback was alarming. Finding 1 states:

There is a risk of insufficient public transport connections between the airport, aerotropolis and the rest of western Sydney, which can contribute to existing car dependence and road congestion in western Sydney.

We repeatedly asked stakeholders for information on the estimated number of flights within the first year and over a 10-year period, and none of them were able to provide that information. We repeatedly asked for the number of freight versus passenger movements, and that was entirely unclear. We were unable to get the business case. In fact, recommendation 7 states:

That the NSW Government release the full business case for the Sydney Metro – Western Sydney Airport line.

That recommendation seeks to give us some idea of the capacity that this airport will be dealing with, even down to the number of trucks required to provide fuel for the aircrafts. There is no pipeline for aviation fuel going out to the airport, meaning that it has to be taken in via trucks. For perspective, three truckloads of fuel must be taken to the airport to fill every four departing aircraft. By extension, that causes enormous safety risks for people on Sydney's roads, particularly around the airport. We heard from the Transport Workers' Union that there was no consideration given to the location of rest bays where the drivers of those trucks could pull over for breaks. There was little consideration given to airport employees and how they would be able to access and exit the airport. The committee made a series of recommendations to address those issues. The first recommendation is that the New South Wales Government commit to and publish a long-term sequencing of critical transport infrastructure projects to be built for the airport and aerotropolis.

In his contribution to this debate my colleague the member for Leppington mentioned the importance of the metro link connection around Sydney. The connection between Tallawong and St Marys is of particular importance to the people of my electorate. Hundreds of thousands of people live there. We have been told that the new airport will be a jobs epicentre. The number of jobs is questionable and was noted as being aspirational rather than committed to. Access to the airport is quite limited, especially for those coming from the north-west of Sydney. The confusion over freight versus passenger services puts additional importance on the Mamre Road and Elizabeth Drive intersection, where all of the logistics firms are setting up shop. There is no exit off the M12 freeway at that point. The report underlined the lack of planning of transport connections into the airport. There has been a lot of talk about how wonderful this airport is—and it is absolutely a game changing piece of infrastructure for Sydney. We can build the world's greatest airport in the world's greatest city, but if people do not have the ability to get to it by road, rail, bus or any other form of transport it begs the question, what is the value of this particular airport?

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (11:02):** I thank the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure for its extensive report entitled *Critical transport infrastructure supporting the Western Sydney International Airport and Western Sydney Aerotropolis*. As the member for Riverstone stated in his contribution to this debate, it is amazing what a lack of information there is about the airport. The former Liberal Federal and State governments



made a puff statement that it would be a "game changer". We constantly hear how it is going to change the lives of people in Western Sydney, but there was never a plan to put in the necessary infrastructure. This airport is going to be a blight on Western Sydney from 2026, when planes start landing, because there has been no consideration given to the noise impacts or the infrastructure required. From 2026 to 2036, there will be 10 million passenger movements through the airport. From 2036 to 2060, there will be 84 million passenger movements—that is, 1,000 flights—by 2060. Three million additional passengers will pass through the airport every year from 2036.

The committee looked at what infrastructure there will be, how the airport is going to be serviced and how many tankers will be delivering fuel. We know from reports that there will be over 1,000 flights per day. By 2060 there will be much bigger planes. At least six fuel tanker movements will be required to fill up one plane. That means there will be 2.19 million fuel tanker movements into and out of the airport every year. That is 4.4 million tanker movements per year through Western Sydney. The report recommends that we look at those movements and also at the noise. It is clear from the noise that more planes fly over Western Sydney. When planes fly over schools, they have lower learning outcomes. Research reports all over the world show a negative outcome for primary schools and early education centres located under flight paths.

I am disappointed in a couple of recommendations. Recommendation 3 is about introducing value capture. We heard that Liberal philosophy from the former Prime Minister and the former Premier. They gave blood money to Western Sydney councils to support them when they said that we need value capture. The member for Vacluse is in the Chamber. She is shaking her head, trying to work out that concept. Why is Western Sydney the only place in New South Wales that will have value capture? Nowhere else in New South Wales has it. We have to pay for our assets. That is ridiculous. It is fine if we bring in value capture, but do it for the entirety of New South Wales and not just Western Sydney residents.

I am also disappointed by recommendation 8, which talks about delivering rapid buses to Penrith, Liverpool and Campbelltown. Blacktown always misses out. Blacktown's gross regional product is \$25 billion, Penrith's is \$14 billion, Liverpool's is \$16 billion and Campbelltown's is \$9 billion. If we want Western Sydney airport to succeed, we must include the second-largest gross regional producing local government in the region, next to Parramatta. We must ensure that we are included as part of that. The former Liberal Government excluded Blacktown from its tourism and business strategies. If we want Western Sydney airport to work, we must put in the resources and include the entirety of Western Sydney, including Blacktown.

#### **Report noted.**

#### *Bills*

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

#### **Consideration in Detail**

#### **Consideration of the Legislative Council amendment.**

*Schedule of amendment referred to in message of 21 November 2024*

#### **No. 1 GRNS No. 1 [c2024-217A]**

Page 22, Schedule 4. Insert after line 36—

#### **[45] Part 8 Miscellaneous**

Insert at the end of the part, with appropriate section numbering—

#### **Review of operation of amendments by Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Act 2024**

- (1) The Minister must cause an independent review to be conducted of the operation of—
  - (a) the amendments to this Act, the *Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966*, the *Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022*, the *Criminal Procedure Act 1986* and the *Smoke-free Environment Act 2000* by the *Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Act 2024*; and
  - (b) any regulations made for the purposes of those amendments.
- (2) The review must commence no later than 1 July 2026.
- (3) The person who conducts the review must give the Minister a written report on the outcome of the review within 6 months after commencing the review.
- (4) A copy of the report is to be tabled in each House of Parliament within 15 sitting days of the relevant House after the report is given to the Minister.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:06):** I move:

That the Legislative Council amendment be agreed to.

I support the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024 as amended by the other place. All members in this Chamber who represent our communities are deeply concerned by the prevalence of illegal vaping devices, particularly among our young people. That concern is shared by the shadow Minister for Health and the shadow Minister for Regional Health. I have spoken to many crossbench and Labor members about those concerns as well. The issue touches the lives of many communities and families, and it is a real challenge for us from a public health perspective. I am not overstating it when I say that we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to stem the tide of that public health challenge. I am very encouraged by the early progress—and I emphasise that it is early progress—that we are making to remove those harmful devices from our streets.

I am also encouraged that we are starting to see less of the product entering our borders because of the changes made at the Commonwealth level and enforcement led by Commonwealth agencies. I am pleased to announce that we are augmenting our efforts by introducing harsher penalties to target suppliers. The bill will amend the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966 and the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022 to introduce offences modelled on the Commonwealth Government's recent vaping reforms. On assent of the bill, penalties for illegal vape supply are set to soar from \$1,650 to \$1.6 million, and prison sentences are increasing from six months to seven years. Offences will also be added for possession of commercial quantity of vaping products and for retail possession of vaping products. As with the Commonwealth vaping reforms, the intent of those offences is to target suppliers of vaping products, not individual users. I think that all members would agree to focus on that right now.

The changes will reduce the complexity of our inspectors' powers to enforce vaping goods laws and will streamline the compliance and enforcement response, ensuring a more efficient and effective use of resources. I am passionate about making sure that we reduce the supply of this product, particularly to young people. I am not apologising for focusing on young people. I know that the shadow Minister for Health, the shadow Minister for Regional Health and every member of the Government are all passionate about that. I am confident that every member of this Parliament is passionate about it because we cannot afford to have another generation hooked on nicotine.

It took 70-odd years to bring smoking rates down in this country. Legislators from across the political aisle were somewhat hoodwinked by big tobacco companies about vaping and the benefits of vaping. There is no doubt that it can play a role in helping people to stop smoking. But the way in which the products are marketed towards young people is truly atrocious. We are now hearing stories of 10- and 11-year-olds hooked on a product that is very difficult to get off—such is the power of nicotine. We are passionate about ensuring we have inspectors in the community, clamping down on illegal vapes. Importantly, members of this place should know that, through the NSW Health website, someone can put forward a business that they think is doing the wrong thing. Kerry Chant and her team monitor that intelligence. They will send enforcement teams to check whether a business is doing the wrong thing, and then penalties will flow from that if an allegation is proven.

As legislators, we should take very seriously our responsibility in this place to do what we can to protect our vulnerable citizens and, more importantly, our children from the harmful factors of tobacco and poisons found in vapes. It is another important step in the right direction in improving enforcement across New South Wales. It will not be the last thing that we do. I thank the Opposition and the crossbench for their engagement in this area of public policy. This policy area is delivered best when it is bipartisan and cross-partisan in nature. I acknowledge members from across the political divide—the crossbench, the Opposition and my Labor colleagues—for their ongoing advocacy. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (11:12):** I speak on behalf of the Opposition in support of the Legislative Council amendment to the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. I thank the Government and the crossbench for working with us to bring forward the review date. NSW Health data estimates that approximately 19,500 tobaccoconists are registered across New South Wales. That is a huge increase on only a matter of years ago. Given the speed at which the industry is growing, it is imperative that we get the bill right. If it is not working in the way that it is intended, it is important that we know that as soon as possible. I appreciate the work of the Minister for Health and his office in supporting bringing the amendment forward. More broadly, I thank the Minister for his advocacy on the issue, which I note is longstanding. He has a personal, convicted approach when it comes to trying to bring children and young people off vaping devices.

I concur with the Minister that perhaps they play a role in bringing some smokers off tobacco, but if one had not been on tobacco before, such as a kid, it is dangerous. I support the Minister's approach. I am in furious agreement about the need to bring about significant reform. The Opposition will always be happy to work collaboratively with the Minister and his team on reform to ensure that we remove this scourge from our young people—this new addiction to nicotine that did not exist in this new generation until a few years ago. I thank the

Minister and his team. The Opposition supports the amendment. I look forward to seeing the new bill come into play.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (11:13):** I make a brief contribution to debate and indicate that the Opposition supports the Legislative Council amendment to the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. I echo the Minister for Health's comments regarding vaping and how many people, especially parents of teenagers and soon-to-be teenagers, see the potential dangers of vaping. Anything we can do to keep as many people as possible away from what can be a highly addictive and potentially dangerous habit is only a good thing, and this bill is a great first step. We hope to work collaboratively with the Government, the crossbench and all our colleagues to evolve these laws as society evolves.

I take this opportunity to thank our many staff who helped with not only this bill but many other bills during the year. They are Rory Cunningham—also known as Corey Runningman—Chris Beckhouse, Jayden Whaites, Georgia Saeck and Candice Giannakos, who helps get our message across to a lot of regional media. I thank everyone involved in getting this bill to where it is today.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## **TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (NSW MOTORWAYS) BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 20 November 2024.**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (11:15):** I continue my contribution to debate on the Transport Administration Amendment (NSW Motorways) Bill 2024. Toll reform is not just about easing the burden on motorists. The status quo, which is an inefficient, overly complex and overpriced motorway network, is also a handbrake on productivity for business and investment in our city. In delivering the Independent Toll Review, Allan Fels said that high toll prices were driving people off the motorways and creating congestion across our other roads. We see that very clearly in and around Parramatta. The Federal transport department's estimate of the cost of congestion on Sydney roads is \$13.6 billion. If that looks suboptimal now, imagine how big that congestion cost will be in 3½ decades when the last concessions end in 2060. Some of our tollways will increase by 1 per cent every quarter—4 per cent a year—or by the consumer price index, whichever is greater.

Even at current prices, data from Transport for NSW reveals that businesses are spending up to \$7.35 million on tolls. That is just from the State's E-Toll system, which does not include Transurban's Linkt customers. Looking forward, a company paying \$7.35 million now could expect to have a toll bill in excess of \$25 million by 2060. Toll bills of that magnitude will directly impact business decisions. It will impact where people decide to set up shop, where their workers live and what business ideas are worth pursuing, given the cost base. Do we really want the entrepreneurs of the future killing off ideas because toll costs push the break-even point out just too far? If our tolls are already affecting productivity and changing how people live and where they work, how much more will that be the case in 2060? At no point in our city's history have we tried to price and operate our collection of motorways as a genuine network. That might have been reasonable when we had one, two or three motorways, but now, with 13—soon to be 15—it is no longer acceptable.

When each of those toll roads were priced, financing was front of mind. Other factors, like productivity, equity and sometimes even congestion, took a back seat. One problem with a hodgepodge of prices and pricing structures is that they are far too rigid. Only the bridge and the tunnel have time-of-day pricing. That means that on the rest of the 156-kilometre toll network, our pricing model is doing nothing to smooth out peak-hour traffic. That means we are not able to incentivise freight truck drivers to use the motorways outside of peak hour, which is part of the reason freight and commuter traffic move at precisely the same time, and that is at peak hour. That is when time-of-day pricing could incentivise more drivers to go onto our motorways outside of peak hours.

A pricing structure that encourages longer journeys, coupled with broader freight reform, will unclog our local and arterial roads. A pricing model with the right incentives can reduce congestion, which will reduce costs and improve productivity. A pricing system that can respond to the changing demand for motorways, including the arrival of other surrounding transport infrastructure, will drive greater efficiency on our motorway network. The status quo does not give us that power. The status quo has fixed, rigid prices locked in right out to 2060 on some roads. The establishment of the NSW Motorways entity is the first important step in creating the power to price and operate our motorway network as a network.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to take control of our roads and implement a pricing system that prioritises traffic flow, optimises the use of our entire transport network across the day, puts drivers of New South

Wales first and increases productivity. In the interim, our Minns Labor Government is committed to easing the financial burden in a cost-of-living crisis. At last glance, our Government has already paid toll rebates of almost \$4 million in my electorate of Parramatta since the \$60 weekly toll cap was introduced. We need the opportunities that toll reform opens up. If congestion is costing us \$13.6 billion per year on Sydney roads now, imagine the size of the economic gain if we can make our motorway network more efficient for decades to come. That is what the Government's toll reform is setting out to do.

The Government's NSW Motorways bill is the first major step in toll reform. It is a vital step in maximising productivity network and a vital step in getting a better deal for Sydney motorists, particularly drivers of Western Sydney, who bear the brunt of the toll burden. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (11:20):** I speak in support of the Transport Administration Amendment (NSW Motorways) Bill 2024. This important bill builds on the work of the Minns Labor Government, and Minister John Graham in the other place, trying to reform tolls in New South Wales. The Labor Government's reforms have already made a huge financial difference with the introduction of \$60-a-week toll cap. Nowhere is the relief to people's hip pockets being felt greater than in Western Sydney. Take, for example, Jhan Leach. She is the executive director of Blacktown Women's and Girls' Health Centre, which is a fantastic organisation in my electorate. Before the toll cap was introduced, Jhan, who lives down south but works in my electorate, paid between \$350 to \$450 a week in tolls.

The previous Liberal Government's obsession with tolling, which resulted in us being the most tolled city in the world, had the consequence of punishing people like Jhan for offering her services to vulnerable people in my electorate. She is now better off by \$390 per week because her tolls are capped at \$60. Jhan is not alone. In August this year, it was announced that Western Sydney motorists had already saved a combined \$37 million. Motorists in my electorate of Blacktown had the second-highest claims in the State, at 2,146, and Blacktown recently became the first suburb to pass \$1 million in total toll relief claimed. Now the Government recognises there is more to be done if we want real reform of our toll network.

That is why the Government, upon its election last year, commissioned an independent toll review to investigate options to overhaul the toll network in our State. I thank the independent reviewers—Professor Allan Fels, AO, former chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission; and Dr David Cousins, AM, former chair of the Prices Surveillance Authority and director of Consumer Affairs Victoria—for their work on the interim report in March this year and the final report in July. Importantly, the toll review is available to the public—unlike the review commissioned by the now Opposition in 2021-22, which never saw the light of day.

A key recommendation of the final report was the creation of a new body to drive toll reform in New South Wales. The bill will create NSW Motorways, a new State government agency whose principal objective will be to deliver safe and reliable toll roads and toll road services in an efficient and financially responsible manner. This is a specific recommendation of the independent reviewers' final report to the Government. NSW Motorways will be given a range of toll-related functions, including but not limited to operating our toll roads and providing toll services; facilitating the collection of tolls, including by other toll providers; advocating on behalf of customers; and administering toll relief schemes.

Additionally, the Minister will be given the power to transfer assets to the ownership of NSW Motorways by order. Tolled public roads and publicly operated tollways that are not subject to a current private concession arrangement—like the Sydney Harbour Bridge and tunnel, the Western Harbour Tunnel and the M6 stage one—will immediately be transferred from their current ownership by Transport for NSW. The bill also establishes an independent Tolling Customer Ombudsman to deal with disputes and complaints between consumers and operators of toll roads. All operators in New South Wales will be bound by the decisions of the ombudsman. The bill also makes a provision for the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Authority to monitor toll prices on reference by the Minister.

Finally, I acknowledge my friend and the Minister for Roads in the other place, the Hon. John Graham, for his fervent commitment to reforming our toll system. I thank the Treasurer, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, also in the other place, for his work in addressing the cost-of-living crisis in our State, particularly on toll relief, which has saved my constituents millions of dollars. I even thank the Opposition for its begrudging support for the reform. I believe the words used by the shadow Minister when addressing the bill were "so be it". I suppose the people of New South Wales should be grateful for even that modicum of support from the Opposition and the shadow Minister. The Opposition still does not fully support toll capping, even though electorates like mine and Liberal-held electorates across the north-west like Baulkham Hills—and I note the member for Riverstone is in the Chamber—have benefited from over \$1 million in toll relief.

In their notices of motions, the Liberals constantly have a go at Labor for the cost-of-living crisis, but the Liberals do not seem to care about the financial pain they inflicted on their communities. They cry about the

reduction of the Active Kids program, which may return \$100 for some families, yet they want to prevent them from receiving hundreds or even thousands of dollars in benefit from toll relief. They sold assets like WestConnex in a move described as "the biggest waste of public funds for corporate gain in Australian history". Let us look briefly at the history of WestConnex. It was funded as a result of the Liberal-Nationals Government privatising electricity assets as part of its asset recycling scheme to build an untolled WestConnex. After the 2019 election, it suddenly sold WestConnex—which it promised not to sell—with a toll and baked-in price rises over the next 40 years at either 4 per cent or consumer price index, whichever is higher. It was an absolute disgrace to privatise the electricity network with higher electricity prices and WestConnex with guaranteed price increases. Why would anyone in Western Sydney vote Liberal?

The Liberals carry on about Active Kids vouchers helping more kids participate in sport than ever before, while Western Sydney residents are left to pay hundreds of dollars a week in tolls. In his second reading speech, Minister Graham said:

On 26 July 2018 at a media conference, the then Premier Gladys Berejiklian said that two-way tolling on the existing harbour crossing would be unavoidable when the Western Harbour Tunnel opened.

That means that the Liberals were already on record as planning to increase the toll on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Although residents of the northern suburbs may have received an additional toll as a result of Liberal policy, Western Sydney residents would have suffered an even bigger impact because they were already paying tolls on the M7, the M2, the Lane Cove Tunnel and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Thank God for Labor introducing the \$60 road toll cap. The residents of the Liberal-held electorates of Kellyville, Hawkesbury, Castle Hill and Winston Hills are lucky that they have a Labor Government. Maybe next time they will consider voting Labor since we are part of the north-west and care about the cost-of-living crisis.

Finally, I will look at the way tolls are charged. Whether drivers drive a small lorry truck or a B-double, they pay the same toll. Small businesses, removalists' trucks and people carrying food in small lorries are paying as much as large trucks. Most other States have a scheme with four different tolls: one for motorcycles, one for cars, one for small lorries and one for large trucks. When the Liberal Party and The Nationals were in power, they were so lazy. They said, "Let's just have two tolls. Bigger the small business owners who are running their fleet trucks to get goods and services to people. No, let's toll them at the same rate as the gigantic B-double trucks." And the Liberal Party calls itself the party of small business. They do not seem to care. The bill will eventually correct a lot of these problems. The people of Western Sydney are extremely grateful for the \$60 toll cap. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (11:30):** I make a contribution to debate on the Transport Administration Amendment (NSW Motorways) Bill 2024. Let us be frank: When we are talking about the tolling of motorways, what we are talking about is a tax on Western Sydney. While I acknowledge that there is a toll on the Sydney Harbour Bridge of \$4, it is worth noting that this toll has not increased in 14 years, whereas tolls on every other motorway are increased every three months. In the electorate of Riverstone, some people are spending in excess of \$250 a week on tolls. It is not as if that money is coming back to the New South Wales Government to improve infrastructure or provide more motorways, more connected transport corridors and public transport. This money is going to the shareholders of predominantly one company: Transurban.

The review conducted by Allan Fels and David Cousins was an excellent piece of work that looked to inject more fairness into Sydney's motorways. Recommendations from this work are being adopted by the Government to make sure that there is fairness across the whole system. It is not possible for the people of Western Sydney to carry the rest of Sydney when it comes to the cost of motorways. It is fundamentally unfair that the people of my electorate are forced over and over again, day after day, to pay on motorways. To give members an example, a return trip from the Quakers Hill entrance to the M7 motorway, travelling onto the M2, then into the Lane Cove Tunnel and then across the bridge to get to the middle of the city, is approximately \$40 every single day. This is unsustainable by any measure and needs to be addressed.

The purpose of the bill is to introduce fairness back into the system. The Opposition has feigned concern over the concept of two-way tolling on the Sydney Harbour Bridge since as far back as 2018, when Gladys Berejiklian said on Channel 9 that two-way tolling across Sydney Harbour was unavoidable. This was reinforced in the Western Harbour Tunnel environmental impact statement, which was approved in January 2021, which stated:

The potential cost increase associated with the introduction of a northbound toll on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Sydney Harbour Tunnel and Western Harbour Tunnel may be offset by travel time savings created by the project.

This was further reinforced in November 2021 in a report released by Transport for NSW requesting submissions to the Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection, which stated:

... the traffic assessment and modelling carried out for the environmental impact statement assumes that tolls would apply to all north and southbound trips on all harbour crossings in the future, including two-way tolling on the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link tunnel.

It is somewhat disingenuous for members opposite to say that these tolls should not be changed because it would be an unfair impost on their electorates and the people they represent when the vast majority of the revenue burden for toll roads is carried by the people of Western Sydney, particularly those in north-western Sydney.

Over and over again we are shown to be paying the most. All the way from suburbs like Baulkham Hills and Kellyville, through to Tallawong, Marsden Park and Schofields, and through the north-western belt, we are the ones bearing the brunt of the sell-off of Sydney's motorways and the former Government's obsession with privatising all our major connecting road networks and then creating funnels to ensure that the only viable way to get to and from work is via the motorways. It is entirely unsustainable and it must stop. I congratulate the Minister in the other place, the Hon. John Graham, on the work he has done on the bill. He is dedicated to ensuring that our tolling system is fair for everyone across Sydney, that the burden is not only carried by those in Western Sydney, that we can work together as a city to provide great connectivity between east and west, and that everyone pays their fair share.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (11:36):** I contribute to debate on the Transport Administration Amendment (NSW Motorways) Bill 2024. It is the sad record of the former Government and its philosophy of privatisation and letting the private sector manage essential public infrastructure and services wholesale that New South Wales is faced with being the most tolled jurisdiction on the face of the entire planet. When the Labor Government was elected, it gave a commitment that it would do something about that issue. This bill is part of our plan to make tolling and road costs fairer across the State.

The bill will establish a government agency, to be referred to as NSW Motorways, that will be given the job of overseeing the network of tollways that operates in the State. It will bring some order to a chaotic, costly, inefficient and privately-run system of tollways and roadways that is not working for the people of New South Wales. My electorate is located on the Central Coast, and a large number of my constituents use tollways daily in the conduct of business and to travel to and from work. The cost of those tolls is part of the huge cost-of-living burden inherited from the former Government and its privatisation economics. I can assure my constituents that the scheme to be developed by the Minns Labor Government will be informed by the work that is already being done.

The review of the tolling system conducted by the Government has shown there is a way to reorganise tolling in this State to make sure that everyone is paying less for the tollways they currently use, including people on the Central Coast. Some scuttlebutt has been generated, particularly by the member for Terrigal, about two-way tolling on the Sydney Harbour Bridge and whether that will result in more being paid by the people of the Central Coast than is currently the case. I know a lot of my constituents use that bridge to get to work. Those opposite were going to introduce two-way tolling in any event. In 2018 Gladys Berejiklian said that two-way tolls were "unavoidable".

The work we have done shows that two-way tolling on the bridge, as well as a general reorganisation of tolling that is overseen by a government authority—provided for in the bill, with oversight by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal and an ombudsman—will result in a fairer system of tolling and lower tolls overall for everybody in the State. I look forward to that occurring. I will keep engaging with the Ministers involved, particularly the fantastic Parliamentary Secretary for Transport. I acknowledge her fantastic work to make the tolling system fairer for everyone. That will see people, particularly on the Central Coast, pay less in tolls than they currently pay to use our roadways. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (11:40):** I participate ever so slightly in debate on the Transport Administration Amendment (NSW Motorways) Bill 2024. I welcome any measures that reduce stress and anxiety from cost-of-living pressures for the people of New South Wales. However, it is only fair to place firmly on record how the motorways and tollways came about in New South Wales and particularly in the Sydney area. Nobody likes to pay tolls or taxes. Unfortunately, if people want improved services and infrastructure, then the Government ultimately needs to find methods to support and fund them.

As our areas grew, particularly the area of Western Sydney, it was vital that new roads were built. New tolls were ultimately introduced on those roads under what I would call a user-pays model in order to fund the highways and motorways that support the growth areas in Western Sydney and in other areas of the city. However, it should always be remembered that one of the first tolls ever introduced to Sydney was on the M2. The M2 may have been started by the Greiner and Fahey governments, but the toll was introduced by the Carr Government. It introduced the toll on behalf of the constructor of that road, Transurban. It was one of Transurban's first ventures into tollways in Sydney.

**Ms Donna Davis:** And you didn't put any other tolls on?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** Order!

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** It was the first venture into tollways in Sydney, and the Carr Government was only too happy to implement tollway funding for that road and sign the initial contracts with Transurban in relation to how that funding would happen. As governments change, when contracts have previously been entered into, the following governments must follow those binding contracts. Did the then Coalition Government ultimately sign contracts? It did. But let me go through, as best I can off the top of my head, the list of all the toll roads that were introduced by the Labor Party across Sydney. As I said, the M2 was one of the first. Another one was the M4. All members remember when those areas, which were very much Labor electorates, cried poor. The Carr Government then introduced the cashback scheme, but only in that particular area of Western Sydney. It was quite discriminatory.

Another toll road was the M5, and then, of course, along came the M7, which was a dual-funded project between the Federal and the State governments. The Federal Government put up all the money for the acquisition of the land for the M7. As I have said many times, the M7 is one of the great outcomes for road travel, particularly between the north-west and the south-west areas of Sydney. It benefits not only commuters but also heavy vehicles and contractors, who travel on it every day. While the Federal Government was happy to provide the money for the acquisition of that road, the only investment the Carr Government made in the M7 was for the tollbooths. It was more than happy to put in place a toll as its contribution. So the M7 was also a tollway introduced by the Carr Government, once again entering into contracts with Transurban, which seemed to be one of the rare companies willing to take on the risk and fund the upgrade and construction of those roads, and receive remuneration from the user-pays system under the tollways in order to continue to develop roads across Sydney.

Then there are roads like the Cross City Tunnel, another road that the Carr Government introduced a toll on. Not only did it introduce the toll on the Cross City Tunnel; it also turned one lane on Epping Road into a bus-only lane, forcing traffic to divert onto the Lane Cove Tunnel, thereby increasing the number of vehicles going through that tunnel. The ill-fated Cross City Tunnel, even to this day, does not receive enough traffic. But, once again, the Carr Government was more than happy to enter into a user-pays tolling system in order to introduce that road. While the initial contracts for every one of those toll roads were entered into by the Carr Government prior to the previous Liberal-Nationals Government coming to power, I state for the record that we were more than happy to fund and then have a toll applied to WestConnex and NorthConnex.

Why? That is because they are possibly two of the greatest road networks that have ever been introduced to this city, relieving areas like Pennant Hills Road, which had enormous traffic gridlock every afternoon and certainly on public holidays and weekends. One of the greatest roads built in this city is WestConnex, on which people can now travel from Penrith all the way to Sydney airport, whether domestic or international, through Sydney Gateway, which was another project of ours. From Penrith to the airport, it costs a grand total of just over \$8 and saves some 20 or 25 minutes in travel, and possibly half an hour from some areas of Western Sydney. Just think about the cost savings in fuel, brakes, maintenance and everything on your vehicle. In my book, that \$8 is money well spent.

The Minns Labor Government has also permitted capped tolling for commercial vehicles and heavy vehicles. I would never begrudge some relief going to small business people, especially in relation to the heavy vehicle industry, but it should always be noted that any tolls or fuel revenue fees are completely tax deductible for business. Businesses using toll roads already had the opportunity to claim at least 30 per cent off their tolls prior to the cap being introduced. Unfortunately, the Minns Labor Government does not know too much about business. That is why it is not too popular with the business community. I note for the record that the heavy vehicles that transport goods throughout our regions into the ports of Sydney or Newcastle are the great beneficiaries of the roads that we upgrade and build.

The Liberal-Nationals Coalition will always stand by and acknowledge our ongoing great legacy of infrastructure, which includes roads such as WestConnex and NorthConnex. That legacy continues to be decried by the Minns Labor Government but will never be repeated by it. As I have said many times, if you hear the words "Labor in government" and "infrastructure", you know it is a myth, because those opposite do not build anything when they are in government. It is just a fantasy. I have already noticed that in my area. We were going to have a hospital finished at Rouse Hill halfway through next year, but sadly it has been scrapped. The completion date is now 2029. That is just one example of how Labor lets down the people of New South Wales.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** Order! Members will cease interjecting.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** The bill is a great opportunity to acknowledge the wonderful road network that was built by the Liberal-Nationals Coalition. It is also important to place on record the absolute facts of all of the

previous toll roads put in place by the Carr Labor Government. Finally, I note the imposition of a toll northbound on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The first day they were in government, those opposite said they would not put any more tolls in place, yet we now pay both ways on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Watch out—under Labor we pay more, but we get a lot less.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** I welcome to the gallery youth leaders and teachers from Mount Kuring-gai Public School, guests of the member for Hornsby.

**Business interrupted.**

*Business of the House*

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

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (11:50):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended this day to provide for the following routine of business for the remainder of the day:

- (1) Government business to continue until its completion.
- (2) Community recognition statements, for up to 20 minutes.
- (3) Private members' statements, after which the House to adjourn without motion moved until Tuesday 11 February 2025 at 12.00 p.m.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (11:51):** On behalf of the Opposition, I thank the Leader of the House for bringing this suspension to our attention. We support the suspension of standing orders.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills*

## **TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (NSW MOTORWAYS) BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Business resumed.**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (11:51):** On behalf of Ms Jo Haylen: In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Transport Administration Amendment (NSW Motorways) Bill 2024. In particular, I thank the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Penrith, the member for Granville, the member for Campbelltown, the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, the member for Camden, the member for Parramatta, the member for Blacktown, the member for Leppington, the member for Auburn, the member for Riverstone and the member for The Entrance. I also acknowledge the speakers from the Opposition: the member for Vacluse, the member for Davidson and the member for Kellyville.

I thank the Opposition for its support of the customer advocate functions and the tollway ombudsman. However, I would like to address some of the points raised. As the shadow Minister for Transport and Roads in the other place pointed out, reform is not easy. This is tough reform, and that has been reflected in the debate in both Houses. I am clear on the fact that people would love for it to move more quickly. That is also the Government's position, but this is very complex reform. To put it into context, we were actually told that this was impossible reform. We were told that it would be impossible to administer toll relief and get a \$60 toll cap in place. However, that scheme has been up and running since 1 January.

We were told that it would be impossible to change the contracts. That is no longer the view of the reviewers, the Government or, most importantly, the private toll road owners. On completion of the Independent Toll Review in July, we began negotiations with toll road operators. We said that we would waste no time in legislating towards our aim of a network-wide toll system, and that is exactly what we are doing. We provided for NSW Motorways in the June budget earlier this year. The Government is committed to getting a better deal for motorists. I now turn to some of the other points raised by the Opposition. The bill has been referred to as watered-down legislation. The bill does not refer directly to the new pricing model because that will be determined following negotiation with the toll road operators. The bill contains functions specifically for the following. New section 39B, "NSW Motorways functions", states:

- (b) to facilitate the collection of tolls by it and other toll operators,
- ...
- (f) to enter into or administer arrangements involving the collection of tolls,



The provisions are there in black and white. The Minister for Roads has made it clear that this is the first phase of legislation. The Government is not ruling out introducing more legislation. The Government genuinely wants to negotiate, and that was the offer earlier this year. Those negotiations are underway. We also want to work in a way that best allows those negotiations to meet the test set out by Allan Fels and David Cousins in those two important reports. They have guided where we have got to, and the Government is very grateful to both of them for the work they have done.

We are setting up NSW Motorways to drive future toll reform, and we are continuing to negotiate with toll road operators. We will not be tearing up contracts. The Opposition is right to say that not all of the toll roads or tolls were implemented by the former Government. That is absolutely true. But the vast bulk of the \$195 billion bill—40 per cent of that from WestConnex—that drivers are left with did come in that 12-year period. Toll reform should mean lower tolls for long-distance commuters, drivers in outer suburbs and drivers without access to public transport. The Premier has singled out those drivers, saying that we want to tip the system in their favour. I believe that is possible.

I turn to the question of two-way tolling. I am very grateful for the assistance of the member for Penrith, the member for Granville, the member for Campbelltown, and the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads in dealing with some of these issues. Two of the reports found that two-way tolling may be required, which was the view that Fels and Cousins came to. The Government has not made a decision on that review, but we will not entertain questions raised by Opposition members about that after they made it crystal clear that that was their plan. It was in black and white in the environmental impact statement in January 2020, which spelt out the fact that two-way tolling, northbound and southbound on the Harbour Bridge and in the Harbour Tunnel, was built into the assumptions. That was emphasised in November 2021 when two-way tolling was referenced as Transport for NSW responded to community submissions on the Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection. That made it clear that the traffic assessment and the modelling were all built on two-way tolling. That is why Gladys Berejiklian was very up-front and said that it would be unavoidable. That was always the plan.

The Opposition should be up-front about the fact that it was always the plan. Two-way tolling on those harbour crossings was built into all the assumptions, for the reason that Matt Kean was very public about. On 2GB, he said, "You certainly don't want to have a perverse outcome where you've got a toll road on one road and then everybody else avoids that toll by using the other road, causing more congestion and causing more traffic problems." That was the reason the former Government put those assumptions in the reports and the documents that were released as it responded to community submissions. That is why Matt Kean put that position publicly. Of course this is a difficult issue, but the Government will not accept advice by Opposition members, given that that was their position.

I thank members for their contributions. We have debated these matters a lot in both Houses. The bill is an important step forward. It will give us a very good chance of doing what no-one thought was possible—reforming tolls; just as no-one thought it was possible to get the cap in place. With the assistance of the House, we were able to do the first thing on 1 January. Now, with the help of the House, we will take another step forward. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL:** On behalf of Ms Jo Haylen: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AMENDMENT (BIODIVERSITY OFFSETS SCHEME) BILL 2024

### Second Reading Speech

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (12:00):** On behalf of Mr Jihad Dib: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Offsets Scheme) Bill 2024. On 17 July this year, the Government released the *NSW plan for nature*. The plan responds to the independent statutory review of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, led by Dr Ken Henry, and sets out how we will protect what is left, restore what has been degraded, and transition to a nature positive approach for biodiversity.

Dr Henry's review made it clear that nature in New South Wales is declining and must be set on a path to recovery. A key part of this picture is the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, which Dr Henry found required reform to ensure its effectiveness in protecting biodiversity. Previous inquiries and reviews into the scheme have identified similar concerns, including the 2022 parliamentary inquiry, which recommended that the scheme be reformed, that the "avoid and minimise" hierarchy be strengthened and that changes be made to ensure offsetting is genuinely used as a last resort.

That is why the Government made a key election commitment to fix the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme. The *NSW plan for nature* sets out the actions the Government will take to meet this commitment. Many of those actions require changes to the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. This bill is a major first step in delivering those necessary reforms and meeting the Government's commitment to fix the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme. Under the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, developers or landholders wanting to clear land must compensate, or offset, for any biodiversity loss. The offset is generated by a landowner through the permanent protection and improvement of a separate site with a similar habitat, through a stewardship agreement. The landholder receives annual payments to undertake management actions to offset the original development. The scheme is a necessary arrangement to provide a mechanism for balancing development and conservation objectives.

However, reforms are essential for the scheme to function effectively to ensure the environment is properly compensated whenever unavoidable biodiversity loss occurs. Having an effective offsets scheme which leads to better environmental outcomes will directly benefit communities like those in my electorate of the Blue Mountains, an area cherished for its natural beauty and unique biodiversity. The bill was referred to Portfolio Committee No. 7 - Planning and Environment for inquiry and report to the House. I thank the committee for its work, and I thank those who contributed to the inquiry process. It was encouraging to see a diverse range of stakeholders participate in the inquiry, and that most stakeholders broadly supported the intent of the bill. The Government listened carefully to the feedback received through the inquiry and my colleagues have worked closely with members in the other place to introduce a range of amendments to the proposed bill. I highlight that we are committed to meaningful engagement with stakeholders as we continue this reform process.

I now turn to the bill. The bill has five key elements. The bill requires that steps be taken to avoid impacts, first and foremost; requires the scheme to transition to delivering net positive biodiversity outcomes; allows for the circumstances where developers can pay into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund to be reduced and, when the fund is used, ensures quicker investment in impacted species and ecosystems; increases transparency through new public registers; and allows for local development to be exempt from the scheme in exceptional circumstances and for the regulations to prescribe circumstances where burden on low-impact local development can be reduced, particularly in regional areas. Amendments to subordinate legislation, including the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017, will be needed to implement the bill and deliver other reform commitments in the *NSW plan for nature*. Those further changes will include amending the scheme entry threshold so that small, low-impact local development does not come into the scheme, and removing the option for major mining proponents to meet a credit obligation through a commitment to ecological mine site rehabilitation.

I turn now to the details of the bill. The bill will improve the biodiversity outcomes achieved by the scheme. The Government's goal is to leave nature better off than we found it. Dr Henry recommended the scheme become nature positive, as it is a critical tool for reversing biodiversity loss. The bill will amend the Act to make it clear that the scheme will transition to net positive biodiversity outcomes. That will mean moving beyond the current "no net loss" standard to one where the scheme will achieve overall biodiversity gains. The bill requires a strategy to be developed that will set out how the scheme will transition to net positive, including targets, time frames and actions. The Government will take time to work with experts, stakeholders and the public on the development of the strategy, and carefully consider the views of scheme participants and impacts on the biodiversity credit market.

Part of the Government's pre-election commitment to fix the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme was to seek a greater emphasis on avoidance of biodiversity impacts as the first step in the offset process. Offsets must be a genuine last resort. While that step is currently required under the scheme too regularly, it is not given the focus it requires. The Government will legislatively require certain measures to be taken to fulfil that critical obligation. The bill strengthens the application of the "avoid, minimise and offset" hierarchy by requiring development proponents to take all reasonable measures to avoid and minimise impacts before moving to offsetting. The bill also requires that the avoid and minimise measures are genuine—that is, that they respond to biodiversity values on the site.

New statutory assessment standards detailing the requirements to meet that obligation will be set out in the regulation. It will give particular attention to protecting our most at-risk species and ecological communities, including our threatened plants and animals at risk of serious and irreversible impacts. To support the standard, the bill introduces a public register that will keep track of commitments to avoid and minimise impacts to biodiversity for approved projects. That new register is one of several to improve the transparency of the scheme.

In recognition of the critical responsibility that the Minister for the Environment has to protect biodiversity across New South Wales, the bill will provide a new ministerial concurrence power in relation to certain biodiversity offset decisions for State significant developments and infrastructure proposals.

Concurrence from the Minister for the Environment will be required for those State significant projects where it is proposed that approval be granted with conditions other than requiring the total number and class of biodiversity credits to be retired, as specified in the biodiversity development assessment report. That amendment will ensure biodiversity is protected, while also increasing consistency and minimising delays to the approvals process for these important projects. The bill will also strengthen the processes, requirements and administration of the Biodiversity Conservation Fund to support the Biodiversity Conservation Trust in achieving outcomes for biodiversity. The bill will require the trust to acquit offset obligations paid into the fund within three years, after which it must enter into an agreement with the Minister for the Environment on how the obligation will be met. This will ensure that impacts to biodiversity are offset sooner and minimise delays in biodiversity outcomes. While this seems administrative in nature, it is critical. Any delay means that biodiversity has been lost and not yet compensated for.

I turn next to how the bill will support a well-functioning biodiversity credit market. The Government's pre-election commitment to fix the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme specifically identified that payment into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund, which currently operates as a default pathway for many proponents, should be a genuine last resort. The bill will enable restrictions to be imposed on when proponents can meet offsets obligations through payment into the fund. These restrictions will be set out in changes to the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017 following public consultation. This reform will facilitate greater participation in the biodiversity credit market while still ensuring that the fund is available when needed.

I turn to how the bill will increase the efficiency and transparency of the scheme. Both the Henry review and the 2022 inquiry into the scheme found that there was a lack of transparency around how the scheme operates and on the biodiversity outcomes it delivers. The bill addresses these issues by introducing requirements for new public registers. The bill will establish new public registers to provide transparency of actions taken and commitments made by proponents to avoid and minimise impacts to biodiversity; offsets obligations imposed for projects under the scheme, including if, when and how these obligations have been met; decisions made to approve developments, activities or clearing with serious and irreversible impacts; and ministerial decisions to exempt local development from the scheme following a natural disaster or other exceptional circumstances. To support the establishment of these registers and ensure that they are accessible and reliable, we are also investing in the digital systems underpinning the scheme. The bill also proposes a series of small but important amendments to clarify the intent and interpretation of existing provisions in the Act.

Finally, the bill will enable a better balance to be struck between the costs associated with complying with the scheme and the risks to biodiversity posed by smaller scale local development. Dr Henry made several recommendations that considered how the scheme could apply more reasonably to local development. The scheme applies to a range of different development types across New South Wales, from major projects to small developments. This is an important aspect of the scheme that ensures that unavoidable impacts to biodiversity are identified, assessed and offset wherever they occur. However, we must ensure that the application of the scheme is balanced, taking a risk-based approach to impacts on biodiversity from development, and that the scheme is workable for small developers and local community.

The bill will allow for scheme entry thresholds to be revised through amendments to the regulation so that we can reduce the regulatory burden on low-impact local development. It is important for the scheme to apply sensibly, especially in regional areas. We will consider these changes in consultation with local government and with communities. The bill introduces a new power that enables the Minister for the Environment to provide exemptions from the scheme for local development in exceptional circumstances or in response to natural disasters. After the 2019-20 bushfires, temporary legislative amendments were made to switch off the scheme to help affected communities rebuild and get back on their feet. This new power will allow the Minister for the Environment to respond more quickly to similar disasters and ensure that there is some flexibility when needed.

In line with the Government's commitment to improve transparency, all exemptions to the scheme will be published on a new public register. The Minister will be required to set out reasons for the exemption, including the consideration of ecologically sustainable development. The bill also facilitates the making of regulations to create a formal review process for landholders whose land is mapped on the Biodiversity Values Map, one of the scheme triggers for local development. The regulations will mean that landholders will be able to formally request a review if they believe the mapping for their property is incorrect. If the review finds their land should be removed from the Biodiversity Values Map, and they do not meet other entry requirements, the scheme will not apply.

This bill represents the biggest reform to the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme since its inception. It is a significant first step in implementing our commitments to fix the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme and set nature in

New South Wales on a path of recovery. The next step will involve amendments to subordinate legislation, including the Biodiversity Conversation Regulation 2017, to operationalise key positions in the bill and deliver other reform commitments laid out in the *NSW plan for nature*. We will continue to engage stakeholders, including through public consultation, as we continue this reform process. Under our *NSW plan for nature*, we will protect what is left, restore what has been degraded and begin the transition to a nature positive approach for biodiversity in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (12:15):** I contribute to debate on the Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Offsets Scheme) Bill 2024, on behalf of the Opposition. I acknowledge the debate last night in the Legislative Council, which neatly encapsulated many of the challenges with the legislation and the scheme itself. Generally three themes emerged from that debate: the tension between development and conservation; the perspectives between urban versus regional challenges; and the practical solutions versus the ideological stances when it comes to the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme itself. All of those are fair perspectives and reinforce the importance of getting the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme right, and the amendments to the scheme via the bill go some way to achieving that.

It is important to recognise that New South Wales is not the only jurisdiction grappling with the loss of biodiversity and nature and the need to build homes and infrastructure. It is, in fact, a global challenge. However, we have the opportunity to lead in preparing and implementing solutions and responses to that challenge. Principally, that can be done via the New South Wales nature positive strategy, which seeks to steer the direction of biodiversity and nature in this State. Responding to the pressures being faced by biodiversity will require the improvement of the much-maligned, but incredibly important, Biodiversity Offsets Scheme.

I recall the significant amount of energy and effort put into improving the scheme by many talented and passionate departmental staff during my time as Minister. I also remember getting routinely whacked at every opportunity by *The Guardian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* about the scheme, and now by the Government. Perhaps the most visible reform was the establishment of the Biodiversity Credits Supply Fund and the taskforce, and I recognise and pay tribute to Dr Louisa Mamouney in her capacity as executive director of Nature Markets and Offsets. No-one can say that the departmental staff associated with the offsets scheme, then and now, have ever done anything but try their best to improve the scheme. I acknowledge the Minister's office—in particular, Emily Dyball, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell and the Hon. Scott Farlow in the other place—for their collective, collaborative approach to try to put forward amendments that improve the scheme from all perspectives.

The Biodiversity Offsets Scheme is both a simple and a complex thing. It was introduced to address the environmental impacts of development by counterbalancing them through equivalent ecological restoration elsewhere. It is simple to describe in one sentence but very hard to implement in reality. However, just because something is hard does not mean it should not be done. I still do not believe many people truly appreciate what the impact on our world will be if the biodiversity problem is not effectively addressed. In the mind of a busy person, it is unfortunately a lower order issue and a problem that perhaps does not quite make sense when they see the world around them. To a city dweller or a frustrated rural or regional landowner, the scheme can be—and is, in some respects—cumbersome and complicated, which brings us to the reforms in the bill.

In New South Wales, over 1,000 plant and animal species are listed as threatened. That stark reality underscores the need for immediate action to protect our natural environment. However, persistent issues such as inadequate enforcement, over-reliance on financial contributions instead of on-the-ground actions and the undervaluing of biodiversity credits have hampered its effectiveness. Yes, the scheme has a difficult history. It also has the real challenge of its experience with rural and regional landholders who want to improve or manage their land. The publishing of the recent *NSW plan for nature* marks a possible turning point. Building on the recommendations of the Henry review, the nature positive strategy aims to shift away from merely mitigating biodiversity loss to actively restoring ecosystems. That approach emphasises measurable improvements in biodiversity, moving towards net positive outcomes that leave nature better off than when we found it. It can work alongside and not in conflict with the planning system.

A robust offsets system benefits not just the environment but also the economy and communities. By preserving natural assets, we safeguard critical ecosystems such as water filtration, soil fertility and pollination, which underpin industries like agriculture and tourism. Furthermore, offsets can empower landholders by enabling them to participate in biodiversity markets, turning conservation into a viable livelihood option. Yet the scheme's success hinges on its integrity. Without rigorous standards and meaningful enforcement, offset risks become a licence to destroy nature under the guise of compliance. A well-functioning system must ensure that offsets are ecologically equivalent and timely, which is feedback and insights that both conservation groups and developers and proponents support and want.

I make this point: The idea that the environment, or environmental stewardship, and economic growth are mutually exclusive is an outdated misconception. In fact, not only can the two goals coexist but also they can reinforce each other when pursued thoughtfully. It is my long-held view that the future lies in treating natural capital as a cornerstone of economic planning. By fostering its sustainable use, we can align economic property with environmental stewardship, ensuring a thriving planet and economy. The Opposition is happy to support the bill. However, we note that, for some, it does not go far enough and they feel let down; for others, it does not remedy their problems with the scheme.

Despite the promise of these reforms, challenges remain. For example, we will require robust data and reporting systems and capacity building for local government and landholders, particularly those in the regions. Addressing the underdelivering of biodiversity credits and ensuring ecological equivalence in offsets where possible will continue to be important. A functioning Biodiversity Offsets Scheme is more than a policy tool. It is an opportunity to restore ecosystems and create thriving, resilient economies for a sustainable future. Conservation should not be an afterthought or framed as a barrier to progress but a foundation of progress. We support the bill.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (12:21):** On behalf of The Greens in the Legislative Assembly, I make a contribution to debate on the Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Offsets Scheme) Bill 2024. Our Environment portfolio holder, Ms Sue Higginson in the other place, is one of the leading and eminent environmental lawyers in the country—she taught me environmental law in my law degree. She and her team have worked tirelessly on the bill, and we were able to move significant amendments to the bill in the other place last night. But let us be clear: The Greens do not like offsets at all. That is our policy. The idea we can take action that is likely to make a species extinct and then alleviate our conscience by promoting another species is flawed and, in an extinction crisis, absolutely absurd.

Ms Sue Higginson chaired the inquiry that looked into this bill, and she wants me to reiterate her thanks to every single person who participated. I acknowledge that the Minister's staff are, basically, trying to make something that is so deeply flawed workable, and our opposition to the bill and my criticism are in no way a reflection on their intention. It should be noted that the timeline of the inquiry was incredibly truncated. It was raised by numerous stakeholders that the period for submissions was incredibly short and did not allow time for many organisations to properly understand the proposed changes and how they interact with our dysfunctional Biodiversity Offsets Scheme. It is extremely complex. I share quotes from a submission to the inquiry, which, as far as The Greens are concerned, spell it out. The submission stated:

Biodiversity offsetting is fundamentally nature negative. Offsets do not repair nature, and they do not result in 'biodiversity gains' because they destroy at least as much as they protect. Over time, offsetting frameworks have evolved to focus on facilitating development with little regard to whether genuine environmental outcomes are being delivered.

The NSW biodiversity offsetting system has delivered a market mechanism that enables project approval to be granted in almost every situation. Biodiversity has become a cost of doing business, not a decisive factor in whether a proposal should be permitted or refused.

We can say "nature positive", but saying it does not make it so. The submission goes on to say:

The reforms proposed by this Amendment Bill will not change business as usual.

Another submission explains:

Review after review has shown that the NSW Biodiversity Offsets Scheme is failing biodiversity. It has failed to drive protection of areas that cannot withstand further loss, it has failed to deliver meaningful conservation gains in exchange for approved harm, and it has failed to contribute to better management of our wildlife and the places they call home.

It is unfortunately trite to say that the practice of biodiversity offsetting in New South Wales is facilitating biodiversity decline and pushing communities and species—including endangered species—towards extinction. But that is what it is doing. That is the view of anyone who is looking. We understand that many conservation groups want to see those minimal changes so that there is some improvement, but we put on record that The Greens do not support the bill.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (12:25):** I am pleased to speak in support of the Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Offsets Scheme) Bill 2024. As everyone in this place will acknowledge, the content of the bill and the broader Biodiversity Offsets Scheme is incredibly complex, but it is critical to balance the preservation of biodiversity while delivering the important housing and infrastructure that we need as a society. Getting that balance right is not an easy task for any government. How we got here is important. In 2016 the Coalition introduced its land management and biodiversity conservation reforms. The Nationals got land-clearing laws, and the Liberals, through the now Opposition leader, got the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme. That reform was in response to criticism that approval requirements for agricultural development were significantly more burdensome than approvals in the planning system. While that imbalance may have been a

legitimate criticism, the Coalition's reforms did not get the balance right. Labor vehemently opposed those laws in opposition, and we now have the task of repair.

Since its introduction in 2017, the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme has been subject to a series of independent reviews, including the 2021 parliamentary inquiry into the integrity of the NSW Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, the 2022 Auditor-General's report on the effectiveness of the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme and the 2023 statutory review of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 by Dr Ken Henry, AC. Those reviews all found that the scheme as it was failing to deliver biodiversity conservation outcomes for communities. The Henry review stated:

Biodiversity is not being conserved at bioregional or State scale. The diversity and quality of ecosystems is not being maintained, nor is their capacity to adapt to change and provide for the needs of future generations being enhanced.

Ahead of the last election, NSW Labor committed to fix the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme. The bill is the first step in achieving that, and the first legislative step in the Government's broader *NSW plan for nature*. It is clear that a lot more work has to be done. The issues with the scheme are diverse and complex. There is no silver bullet to the issue. Governments around the world are grappling with the task of how to preserve nature in perpetuity while allowing important and necessary development. What we do know is that we can no longer be the managers of a steady decline. We must put nature back on a path to recovery. We can do that while still building the homes and infrastructure we need. While many oppose the concept of an offsets scheme, it is vital for a government to have a mechanism in place to manage biodiversity loss from development and compensate for that loss when it is unavoidable. The bill aims to improve this process and get the balance right between reducing biodiversity loss and supporting development.

The bill represents a crucial step in reforming the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme and sets the foundation for future improvements to the scheme through amendments to the regulation and the development of a strategy to transition the scheme to net positive outcomes. The bill mandates a new process where avoidance and minimisation measures must be undertaken, which will ensure that areas of high ecological value are first avoided, reducing the cost of offsets for proponents and making biodiversity liabilities clear up-front. Importantly, the bill introduces flexibility for regional communities, reduces the burden of the scheme in exceptional circumstances like natural disasters and allows flexibility for low-risk local development where the scheme is inappropriately onerous. This new flexibility goes some way to address the criticism that the scheme has disproportionate financial impacts on regional communities. The bill also provides transparency, consistency and accountability of decision-making under the scheme, with new public registers that will open the black box of the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme.

The inquiry into the bill heard from a range of stakeholders. By and large, most supported the bill—in particular, its establishment of the avoid, minimise, offset hierarchy; the transition to a net positive offsets scheme; and the requirement for the Biodiversity Conservation Trust to acquit obligations within three years. The establishment of the new public registers to provide transparency and accountability was also welcomed. Most issues raised in the inquiry related to the broader operations of the scheme, including that there are no limits to development in places with the highest ecological value, that cost and complexity of the scheme are not addressed, that the scheme burdens land that has been returned to Aboriginal communities under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, as well as the impact of the scheme on housing and infrastructure development, the lack of support for local government, and the disproportionate impact of the scheme on regional development. What was made clear in the committee process is that a lot more work is required to improve the scheme and address the genuine issues raised by the wide range of stakeholders who presented to the inquiry.

In conclusion, the reforms in the bill are just the start of the Government's broader efforts to refine and strengthen the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme. It is important that these foundational changes are implemented now so that the Government can continue to build on them as part of its broader reforms to biodiversity laws, as detailed in the *NSW plan for nature*.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (12:32):** I speak on behalf of The Nationals on the Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Offsets Scheme) Bill 2024. From the outset, I say that The Nationals support protecting the environment. No-one wants to see the environment destroyed, but the right balance needs to be struck in our approach. Despite the words of the member for South Coast, we do not believe that has happened enough in the bill. I agree that the Act has a complex history. It was implemented by the former Liberal-Nationals Government in 2016 to provide a sensible framework that strives to achieve a triple bottom line where economic, social and environmental outcomes are all prioritised. The 2016 reforms that are in place today were a decade in the making and, most importantly, were based on common sense. While I acknowledge that there is definitely more work to do in this space, we cannot afford to create a situation where it is harder to get the developments our communities need over the line. Some of that is industrial development, but I am talking about building homes in the middle of a housing shortage crisis.

The Nationals have some serious concerns with the bill because parts of it resemble a return to the bad old days of Bob Carr, whose Labor Government was hellbent on stopping building, developing and farming through its unworkable legislation. There is a reason those days have been left in the past. Although the 2016 Act was not perfect, it aimed to bring all sides together, including developers and environmentalists, each giving some ground to ultimately create a system that worked for everyone. The bill in its current form threatens that commonsense approach, which is why The Nationals moved amendments in the upper House to try to address some of those concerns. I thank my colleagues Sarah Mitchell, Leader of The Nationals in the upper House, and Scott Farlow for moving those amendments.

The simple fact is that the majority of the impact of these legislative changes will fall on regional New South Wales. It is the single biggest challenge to building and developing in regional areas. It does not make sense to further restrict development in the bush. Those areas are the engine room of the State, supplying a disproportionate amount of our goods and services while also helping to supercharge Australia's exports. One concerning part of the scheme is that it can impose significant regulatory burdens, especially on small, low-impact local developments, particularly in the regions. The Country Mayors Association has given examples of where the program has not worked as intended, including where the offset costs of a project are far greater than what the land or project is actually worth.

Bourke Shire Council had planned to develop a number of small commercial blocks that were due to be sold at about \$48,000 each, but the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme added a further \$480,000 to each block, making the project unviable. That development would have helped to generate economic activity in the region and bring down unemployment. Instead, the scheme led to the cancellation of the development and the jobs it would have brought. Bogan Shire Council at Nyngan faced a similar issue. It was hit with a \$339,000 offset cost for a small housing development. The offsets more than doubled the cost of every block and made them impossible to sell. In Moree, a planned housing development of 600 blocks to accommodate an influx of people doing a range of jobs for the Inland Rail was again left in the dust. The most suitable location was chosen for that project and the planning had begun, but the cost of biodiversity offsets tripled the land price and made the project unviable.

A similar scenario played out with the plan to raise the Wyangala Dam wall, which was a crucial project that would have delivered water security, drought resilience and flood mitigation for communities along the Lachlan River. The water Minister has now scrapped that project, essentially because of this Act, leaving those communities wondering how many floods and droughts they will have to endure before common sense prevails. Again, the offsets would have been more than half the total cost of the project, which made it unviable. It is a classic case of putting environmental needs above and beyond the needs of people in our communities. Because of that, we have lost projects that could literally save towns and lives.

In regional areas, we are talking about vast areas of land that are much bigger than the inner city. It does not do to compare Bourke to Balmain. It would not make a significant difference to remove a tree. The land value in cities is much higher than in remote and regional areas. Bourke shire, for example, is about 200 kilometres by 215 kilometres. To treat it the same as a city area does not make sense. That is why the Opposition moved an amendment to cap any amount paid into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund at a maximum payment of 5 per cent of the value of the land in regional areas. That would help to maintain a fair system that does not unduly penalise smaller regional developments but is still clear about how to safeguard biodiversity.

There would still be a process for biodiversity offsets and a cost involved, so it would not be a free-for-all, but it would better reflect the market and make projects possible rather than impossible in regional areas. Unfortunately, that very sensible amendment was not agreed to. It was something that the Country Mayors Association had been calling for. I know the team from the environment Minister's office, including Emily, who is in the gallery today, has been having recent conversations with a delegation from the Country Mayors Association. I encourage the Government to further consider a pathway to make things fairer for regional areas, which are definitely feeling the brunt of the scheme.

The amendment moved yesterday was about housing. We felt that was a sensible start, given that housing is a big priority for the Government. However, it should extend further to community infrastructure, water and other enabling infrastructure, and commercial developments in places like Bourke that would also have a significant community benefit. Another consideration that has been raised with me and with the Minister's office is about capping the contribution at a level proportionate with the value of the project to ensure that developments can remain viable in low-value areas. Otherwise, that retardation of development will continue.

Allowing environmental improvements within the development to be used as offset credits would also raise the overall standard of the development, along with mapping low-to-nil value biodiversity areas around regional towns that could be developed without the need for any biodiversity assessment. Further suggestions included consideration of offset credits being provided by adjoining national parks and used for the maintenance and improvement of those parks, as well as consideration of environmental lands dedicated to council for public

use being able to access funds from the trust for future maintenance of that asset. Plenty of ideas can be looked at to lessen the blow on regional areas. I thank the Minister's team for being in the gallery, and I call on the Minister to keep engaging in constructive conversations with the Country Mayors Association and other stakeholders to find a solution, because the regions are just a bit different.

Environmental activists do not want to make things easier for development; I get that. They often like to throw the word "crisis" around when it comes to biodiversity, but that largely ignores the multiple crises currently faced by our State. In 2024 we have a housing crisis, an energy crisis and a cost-of-living crisis, all of which the bill unfortunately will further exacerbate. As I mentioned earlier, Labor put housing at the centre of its policy platform, yet the Premier has already admitted his Government will not meet this year's target of 75,000 homes. People are hurting and feeling the impacts of the supply crisis. Rent is skyrocketing, housing approvals are down by 25 per cent compared with the former Coalition Government's record, and it has never been harder to buy a house. But the bill is one of the biggest handbrakes on new housing supply in New South Wales.

It looks like the Government wants to make it even worse. I am not sure how anyone could think that putting more red tape on housing projects, paying larger offsets and building less on the available land will do anything other than drive up housing prices. Stakeholders like the Urban Development Institute of Australia and the Urban Taskforce brought a lot of common sense to the committee that was looking into the issue. It is fool's gold for the Government to think that the bill will have no impact on future supply. That is why the Opposition also moved amendments in the other place to provide standards for the "avoid and minimise" hierarchy, including defining what "reasonable actions" mean and limiting avoidance to a single time at the beginning of the zoning process.

We keep hearing that the bill fulfils a Labor election commitment to fix the scheme. Unfortunately, it seems like that commitment has translated into fewer homes and less common sense. Again, more often than not, regional New South Wales is the biggest loser in these decisions. The Nationals do not disagree that the Biodiversity Conservation Act needs improvement, but any reforms need to make it better, not worse. Above all, we believe in a New South Wales where we build things, where everyone can afford a house, and where we create jobs and enable our communities to thrive. We are disappointed the Government has failed to recognise the damage that could be done here. We will keep working to strike the right balance between providing the protection that is needed and ensuring that our State has what it needs to grow into the future.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:42):** Biodiversity in New South Wales is under threat. We have some of the worst extinction rates in the world, and habitat loss is rapidly accelerating. Experts estimate that we are losing 50 million trees a year. We are not on track to save the over 1,000 species and over 100 ecological communities at risk of extinction by 2050. Loss of biodiversity will have severe impacts on food production, air and water quality, carbon emissions and resilience to climate change. Our future is under threat. Yet our biodiversity offsets scheme, which is meant to deliver new biodiversity outcomes whenever there is a loss from development, is acting as nothing more than a mechanism for environmental destruction. Most biodiversity loss is permitted, regardless of how serious. Numerous reviews have found that the scheme is a driver of biodiversity decline rather than of biodiversity gain.

I welcome the Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Offsets Scheme) Bill 2024 and acknowledge the Government's commitment to reversing the loss of native bush and achieving a nature net positive future. The bill will put integrity, accountability and transparency into the system. New requirements under the bill for proponents to provide early reports identifying how they have complied with their obligations to avoid and minimise destruction before offsets can be made available will encourage proposals to reduce destruction in the first instance. New public registers of decisions around offset obligations, exemptions and serious and irreversible impacts will ensure public scrutiny of the system, and amendments in the other place ensure that reporting will continue until offsets are delivered. The transparency will improve accountability and help us improve how offsets are delivered in the future.

Regulations will limit the very fraught Biodiversity Conservation Fund, which has become nothing more than a way to pay for destruction, regardless of whether a future offset of equivalent value could be achieved. It will be harder and more expensive to pay into the fund, and there will be a three-year time frame to expend funds so that offsets cannot be delayed indefinitely. Offset discounts for State significant development and State significant infrastructure will have more oversight, with concurrence required from the Minister for the Environment. Most importantly, the bill will require the Minister to establish a strategy to transition the scheme to net positive. Biodiversity offsetting has been nature negative. In every situation, at best, the mechanism has only ever ensured that the amount of biodiversity protected is equivalent to the amount that is destroyed. If we are to avert mass extinction in the next few decades, we need a nature positive scheme. I welcome the non-regression clause passed in the other place to ensure ambitions and targets can only ever be improved.



Further work is needed to guarantee real environmental gains. We urgently need to map high-value conservation land and guarantee that it cannot be destroyed for an offset. Exclusions that enable government projects to destroy biodiversity without offsets need to be removed and exemptions for low-impact development need to be tightened to ensure that only genuinely low-impact development is included. We need to strengthen the like-for-like offsets to limit trading of different species and different ecological communities or trading for conservation actions. Amendments passed in the other place will exclude proponent-led variations, helping to reduce trading between species and ecological communities. I worked with my lower House Independent colleagues—the member for Wakehurst, the member for Lake Macquarie, the member for Wollondilly and the new member for Pittwater—to advocate for those amendments. We appreciate the strong working relationship with the Government to achieve some good outcomes in the other place.

It is especially important that, as we reduce access to the Biodiversity Conservation Fund, we do not give proponents a loophole through variations to water down their conservation obligations. While more reform is needed, I understand that the bill is a first step in a process to achieve a world-class, nature-positive offsets scheme. I thank the Minister and her office, especially Emily Dyball, for working collaboratively across the Parliament, including with the lower House crossbench, and for committing to improving biodiversity protections. I will continue to work with the Government and my crossbench colleagues to help save the State's threatened species and ecological communities from extinction. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (12:47):** Before I commence my contribution to debate on the Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Offsets Scheme) Bill 2024, I acknowledge the Darkinjung people, on whose land I live, work and play on the Central Coast. The bill is important to the future development of land they have in our community. I will continue to work with them to make sure we get the right balance between development and protection of biodiversity in our community. I am pleased to support the bill, which is the first step in the Government's plan for nature and the first step to improve the highly complex and contentious Biodiversity Offsets Scheme. I thank Ken Henry for his review of the Biodiversity Conservation Act and also his review of the native vegetation provisions of the Local Land Services Act. Ken Henry's review included 58 recommendations, and the Government accepted 49 of them. Thirty of the recommendations relate to the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, and the bill addresses those recommendations. Mr Henry said:

Biodiversity is not being conserved at bioregional or State scale. The diversity and quality of ecosystems is not being maintained, nor is their capacity to adapt to change and provide for the needs of future generations being enhanced.

I thank the Minister for the Environment in the other place, Penny Sharpe, who has been a passionate advocate for the environment and who condemned the laws introduced in 2016, which basically ripped up environmental protections and replaced them with a land management framework. In her second reading speech in the other place, Minister Sharpe said:

Biodiversity in New South Wales is in crisis. Half of the threatened species currently listed are on track to extinction within the next 100 years. Without urgent action many species like mountain frogs, koalas, pygmy possums and regent honeyeaters, as well as plants such as the Wollemi pine, could be lost. Our landscapes are a shadow of their former selves. Half the bioregions in New South Wales have less than one-third of their original ecological capacity remaining. We have seen rivers run dry, increasingly severe drought, the rise of soil salinity and disconnected habitat, all of which are further compounded by the impacts of climate change.

The bill aims to strike a better balance between protecting our unique natural environment and enabling essential development. By identifying biodiversity risks earlier through new "avoid and minimise" requirements, the bill aims to reduce uncertainty and unnecessary costs for proponents while preserving our most important environments. The main thing that industry says to the Government is that certainty is crucial. This reform will make biodiversity constraints clearer at the beginning of the planning process, not years down the track when a proponent receives an offsets bill for impacts that could have and should have been avoided at the very beginning.

The bill also raises our ambition by introducing a new "net positive" overall standard for the offsets scheme. The scheme currently applies a "no net loss" standard, but the reality is that, with the various discretions across the scheme, the no net loss standard is far from being met. Over time, the Government will transition to a net positive outcome across the whole scheme. Importantly, the bill also improves the integrity and transparency of the scheme by introducing new public registers. That will improve public access to government information, and having clearer data will also inform future reform of the scheme.

I focus on how the bill will benefit regional communities. The bill will reduce regulatory burden, particularly for low-risk development in regional communities, and reduce costs through earlier avoidance of impact. The bill helps deliver on the commitment in the *NSW plan for nature* to better balance the application of the scheme with biodiversity risks. It also recognises that not all developments will have significant impacts on biodiversity and that some offset costs are disproportionate to the overall biodiversity risk. It is essential that the scheme is sensibly applied to small developers and local communities, particularly those in regional areas, who face additional challenges in navigating the scheme.

The amendments include powers to enable changes to scheme entry thresholds for low-risk local development, the establishment of formal processes for landholders to request a review of the Biodiversity Values Map for their land, and new powers to exempt local development from the scheme and support local communities impacted by natural disasters or other exceptional circumstances. Taken together, those amendments will reduce the regulatory burden of the scheme on local development where appropriate and while considering the level of biodiversity risk. Along with the reforms dealt with in the bill, the *NSW plan for nature* makes further commitments to support Government priorities for housing, renewable energy and critical infrastructure. We will improve regional planning and bio-certification processes so that communities will have confidence and clarity that their essential infrastructure will be delivered while maintaining their local environment and amenity.

We will map areas of higher biodiversity value to provide clear guidance to the community and decision-makers about areas where biodiversity impacts should be avoided. We are having a meeting this afternoon to discuss some of those areas of high biodiversity value in my community. They will be clearly marked out so that developers have a clear understanding of what can and cannot be invested in and developed. We will modernise our understanding and application of ecological sustainable development principles with a focus on ensuring that biodiversity conservation and intergenerational equity are being achieved. That includes improving how Aboriginal cultural heritage, climate change and cumulative impacts are considered within the concept of ecological sustainable development.

The bill was referred to a portfolio committee inquiry in the other place. The committee received 57 individual submissions and heard from 39 stakeholders across two days of public hearings. I thank all those who contributed by making submissions, attending hearings and sharing their knowledge and perspectives with the committee. I also thank the committee, which released its report on Friday 11 October. It found that the majority of stakeholders are broadly supportive of the intentions of the bill. The bill supports local communities and provides flexibility without compromising the Government's vision to set nature back on the path to recovery. It is an important first step in achieving the Government's commitments to reform the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme. I thank the Minister and her team for their work in getting us to this place. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (12:54):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Offsets Scheme) Bill 2024. The bill attempts to correct the approach by the previous Government to reform biodiversity management. That approach could be described as an each-way bet that ended up achieving little and pleasing few. It appears to have slowed development and led to worse outcomes for the environment. The Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 was meant to avoid impacts on high-value areas of biodiversity. Instead, it appears to have simply saddled developers with sometimes expensive offset requirements that came far too late in the development process and did little for the environment. This slowed much-needed development, and yet the state of the environment went backwards.

Under this reform, the focus will be to protect biodiversity earlier in the assessment process, meaning there is a clear picture of environmental and financial obligations, hopefully supporting outcomes that will help to deliver offsets that enable development to proceed more smoothly. The emphasis is on avoiding and minimising damage rather than offsets or, worse still, paying for offsets that never occur. This approach should help to reduce costs, especially in cases of high-value impacts, and allow works to proceed with the aim of a nature positive outcome. At a time of a critical housing shortage, when we need more land for more homes, this reform must create a path for development that is balanced by a more efficient system of offsetting environmental costs.

Development should not come at any cost, and environmental values must be protected. Currently, development is coming at a nature negative cost. Opaque rules, arbitrary discretionary powers and pathways to sidestep regulations are failing to deliver for the environment and leaving communities without confidence in the scheme. I applaud the Government and the work that has been done on the bill, but the scheme should not add unnecessarily to the regulatory burden of local regional development at a time of a housing shortage. I welcome the potential advantages it offers to smaller developments through defining the issues at hand up-front and providing knowledge about what needs to be done and when. Importantly, the bill provides a power through new section 7.2 (3), outlined by the Minister in her second reading speech in the Legislative Council. She stated:

The bill, through new section 7.2 (3), will allow for scheme entry thresholds to be revised through subsequent regulatory amendments so we can reduce the regulatory burden on lower impact local development, including in regional areas.

The Minister also stated:

... we must ensure that the application of the scheme is balanced, taking a risk-based approach to impacts on biodiversity from development, and that the scheme works to support small developers and local communities.

I welcome this flexibility and emphasise how important it is. The current legislation has been a block on reasonable development, without doing anything for the environment. Significantly, the legislation offers greater controls

over large projects—State significant infrastructure projects. Those projects really do need to focus much more on avoiding and minimising environmental effects rather than just purchasing offsets that may or may not happen. Offsets delayed can easily be offsets denied.

A case in point is Transgrid's HumeLink project. I am very pleased to be able to speak in this place on this project once again. I know the Minister's advisers in the gallery welcome this, but I make a serious point. The project will cut a swathe of destruction through the forests and grasslands of the Snowy Valleys, and there are plans to offset this. The approval that has just been given by the Minister has required a \$502.3 million bank guarantee as security to make sure offsets are implemented. That is more than 10 per cent of the cost of the project. It is extraordinary.

The great and tragic irony of HumeLink's no gold-plated option—it is the cheaper option, the overhead option—is that money saved on overhead lines leads to extra costs on biodiversity offsets. When one thinks about it, the priority for the Transgrid HumeLink project should have been avoidance and mitigation. And how would damage be avoided and mitigated? Undergrounding could have been utilised instead of putting up overhead lines. Carving paths for overhead powerlines through hundreds of kilometres of woodlands is hardly putting avoidance and mitigation first. Yet if the HumeLink lines were to be undergrounded—an option dismissed mainly because of alleged cost—the destruction would be far less severe and the burden of offsetting that damage much lighter.

In fact, Amplitude Consultants, using Transgrid's dollars per kilometre, estimated that the narrower undergrounding option could have reduced biodiversity offset costs by more than half a billion dollars. Instead, we will be forced to live with the ugly overhead option that will scar lifestyles, livelihoods and communities, while at the same time destroying large sections of our environment. We know about those issues. I have spoken about them many times in this Parliament. I bring them up in the context of this bill because it is a perfect illustration of why the approach of this bill is so important. We need to avoid and minimise rather than simply have a fund where money can be put to, effectively, purchase environmental destruction. With all that in mind, it is my hope that this bill will provide greater controls over large development so there are positive environmental outcomes rather than the negative effects created by the current regime. I commend the Minister and her team for the work they have done in a very complex area. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (13:00):** I contribute to debate on the Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Offsets Scheme) Bill 2024. All of us in this State recognise the need to protect biodiversity and to do what we can to preserve it. We acknowledge the impact that people have on biodiversity all over the State, including, shockingly, in Sydney. Certainly, there is a huge amount of pushback in my electorate against the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, and I think a lot more reform can be done. This is not "set and forget" legislation, so I thank the committee for its work and I thank the Minister and her team for this reform. I advocate for further reform because, whilst the scheme has many high-minded goals, it is impacting my community in a big way. It is important that I explain those impacts so Sydneysiders understand that people from the Upper Hunter are not rednecks who are against biodiversity. They are just the opposite—people who care deeply about the environment.

But we are a working electorate and, therefore, we need our communities to grow and we need jobs. That means we need to do something that perhaps those who live on the northern beaches might find a little bit tough to deal with—that is, mining. Mining supports a lot of the public services in this State. There is a huge coalmining industry in the Upper Hunter, and some of the biodiversity offsets from those approved projects are starting to bite now. For example, if 1,000 acres of mining country is approved, it can lead to up to 6,000 acres of biodiversity offsets for the mine. Obviously, when 1,500 people are employed on those 1,000 acres, there is a lot of money to be made by the mining company and for the State. Mining companies have a lot of funds to buy up land, and in my electorate they are buying up land that is not in biodiversity strategic zones. We are seeing them buy 2,000 acres in in the middle of great farming areas.

Locals refer to that land as being "locked up". What does that mean for the community? When the owner of the land sells and leaves, it impacts the neighbouring farmers. They lose not only an important community member but also someone to manage pests and vegetation on that property. Like national parks, land managers say that they manage those issues, but they cannot possibly. There is not enough money in the State to manage the land that we have in national parks as well as the land that we are adding to it through offset schemes. We must do better. My wife's car is smashed up from pests that came out of locked-up land up the road from our place—and my wife has given me the job of fixing her car. But people are getting upset because if a fire starts on that land, we do not have the people to manage it. Because we have lost the person who managed that land, we have lost people from the rural fire brigade.

I like to provide an equivalent example to my friends in Sydney. If someone came to their suburban street, bought a multimillion-dollar home, locked the front gate and let it go to rack and ruin, they would watch as it became overgrown and full of rats breeding. I can absolutely guarantee that everyone else on that street would

complain about that house, but the answer that would come back would be, "Sorry, that's locked up for biodiversity purposes." That is why we have pushback from communities—because they cannot see how it benefits their area. There is so much more we can do. I do not knock the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, but we must do better going forward.

There are opportunities for farmers to work better with the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme. They could be paid under the scheme to look after strips of land on their property. That would better allow biodiversity to exist. Farmers could be paid to look after pests, like breeding pigs and deer, as well as weeds, which are also a big issue. A lot of the locked-up biodiversity mining land near where I live is becoming overrun by weeds. Of course, when those weeds take off on people's properties, they say, "They're not doing a good enough job," to which the department says, "The mine is supposed to look after that land".

It is important to recognise that farmers are the best managers of land. If we utilise that resource more under the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, we could get a win-win situation. There are opportunities there. A number of members have talked about this in detail, but another area where there is a lot of pushback against the scheme is around local infrastructure projects. Those projects, like water projects, are there for the public good, and we really need them in regional New South Wales so people can live there. The cost of biodiversity offsets for the Lostock to St Clair pipeline project will be huge. It will add huge value to the project, but it is trying to secure the water supply for Newcastle.

The great irony is that Hunter Water has said, "That's going to cost a lot of money. What are we going to do? We will build a desal plant. But that will require a huge amount of money, so we may as well give money to the French, hand over fist, and give them the opportunity to give us water through that scheme." But most of the energy in this State comes from burning coal, so that is not a great outcome for any of those projects. Infrastructure projects that are for the public good must be analysed for their biodiversity costs to the taxpayer. There is another project that I am looking at at the moment and trying to deal with the consequences of. It is where biodiversity locks up land and does not work with the community, does not build on the national park estate and does not have a strategic value to it. Mines lock up a lot of country next to them. The Hunter transmission line is due to cut through the area and find its way around a number of our mines. I note that the Speaker has just walked into the Chamber, and he is dealing with it in his electorate as well. [*Extension of time*]

That piece of infrastructure, which is sorely needed by the State, is trying to find its way around one of the mines. We have desperately tried to get it through the western side of the mine, but all of that country is locked up under biodiversity. It is what I would call scrub country, acknowledging that there is a parrot associated with that scrub country. The only way that EnergyCo could run that infrastructure is through prime agricultural land on the creek flats next to the Hunter River. That dairy country is where the transmission line is going. We are now faced with a situation where the farmers are aggravated that we are protecting rough scrubland on one side, but we are going to lose quite a lot of our productive capacity on those creek flats. You can basically grow gold in some of that soil there.

Another example of where we are getting community pushback on the biodiversity scheme is, again, where mines are buying up land in Muswellbrook. They have bought land around the industrial estate. The industrial estate of Muswellbrook is now completely landlocked by biodiversity land. It is more locked-up land. We are looking at how to expand the industrial base in the Muswellbrook area. We have now lost all of that land for future development. It is another example of where we are scratching our heads and asking, "How is it fair that they could lock up all of this land around our town?" We are trying to grow the town. We are trying to grow jobs and grow businesses, but we are completely locked in there. In that case, we are looking for ways to try to get a more sensible swap of land. We are still working our way through the possibilities of that.

I want to let the department and those in the Minister's office know that land is locking up towns. The project is not building on the national park estate. It is not building on the great biodiversity assets that we already have. All it is doing is causing chaos to local communities. That is another example of where we are getting huge pushback against it. Again, I am thankful for the reform and the work that has been done by the committee, but I ask that we keep reforming the system. It is not a piece of set-and-forget legislation and policy. We have to keep working and improving it. In places like the Upper Hunter, where there is a huge amount of biodiversity offset, it is a thorn in the side of the local communities and the people who live there. Let us continue the reform going forward.

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (13:13):** I contribute to debate on the Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Offsets Scheme) Bill 2024. Don Watson, who was Paul Keating's speechwriter among other things, writes evocatively in his book *The Bush* about his family's history as colonisers in the Strzelecki Ranges in Gippsland, Victoria. His ancestors, just a few generations ago, were part of the rapid and comprehensive transformation of the landscape through intensive logging and burning the original tall eucalypt forests. His mother would recount to him how she grew up hearing the elaborate calls of lyrebirds, a species that has existed

in this country for 15 million years, until the gullies where they lived were cleared. He lists the many animals—goannas, wallabies, koalas, quolls—that vanished with the remnants of the forest. He writes, "As children, we heard them all spoken of, but saw very few."

On the northern beaches, we have similar stories. When driving through Avalon, we see road signs telling us to look out for koalas that are no longer there. Many long-time residents can remember having koalas in their gardens, but by 1989 there were only six left. The last one ever seen there was in 2006. Habitat fragmentation from development, as well as dogs and cars, are forcing them to local extinction. There are stories like that from across our entire continent. That is how extinction happens. Baselines shift as memories of ecological abundance fade. New generations do not know what has been lost. Our collective perception of loss is distorted, and we continue to destroy habitat and push species further towards extinction. And yet when we want to inspire our children, impress visiting dignitaries or market Australia to the world, we turn to our continent's unique and wonderful animals, ecosystems and landscapes, as we should.

The Biodiversity Offsets Scheme is very technical but fundamentally must be about genuinely stemming the trajectory of the decline of our shared natural heritage, which is economically and intrinsically valuable. Over the past 200 years New South Wales has lost almost half of its bushland through land clearing and only 9 per cent of what is left is in good condition. The public conservation estate only covers 9 per cent of New South Wales and does not constitute the comprehensive, adequate and representative protection needed to ensure the long-term survival of species and ecosystems. That means efforts to protect vegetation outside the conservation estate are crucial.

A significant body of academic literature and policy guidance exists that establishes principles for best practice biodiversity offsetting. They include ensuring offsets are only used as a last resort; not permitted for use in areas with high conservation value, which must be no-go zones; ensuring that offsets are like for like; genuinely additional; required to achieve no net loss to biodiversity; and direct land-based offsets, not payment or indirect conservation measures. The bill brings the New South Wales Biodiversity Offsets Scheme closer to those principles. The bill strengthens the "avoid and minimise" requirements under the scheme, raises the ambition for biodiversity protection to net positive rather than no net loss, reduces unnecessary burdens on local development and increases transparency oversight and integrity.

The bill is significant because it is the first piece of legislative reform to implement Labor's election commitments to strengthen the nature laws in New South Wales. The commitments were, firstly, to fix the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme; and, secondly, to stop excess land clearing. Earlier in the year several Independent crossbench colleagues—the member for Sydney, in particular, and the member for Wollondilly—and I wrote to the Premier and Ministers Sharpe and Moriarty to remind them of their commitments and the community and our expectation that they would be delivered. In that letter, we included quotes from *Hansard* of several current Cabinet Ministers passionately lamenting in this Chamber the passage of the 2016 Coalition reforms that gutted the Carr-era native vegetation laws. I encourage those same members to bring that conviction to continuing to implement native vegetation reform in government. There is so much more to do. I look forward to the Government implementing its reforms outlined in its *NSW plan for nature*, including reforms to native vegetation on rural land under the Local Land Services Act.

I am very supportive of the amendments to the bill passed in the Legislative Council. They strengthen the bill in important ways. I thank the Government for working across the Parliament, including with the Legislative Assembly Independent members, to make the bill better. Significantly, the amendments require end-to-end reporting of offsets, removing proponent-led variations in offset requirements, changing wording from "no net loss" to "net gain" in the biodiversity assessment method, and implementing a non-regression clause for the net positive strategy.

Over recent years the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme has, quite rightly, been heavily criticised, but it does have an important function in internalising environmental externalities into land-use decisions. The scheme is very complicated but, in many ways, amazingly sophisticated. It is a big machine with many dials. Throwing out the machine is not a feasible option, but it did need to come to the workshop and have its settings updated. That is what the bill does. I thank the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, and her awesome staff, particularly Emily Dyball, for bringing this important bill to the parliamentary workshop for a major service. Good luck on the road.

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (13:18):** I contribute to debate on the Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Offsets Scheme) Bill 2024. It has long been my view that the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme is broken, and that is now a view shared by many of us here but perhaps for different reasons. Earlier I was speaking to Emily Dyball about my recollections as mayor of the City of Lake Macquarie during that period when some of the changes came in, with biobanking in particular. A complex matter we dealt with were major developments. To me, biobanking seemed to be costly and complicated. The intention might have been clear, but

it was very hard to explain how that intention could be delivered. I have always believed that it was like a shell game, and the loser was always the environment. That needs to change. I am not saying that this bill will be the ultimate conclusion to the problems. We will need to continue to learn and adapt.

The scheme has been examined by the New South Wales Audit Office, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART], and the Legislative Council's Portfolio Committee No. 7 - Planning and Environment. At each turn, it was found to be fundamentally flawed. It is failing to deliver no net loss of biodiversity from development and biodiversity in New South Wales is fast declining. I therefore speak very strongly in support of the bill. I commend the Government on introducing this long-overdue reform and congratulate the Minister and her team on their efforts. Today's bill makes changes which would make the offsets scheme better. In particular, it requires the scheme to deliver net positive biodiversity outcomes—that is, the scheme as a whole must transition from one which requires, but is failing to deliver, no net loss to a scheme which delivers net gains overall.

I also voice support for changes which would decrease the flexibility of the scheme and, in turn, increase its integrity and efficacy. For example, the bill allows regulations to be set which make it harder for developers to pay into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund. In 2023 IPART found that developers were paying into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund five times faster than the trust could find the required credits. It has historically been easier for developers to pay into the fund than to find like-for-like credits on the market. Making it harder for developers to shift their offset obligations to the fund as well as requiring the fund to retire credits within three years, or otherwise enter into an agreement with the Minister, will help limit biodiversity loss.

To that end, it is vital that the regulations restrict developers' use of the fund so as to not distort the intended outcomes of the scheme, and we must not be shy of further reform to the scheme. Like many others, I would like to see the scheme apply to part 5 projects and see more changes to ensure that offsets are genuinely like for like. I would also welcome the introduction of no-go zones, being areas of high-biodiversity value, which should not be developed or cleared. I encourage the Government to work with both a broad range of stakeholders, including environmental experts and industry, to develop regulations and its net positive transition strategy. That is necessary for the scheme to actually deliver on its aim of net positive biodiversity outcomes.

There needs to be a balance between essential development, including housing and energy infrastructure, and thriving biodiversity and habitats. Achieving that balance is obviously difficult; maybe it is impossible. But it does not mean that we can ignore the task or simply accept that the loss of our natural environment and species is inevitable. We should instead strive to ensure that we leave nature better off than we found it. I thank Minister Sharpe and her staff for taking on the issue. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (13:22):** On behalf of Mr Jihad Dib: In reply: I thank the following members who contributed to debate on the Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Offsets Scheme) Bill 2024: the member for Manly, for the Opposition; the member for Ballina, for The Greens; the member for South Coast; the member for Dubbo, for The Nationals; the member for Sydney; the member for Gosford; the member for Wagga Wagga; the member for Upper Hunter; the member for Wakehurst; and the member for Lake Macquarie. I also thank Portfolio Committee No. 7 in the other place for conducting an inquiry into the bill, and I thank the broad range of stakeholders who made submissions. The Government has listened to the issues raised in the other place. The offsets scheme is complex. Getting the balance right between protecting the natural environment and building the homes and infrastructure that we need is difficult, but it is crucial. I thank members for their contributions and for their collaborative work on the bill.

I thank the member for Sydney and the member for Wakehurst for their advocacy but also their understanding of the complexities of the scheme. I particularly recognise the concerns that were raised about the impacts on regional areas. I thank the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Dubbo and others for their constructive engagement. I note that amendments were moved by the Government and other parties in the other place to address many of those issues. The Government looks forward to continuing the discussion about what more it can do. I also thank groups like the New South Wales Country Mayors Association, which engaged deeply with the bill and worked with the Government to make the scheme better.

I note some of the issues raised through the process: the need to reduce the complexity of the scheme, the need to improve environmental protections and provide limits to the scheme's application, the need to provide flexibility to allow appropriate development, and the need to support important regional housing. Those issues largely reflect the issues raised by stakeholders in the bill inquiry. There is a lot more work to be done and the bill is just the beginning. What we do know is that the Government can no longer be the manager of slow decline. We must turn around the loss, and protect and restore biodiversity in our State. We need stronger processes to protect our natural environment. To do that, while supporting critical housing and the development of renewable energy infrastructure, is no mean feat, but this Government is up for the challenge. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** On behalf of Mr Jihad Dib: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **CATHERINE FIELD CHALDEAN CHURCH LAND CONSECRATION**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (13:26):** On 12 November I had the immense privilege of attending the consecration of land by Archbishop Amel Nona for a new Chaldean church in Catherine Field. The sacred event was an important milestone for the local Chaldean community, marking the start of a project that will serve as an important spiritual and cultural sanctuary for my growing electorate. The land consecration brought together church members, community leaders and local families, united in hope and faith. It was a deeply moving ceremony. It was very special to see the dedication and commitment of the Chaldean community in creating a place that will strengthen their cultural heritage and enrich our region for many generations to come. I look forward to witnessing the growth of the project and seeing the community centre and church come together over the months and years ahead.

#### **JEM CRADDOCK**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (13:27):** I ask the House to join me in congratulating Jem Craddock, who was recently appointed a justice of the peace [JP] in my electorate of Ryde. JPs play an important role and reflect the community face of our justice system. At its core, the appointment of a person to justice of the peace is all about service. I thank Jem for that service. As a JP, she is responsible for upholding the values of honesty and impartiality as she executes her official duties for the benefit of our local community. In a fast-growing community like Ryde, the demand for JP services is growing exponentially. I feel fortunate as the local member of Parliament to see so many high-quality individuals willing to raise their hands. Her appointment as a JP underscores her character, integrity and dedication to public service. I congratulate her once again on her well-deserved appointment and thank her for the difference that I know she will make in the lives of those she chooses to serve.

#### **PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS IN AUSTRALIA**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (13:28):** I acknowledge an organisation that has channelled grief, distress and helplessness into action, care and compassion. Palestinian Christians in Australia will host its third annual gala since its establishment. As with each of its events since the war in Gaza began over 12 months ago, the gala will also raise funds to support newly arrived refugees from Gaza in Australia. Held in the heart of Liverpool, the gala will showcase Palestinian art created by people who have recently arrived from Gaza; the history of Palestinian Tatreez, which is a traditional form of Palestinian embroidery; music and dabke performances; and Palestinian cuisine. Palestinian Christians in Australia do vital work locally, working closely with the NSW Refugee Health Service and other organisations to provide support and care to those who have fled the ongoing humanitarian crisis that is unfolding. I recognise the work of Palestinian Christians in Australia and look forward to continuing to support its vital work as it helps newly arrived Palestinians process their trauma and try to rebuild their lives in Western Sydney.

#### **MENAI ROOSTERS FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (13:29):** I recognise the Menai Roosters Junior Rugby League Football Club and its successful annual general meeting on 29 October. The Menai Roosters have a proud history in my community spanning four decades, with players such as Shane Flanagan and Cameron Ciraldo going on to play and coach at the highest level in the National Rugby League. Once a small club, the tireless efforts of volunteers have borne fruit, with 150 players and 15 formidable squads, including four female teams, competing in the 2024 season. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the hardworking volunteers behind the scenes. I recognise the executive committee of president Hayden Kendrick, vice-president Tyneale Kendrick, junior vice-president and Junior Rugby League delegate Ross Greenwood, secretary Deanne Charalambous and treasurer Michael Charalambous for investing their time and effort to ensure the smooth running and continued growth of the club. Grassroots sporting organisations like the Menai Roosters Junior Rugby League Football Club are an important part of the fabric of our community. I thank all involved for fostering a love of rugby league in our youth.

### SEWING BASKET AND ACHIEVABLE ENTERPRISES

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (13:30):** I recently popped down to the Sewing Basket and AchievAble Enterprises in Newington to see the amazing work it does in my community. The Sewing Basket is a must-visit for anyone with a love of sewing and craft. Run by Achieve Australia, the store employs people with disabilities to sell 100 per cent donated fabric, haberdashery and craft supplies. It is an Aladdin's cave for any type of handiwork, with an array of wool, fabrics, cross-stitch kits, knitting patterns and an incredible collection of vintage sewing patterns. I could not resist a pack of vintage haberdashery, which will make someone a nice Christmas gift. Next door, AchievAble Enterprises employs people with disabilities at its successful pack-and-send facility. Staff were in the midst of making Transport for NSW's kindy orientation road safety library bags for New South Wales primary schools across the State to share important road safety information. Last year they packed 60,000 library bags for kindy kids. It is great to see this wonderful, passionate and inclusive enterprise in the electorate of Parramatta.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** Before I call the member for Vacluse, I wish everybody a very merry Christmas.

### COLIN MCQUEEN

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vacluse) (13:31):** I recognise Colin McQueen, who has been a member of the NSW State Emergency Service and its predecessor, the Civil Defence, for 55 years since joining in 1969. Colin is a life member of the SES. He was an engaging trainer and deputy local controller, and he is well known and respected by many in the community. Originally a member of the City of Sydney unit before transferring to the Waverley-Woollahra unit, Colin has packed up and relocated headquarters seven times. He has received numerous awards and accolades, including the National Medal with four clasps, NSW State Emergency Service life membership and the NSW Maritime Medal. Colin has been involved in several significant events during that time, including the 1999 Sydney hailstorm and the 1989 Newcastle earthquake. I know the Waverly-Woollahra unit is incredibly proud of Colin. Congratulations, Colin. The Parliament recognises and thanks you for your service to your community and the State.

### REECE HOOKE

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (13:32):** I recognise and congratulate Mr Reece Hooke, who was recently appointed as principal of Bonnyrigg High School in my electorate. He also previously worked in my electorate at Bossley Park High School. Mr Hooke plans to improve a number of key areas, one of which is the school excellence plan, where he aims to create a strong, explicit plan for transformational change that will be implemented collaboratively with the school community. Another key area of focus is improving literacy and numeracy outcomes. In 2025 Mr Hooke plans to focus on reading, comprehension and vocabulary, and aims to equip staff with the tools and strategies to teach these essential skills effectively. Mr Hooke is also dedicated to fostering an environment where all students can realise their full potential. He places a strong emphasis on student wellbeing and inclusion, ensuring that every student feels valued, supported and empowered to succeed. Mr Hooke's long-term goal is to make Bonnyrigg High School the school of choice for local families. I wish him all the success.

### ELLEN ARMFIELD

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (13:33):** I recognise Ellen Armfield, a remarkable 19-year-old from Wakehurst. Ellen currently chairs the New South Wales Youth Advisory Council, which is an impressive achievement. As a lived experience storyteller with batyr and a member of its national youth advisory group, Ellen courageously shares her journey to raise awareness about physical and mental health challenges. Beyond that, she champions the rights of autistic girls and gender-diverse individuals through speaker panels organised by Yellow Ladybugs and Orygen, advocating for inclusivity and breaking down societal barriers. Ellen's passion and advocacy are a shining example for our community and our State. I thank her for her work in creating a more inclusive, supportive world.

### BATEMANS BAY SAILING CLUB

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (13:34):** I congratulate the Batemans Bay Sailing Club, which is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year. It is a volunteer-run club set up by a small group of like-minded people. Their aim was to promote the sport of sailing in the Eurobodalla region for people of all ages and abilities. Today the club holds a regular sailing program on Batemans Bay for keelboats and at Coila Lake, near Tuross Head, for small craft. I confirm to the House that both are spectacular venues for sailing. Over the years, Batemans Bay Sailing Club sailors have won State, national and world sailing championships, as well as major offshore races, including the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. The club has links with Sailability for promoting all-ability sailing and is developing links with Moruya High School to re-establish youth sailing in the area. To quote



Webb Chiles, "A sailor is an artist whose medium is the wind." Happy birthday to the Batemans Bay Sailing Club. I wish everyone a very merry Christmas and New Year, peace on earth and goodwill to all.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** And to you, member for Bega.

#### **GALLUZZO'S CHEMIST RIVERWOOD**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (13:35):** I recognise a fantastic local business that has been making strides within the community of late. Galluzzo's Chemist in Riverwood recently celebrated 67 years of service to the Georges River community. Since its inception, the pharmacy has had three generations of the Galluzzo family proudly managing the business. Today the pharmacy participates in many outreach programs, including the St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal, whilst also supporting the Our Lady of Fatima Peakhurst parish. I truly believe that small businesses are the cornerstone of our local area. As a small, family-owned business, Galluzzo's Chemist has served the people of our community incredibly well over many wonderful years. I thank the Galluzzo family, including Tosca and Ben, for their fantastic work. I also recognise the late Sam Galluzzo, who made the pharmacy into what it is today. I sincerely look forward to working alongside the team into the future.

#### **METROPOLITAN SOUTH WEST HOCKEY ASSOCIATION**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (13:36):** Camden is the home of high-quality hockey. On Friday 8 November Macarthur Hockey Complex in Narellan hosted a thrilling round of Australia's premier Hockey One League, as NSW Pride took on the Perth Thundersticks. NSW Pride captain Nathanael Stewart returned to the Narellan field that started him on his hockey journey as a Metropolitan South West Hockey Association junior. NSW Pride, known for being the most successful and widely followed team in the league, brought both its men's and women's teams, featuring top Australian players from the Hockeyroos and Kookaburras. The men's team, led by Nathanael, kicked off at 7.00 p.m. The women's team, fresh from a victory over Hockey Club Melbourne, followed at 8.30 p.m. Metropolitan South West Hockey Association, with the aid of local companies and community groups, was invaluable in giving support and volunteering time to get the venue set up and ready for the match. The association was also amazing at the event, as volunteers assisted with the set-up, catering, canteen facilities and pack down to ensure a successful fixture. It was a great night, with some ripper games of hockey.

#### **TAIPEI ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL OFFICE**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) (13:37):** As the end of the year approaches, I thank director general David Wu and his team at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Sydney for their amazing work in strengthening the cultural and economic ties between New South Wales and the Republic of China, Taiwan. Like many others in this place, I look forward to our continued work together into 2025 and for many years to come.

#### **TRIBUTE TO TRISH MORAN**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (13:38):** Today I pay tribute to a special woman, who was a resident on the Central Coast since 1980. Trish Moran and her husband, Andy, made their home and raised their three children in the suburb of Narara soon after it was established. Trish's commitment to community life was always apparent. Not only were Trish and Andy the founding members of the Ourimbah Narara Valley branch of the Australian Labor Party, but during the '90s Trish was the Central Coast convenor of the Australian Republic Movement. In 2001 and 2004, Australian Labor Party members demonstrated their support for Trish by endorsing her as the candidate for the Federal seat of Robertson. Although Trish was unsuccessful at both those elections, she improved Labor's vote on both occasions. In the intervening period, Trish continued to demonstrate her understanding and commitment to the community. Sadly, Trish passed away on 10 November. Her family, her many friends and our community farewelled her at St Patrick's East Gosford earlier this week. On behalf of the Australian Labor Party and the Central Coast community, I express our condolences to Andy and his family. Vale, Trish Moran.

#### **GERRINGONG PICS AND FLICKS**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (13:39):** The Parliament recognises community not-for-profit Gerringong Pics and Flicks and its generosity in providing opportunities to Kiama residents in the film industry. This year Pics and Flicks awarded film training scholarships to Regan Anderson and Lleyton Hughes. The scholarships provide financial assistance to study with the Australian Film Television and Radio School and membership with Screen Illawarra. I congratulate Regan and Lleyton. The community looks forward to viewing their short films. Regan plans to produce a comedic short film showcasing the beauty and lifestyle of the South Coast. Lleyton plans to explore the motivations behind challenging sports like boxing. Community-led initiatives like Pics and Flicks support our young artists and demonstrate how great our local communities and villages are. I acknowledge the University of Wollongong, which is providing film and editing equipment; local newspaper *The Bugle*; and the president of Screen Illawarra, Nick Bolton, for his mentorship. I thank Gerringong

Pics and Flicks for its monthly screenings at Gerringong Town Hall, the Waghorn family's 70 years of involvement in showcasing movies in Gerringong, and Pics and Flicks' support of young people in the Kiama electorate.

#### MEG AND PETER NIELSEN

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (13:40):** Meg and Peter Nielsen are a wonderful couple in my electorate who are Bentley-based beef farmers, leading local environmentalists and good community citizens. They recently launched their exhibition of works titled *Seeking the Symbiocene*. The works include a beautiful mosaic of paintings, drawings and photography, enhanced by an array of restored and repurposed objects that were amassed throughout the journey of their lives. Terri Nicholson, another great local artist, environmentalist and good community citizen, was invited to show some of her works of prints and sculptures. Opening night was on 1 November at the unique Serpentine Community Gallery. Terri also sang along with the terrific Black Train. I thank Meg and Peter for their inspiring and signature works of art, and their inspiration and advocacy for a better way to live that addresses the threats of climate change.

#### GARY WONG

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (13:41):** I acknowledge Gary Wong, the owner and operator of Sylvania Mowers in Sylvania, who is retiring after 40 years of operating the business. Since taking over Sylvania Mowers from his father-in-law in the 1980s, Gary has developed what looks to passers-by to be a jungle of lawnmowers, whipper snippers and other parts in the go-to place for lawnmower repair in the Sutherland shire. Gary is known for his no nonsense "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" approach. Operating with only the support of his wife, Lynette—who serves as a director and recently retired after running her own small business—Gary is a man of many hats. Known for his work ethic and getting through 70 to 80 jobs a week in a fast and affordable manner, he has handled not only the repairs but also the ordering and shop maintenance for over 40 years. Ahead of his retirement, Gary has stopped taking on new work and hopes to have the shop cleared out by Christmas. I congratulate Gary on the success of Sylvania Mowers and wish both Gary and Lynette an enjoyable and well-deserved retirement.

#### GLENN REDDING

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (13:42):** I acknowledge the service of Glenn Redding, the President of the Pagewood Botany Football Club. Glen took over the leadership a few years ago, after the passing of the late George Lundy, who was an inspirational leader. The club has grown to a membership of 1,700 children. Glenn and his family's commitment to the Pagewood Botany Football Club is nothing short of remarkable. The club does more than look after children; it raises considerable funds, whether it is for the Bayside Women's Shelter, the Sydney Children's Hospital or for breast cancer. It trains young and older people from Windgap, a support group for people with intellectual disabilities. The club inspires and serves the community beyond what anyone would have thought a sports club could do, and it is Glenn Redding who ensures that the inspirational community work of the club continues.

#### MCHAPPY DAY

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (13:43):** I rise to recognise the incredible spirit of community and generosity displayed during McHappy Day at McDonald's Cremorne on 16 November. McHappy Day is a vital fundraising initiative for Ronald McDonald House Charities, providing essential support to families with seriously ill children. Having visited Ronald McDonald House in Westmead recently, I have seen firsthand the life-changing impact of its efforts and I am proud to have joined the local team to support this cause. At the heart of this event was the wonderful, hardworking and vibrant team at Cremorne McDonald's, led by store manager Bibek, together with Rajita, Skye, Sandra and so many other crew members who graciously welcomed us and shared their expertise as we got involved both in and out of the kitchen. It was a fun and meaningful day, and I can proudly say I may have delivered two of the greatest Big Macs ever made at McDonald's. The event brought together many members of our community, who generously contributed to this important cause. I thank everyone who showed up to support McHappy Day and helped make a real difference for kids and families in need. I acknowledge my colleague the Hon. Rachel Merton, MLC, who joined me on the day as we worked together to highlight the incredible work of Ronald McDonald House Charities.

#### TRAVIS RUSSELL

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (13:44):** As we approach the end of the year, all members recognise that we cannot do the work for our communities without our staff. Time and again we recognise their importance. One staff member of mine is truly the beating heart of the Miranda electorate office, and I could not possibly do the work that I do for our community without him. I acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Travis Russell. He makes sure that every community group in our electorate is well looked after and accommodated for, particularly on the days we are in Parliament. Travis is the kindest, most accommodating, hardworking and

diligent person that I have ever had the privilege of working with. I could not possibly do the job without him. I and the entire community we serve are eternally grateful for all the work he does every single day to make sure that the Miranda electorate is looked after to the best of our abilities.

#### IMAD TAHA AND MICHAEL GIANNIS

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (13:45):** I put on record my appreciation for Imad Taha and Michael Giannis, who have the busy task of ensuring I can get to all my duties, be they in the electorate or across the State. I often talk about the support crew Ministers rely on, and ministerial drivers are a part of that. Especially as the Minister for Emergency Services, I often have to be reactive and ready to go anywhere at short notice. That means I can be in Sydney in the morning and any part of New South Wales in the afternoon, and it is reassuring to know that I can rely on people to get me there through our many early starts and regular late nights. It is the same for all my colleagues. A Minister spends a great deal of time with their drivers, and the level of trust, dependence and patience must be high. I am pleased that both Imad and Michael fit that bill. We have had many great moments this year, been to incredible places and had many conversations. I thank them for that. I promise that, from next year, I will try my hardest not to be a typical back-seat driver and tell them what to do. Thanks for looking after me, boys.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### HEALTHY AGEING PROGRAM

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (13:46):** I update the House on the recent evolution of the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District's Healthy Ageing Program [HAP] and, in particular, its water-based WAVES and land-based AIM classes. These classes play a critical role in promoting the health and wellbeing of senior citizens in our community. Through these kinds of initiatives, participants are supported to maintain their mobility, reduce the risk of falls and manage chronic conditions such as arthritis and osteoporosis. By offering professional guidance in a supportive environment, the program empowers individuals to lead active, independent lives, thereby reducing reliance on the public healthcare system.

The classes also have a profound impact not only on participants' physical health but also on their mental and social wellbeing, fostering a sense of community and inclusion. In fact, many of my older constituents credit the classes with transforming their lives and enabling them to manage health challenges effectively and retain autonomy. By mitigating downstream effects like hospitalisations and health costs, the classes have proven to be smart and essential investments in sustainable community health. So, in September, when my residents contacted me about a notice they had received advising that the classes were scheduled to wrap up, I was quite concerned. Ending such a service would have left a significant void for the over 700 participants who rely on it, that is, until this Labor Government and health Minister—he really is a beauty—responded swiftly to ensure the continuation of these much-loved and vital services.

On 11 November a new program consistent with the Healthy Ageing Program launched, preserving the spirit and benefits of the original. Classes include the same mix of land-based and water-based options, carefully designed to cater to the diverse needs of participants. The structured, 10-week programs offer consistency, promoting long-term engagement and health improvements. Many of the beloved instructors from the HAP program will transition to the new provider, StriveAbility. That ensures familiarity and continuity, creating a supportive and comfortable environment for participants. Familiar faces make a world of difference when maintaining the confidence and motivation to stay active. Classes will continue at the same venues used by the Healthy Ageing Program, ensuring minimal disruption to the routine of participants.

Randwick City Council has generously agreed to maintain the current pricing structures for these facilities through to the end of this financial year, ensuring that the program remains affordable for everybody. Fees will remain consistent with the original program, which is a testament to its commitment to accessibility. These classes go beyond exercise by providing a social lifeline for many participants. The programs continue to encourage community building by providing opportunities for older adults to connect, share experiences and support each other on their healthy journeys. This initiative has been made possible through the collaboration between the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, Randwick City Council and the new third-party provider, StriveAbility.

While I am sure there are still logistical details to finalise, such as securing a permanent location for certain classes at the Prince of Wales Hospital, the vast majority of participants can transition seamlessly to this new chapter. This program is more than a replacement. It is a renewal of this Government's commitment to help the ageing. It highlights what we can achieve when government, community and service providers work together with urgency and purpose.

## WILLOUGHBY ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (13:50):** I rise today, at the end of the Parliamentary year, to reflect on the many milestones we have achieved in Willoughby, the challenges we face and the priorities we should address going forward. Firstly, I am pleased my commitment to two new schools in Willoughby is in motion. Under the former Coalition Government's plan, we have seen a combined \$46.5 million allocated to deliver two new public schools. One is in St Leonards and the other in Chatswood. Our community is eager to see the draft designs and plans to bring these new schools to life.

My advocacy for local school improvements continues too, with \$2.5 million being provided to upgrade Northbridge Public School, with further upgrades, including \$723,000 for Cammeray Public School. These investments underscore our commitment to equipping our children with the best possible facilities and opportunities for success. The opening of the Sydney Metro in our area has been a transformative development. This project has revolutionised public transport in our community. Residents have shared with me many times how this new service has reduced commute times, improved connectivity and made daily life easier.

Such infrastructure represents the forward-thinking planning we need to ensure that Willoughby and New South Wales remain a thriving and accessible community. However, we should also recognise the ongoing challenges. Road congestion remains a pressing issue locally, and there has been no alternative investment whatsoever from this Government to address the cancellation of the Beaches Link project. I should say that the construction of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway Upgrade are both great opportunities for our community, but in the near term they represent big challenges too.

I have consistently advocated for a vision to build over the freeway to restore green space to our community. This would not only address the green space lost but also create a legacy project to enhance liveability for future generations. This year I made my views known on the proposed portal and stack design. I continued to call for filtration of the stack just a few months ago. Locals are grappling with disruptions to traffic and noise as well as impacts on air quality. It is not an easy time of development for my local community. Furthermore, our community deserves reassurance and a clear plan for the restoration of public, open green space in the area.

I am advised this will be consulted on in 2025. These areas are not just land. They are places where families gather, children play and neighbours connect. In advocating for better infrastructure, I am excited to share that our area will soon benefit from the construction of a new cycleway linking Chatswood and St Leonards, with a \$6 million funding allocation successfully secured for this project. The previous Coalition Government had also committed to redesigning and rebuilding the Chatswood bus interchange. This is an essential project for the essential strategic transport hub that is Chatswood.

This Government has ditched this commitment and said nothing of it since, which is plainly not good enough. I have spoken at length recently in Parliament about local buses. The Minns Labor Government, on this front, is failing our community. We have seen practical solutions implemented in other jurisdictions to address bus driver shortages, but in New South Wales it just feels like endless review consultation and no real results being made. This year, I have raised our community's concerns about cuts to Service NSW. Labor's cuts will have an adverse effect on local services.

On a positive note, the Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace in Cremorne has been placed on the New South Wales State Heritage Register this year, safeguarding our beloved cultural landmark for generations to come. I am also pleased that the Artarmon street works to which the State contributed significantly, albeit under the previous Government, have been successfully completed, providing much-needed infrastructure improvements for residents. With this milestone now achieved, our focus should shift to the essential accessibility upgrade of the lift at Artarmon Station, in respect of which I am running a petition.

The much-needed Gore Hill Indoor Sports Centre also remains in limbo, I am afraid. The Coalition committed \$5 million to this long-awaited local piece of infrastructure, which indeed gave it the green light. However, under the Minns Labor Government, nothing happened and the project is now on hold. Plainly, that is not good enough. This facility would be so essential for promoting community health and recreation, and I will continue to fight for its completion. More positively, I would like to acknowledge the recent progress on the Willoughby Leisure Centre upgrade. This project, which received \$5 million of support under the previous Government's Multi-Sport Community Facility Fund, is coming along well. I am advised it will be open in 2025. Our community is looking forward to that.

Briefly, the Minns Government's Crows Nest transport oriented development plans, including changes to the Herbert Street precinct at Royal North Shore Hospital, do pose serious concerns to our community. The high-density proposal lacks the infrastructure and the services required to support such growth. A towering 62-storey building proposed for Herbert Street way exceeds community expectations. Our community supports

well-planned housing around transport hubs, but this growth must be balanced with proper infrastructure, including increased open spaces, road upgrades and healthcare expansions. I will continue to advocate for the investments, the facilities, the services and the infrastructure that our community needs going forward. I would like to see the Minns Government take the people of Willoughby more seriously with its interest and investment in our local area.

### RIVERSTONE YOUTH FORUM

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (13:55):** Young Australians are the champions of change. They are not just the leaders of tomorrow but also the voices we need to hear today. Their ideas, perspectives and dreams give us a vital glimpse into a future we can all shape together. Prior to the 2024 NSW Youth Summit, held on 18 November, I had the privilege of releasing the inaugural Riverstone Youth Forum report at Parliament House. The Youth Forum report is a powerful document. Instead of seeking advice from academics or consultants, this document was compiled with feedback sourced directly from our youth in their own voices, expressing their aspirations and challenges.

Earlier this year, alongside North West Community Services, my office held the Riverstone Youth Forum with a clear goal in mind to create a space where young voices could be heard loud and clear. We brought together students both from public and private schools across the Riverstone electorate, an area with the largest youth population in New South Wales. Students from Riverstone High School, The Ponds High School and Quakers Hill High School, together with students from Wyndham College, Norwest Christian College, St John Paul II Catholic College and St John XXIII Catholic College united to express their ideas and concerns about the world around them.

Riverstone is growing and changing rapidly, and it is more important than ever that we involve the people who will be most affected by those changes—our youth. As parliamentarians we make decisions that impact young people every day. Many of the issues we debate in the Chamber directly affect the future of New South Wales, a future the youth will inherit, and yet all too often young people are not included in those conversations. In Riverstone, we are working to change that. The thoughtful and insightful contributions of our youth challenged the common misconception that teenagers are disengaged or uninterested in important issues normally considered to be adult concerns. On the contrary, they offered strong opinions on matters that affect us all. Issues like cost of living, housing affordability, mental health and the importance of real social connection are very much on their minds.

Many students depicted the struggle for individuality while finding a sense of community. They expressed concerns with anxiety and depression amidst overwhelming pressures and the lack of mental health support through local or school counsellors. They shared how rising costs are affecting their families and, in turn, their own wellbeing. They raised valid concerns about housing affordability and how this limits their aspiration for independence. They pointed out that if they cannot afford to rent a place of their own, let alone realise the dream of home ownership, how can they step forward into the next chapter of their lives? They voiced a deep desire—in fact, a need—for genuine, face-to-face interpersonal relationships in a world where the ubiquitous presence of social media platforms often leaves them feeling disconnected. Their honesty and openness highlighted just how critical it is to engage with youth, to value their unique view of the world and to act on it, something we adults can sometimes overlook.

I extend my gratitude to North West Community Services, especially CEO Angela Van Dyke and child and youth counsellor team leader, Vanessa Sokalik. The forum would not have been possible without their support and guidance. Their dedication ensured that each participant felt empowered to speak openly, whether their thoughts were challenging, bold or unconventional. I also acknowledge the guests who joined our session last week: Premier Chris Minns; the Hon. Prue Car, Minister for Education and Early Learning; the Hon. Rose Jackson, the Minister for Youth; and the Hon. Kate Washington, the Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion. Their presence emphasised the importance of engaging with our youth. A special thanks goes to our fantastic Minister for Youth Justice, the Hon. Jihad Dib, who not only attended but also gave students from Wyndham College a tour of his office and shared some inspiring words.

I thank all Ministers and members who attended and heard the voices of Riverstone's youth. It was an empowering experience for the students and a testament to this Government's commitment to valuing the next generation as essential contributors to any consultation process. Most of all, I thank each and every one of the students who participated. They made the report possible. They clearly identified the challenges they face and offered potential solutions to overcome them. The Riverstone Youth Forum was a tremendous success and one of my proudest achievements since becoming the member for Riverstone. It has given me a deeper insight into what matters most to our youth and how we, as leaders, can create a future that reflects their hopes, dreams and aspirations. I thank the young people who took part for their commitment, for using their voices and for reminding

us all that listening to the next generation is essential to building a brighter, more inclusive future. Together we are creating a legacy of change, driven by the very people who will inherit it.

### TWEED VALLEY HOSPITAL

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (14:00):** Last week the new \$723 million Tweed Valley Hospital reached the important milestone of six months in operation. Since opening on 14 May this year, the state-of-the-art facility has improved the way health care in the Tweed is delivered and provided first-class care to the people of my electorate and surrounding areas. It is no secret that Tweed Valley Hospital is a very busy and active health facility. In some respects it is actually busier than St Vincent's Hospital in the heart of Sydney. A comparison of the *Healthcare Quarterly* activity and performance profiles for April to June 2024 shows that during the period there were 13,920 attendances at Tweed Valley Hospital—several hundred more than the 13,420 attendances at St Vincent's in Sydney. There were also 13,703 emergency presentations at Tweed Valley Hospital, compared to 13,396 at St Vincent's. During the April to June period, 272 babies were born at Tweed Valley Hospital.

While parking at Tweed Valley Hospital remains an ongoing issue—which I am informed is being addressed by the Northern NSW Local Health District—the first six months of patient care have been incredibly positive. Many Tweed residents no longer have to travel outside their local area for medical treatment. The hospital is also treating 30 per cent of Queenslanders who come across the border. I have also received glowing reports of the care provided by staff at the hospital. I thank every staff member for the high level of care they provide to patients. That brings me to the issue of retaining high-quality healthcare staff in the Tweed. As it stands, there are serious and undeniable discrepancies between the pay and working conditions for nurses and midwives in New South Wales when compared to their Queensland colleagues. Nurses and midwives just over the border can earn up to 18 per cent more, and that leads to nurses and midwives leaving the Tweed.

I support the nurses and midwives of New South Wales in their call for a 15 per cent pay increase. I also call on the Government to agree to improved pay and working conditions for those vital frontline workers. Without change, we could see a brand-new \$723 million hospital left without adequate staff to run it. An informal survey conducted by a registered nurse at Tweed Valley Hospital and published last week showed an alarming 70 per cent of nurses and midwives currently employed at that health facility are highly likely or likely to leave NSW Health and the Tweed Valley Hospital if their requests for a 15 per cent pay increase and improvements to working conditions are not agreed to by the New South Wales Government. I cannot stress enough how disastrous that could be for the Tweed. The survey results also showed that of the 150 nurses and midwives surveyed, 25 per cent had already found another job or were searching for other employment.

I have written to the Treasurer expressing my strong support for the nurses and midwives of New South Wales, particularly those in the Tweed electorate. I reiterate today that those crucial and hardworking frontline workers are due a 15 per cent pay increase and improved working conditions. I call on the Government to recognise the gravity of agreeing to anything less and the dire repercussions that would have for health care in the Tweed. I call on the Government to agree to the Nurses and Midwives' Association's request for increased pay and improved working conditions and to ensure that the brand-new Tweed Valley Hospital continues to have adequate staff to meet the community's needs. That was a classic example of a cross-border issue. I am pleased that we have a Cross-Border Commissioner, and recently Queensland also announced its own Cross-Border Commissioner. But the comparison between the States is horrendous. For example, we cannot buy an Opal card because our buses do not accept them in the Tweed. To get from one side of the electorate into Queensland, we have to buy a paper ticket. When we get into Queensland, we have to get a go card, which is similar to the Opal card. Those issues affect people from all walks of life.

Finally, the Federal Government deemed that all my interns are in a metropolitan area, so they have to move out of the Tweed when they finish their internship. We are regional in one sense and metropolitan in another sense. A lot of practices have taken in interns, but then they have to leave the electorate. In many regards, our front door is Queensland and our back door is New South Wales. It is time for that to be truly recognised. Once again, I am 100 per cent for the Tweed.

### RIVERWOOD COMMUNITY CENTRE

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (14:05):** Riverwood Community Centre has evolved over the past 40 years from a small neighbourhood centre into one of the largest community centres in the Canterbury-Bankstown and Georges River areas, delivering a broad range of services. As the local community centre, it is focused on supporting the local community to identify their concerns and ensure they are heard. In 1973 residents of Riverwood came together to discuss the needs of their community. They formed into a group called Voices of Riverwood. Their aim was to have a building in Riverwood where the community could hold a range of activities. That was 50 years ago. It is

very impressive that 50 years ago a small number of people came together and said, "We need services in this area."

By that time the group had gained the support of the Riverwood Rotary club and the Canterbury City Council. In 1976 a grant of \$67,000 was received under the Australian Assistance Plan [AAP]. In fact, it was the last ever grant provided under the AAP, and it helped the Voices of Riverwood to establish a neighbourhood centre. The centre was officially opened in September 1977 by the then Minister for Youth and Community Services. It was staffed entirely by volunteers and offered community aid programs in the form of information and referral. Slowly, a number of different groups began to develop in the community and use the centre—for example, the Riverwood childcare group, a youth group and a multicultural group. In December 1979 the centre's first employee began work, and the centre began to develop activities and programs to meet the needs of the growing local community.

In 1981 Canterbury City Council began construction on a purpose-built centre for Riverwood. Mayor Kevin Moss officially opened the building in 1983. In 1993 major extensions to the centre, including a sports hall and amenities, were completed by Canterbury City Council with funds provided by the Commonwealth Government under the Local Capital Works Program. The local Federal MP for Banks, Mr Daryl Melham, and the Mayor of Canterbury City Council, Mr John Gorrie, officially opened the extension in December 1994. In 1999 the Riverwood Community Centre celebrated 25 years of serving the community. In 2002, after many years of waiting, work on Riverwood Peace Park began.

Riverwood Community Centre should be very proud of the work it has done over the past 50 years. We are about to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. The centre provides important services across my electorate and those of my neighbouring colleagues. It assists the community by providing early child care, sporting activities, tenancy support and disability care. Of an afternoon, a number of young people play basketball and engage in other activities. That exercise is absolutely critical. I have worked with the Riverwood Community Centre for many years, working together and engaging with local families. People in my community, particularly the elderly and multicultural communities, are often found at the Riverwood Community Centre looking for service and participating in many of the activities.

The centre is managed and staffed by incredible professionals. I thank the chair and Karl Saleh for their important work. I thank the many people who do incredible work to serve the community. On behalf of my colleagues and the Parliament, I wish each and every one of those people well. I thank them for their contributions. Here's to another 50 years.

### LAKE MACQUARIE ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (14:10):** In Lake Macquarie we are blessed with a unique natural environment. Our environment supports swimming, birdwatching, boating and hiking. With a beautiful environment, great strategic location, available land and an overall enviable lifestyle, it is no wonder that there is significant population growth. Unfortunately I cannot always be so effusive about our built environment. The infrastructure needed to support our growing community is just not there. I could point to various examples, one of those being the lack of commuter car parking at Morisset and Fassifern train stations. The parking there is not adequate to cope with the current number of people, let alone any growth. Today, however, I focus on our roads.

According to 2021 census data, 60 per cent of employed people aged 15 and over in the Lake Macquarie local government area travelled to work by car. That is higher than both the New South Wales and Australian averages. Higher dependence on car use in Lake Macquarie means a number of things from a strategic perspective. It shows that current public transport is not catering to people's transport needs, and it requires that the roads are reliable and efficient. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Key roads have not been upgraded to support the increasing numbers of residents and visitors. That can result in bottlenecks and delays, which are seen daily at locations like Speers Point roundabout.

For those not familiar, Speers Point roundabout is at the intersection of four roads. Three of those roads—Five Islands Road, TC Frith Avenue and The Esplanade—are major commuter thoroughfares. The roundabout is located at the northern end of my electorate, and commuters travelling towards Newcastle from the Westlakes area have little choice but to drive through it. Those commuters are hit the hardest, whether travelling by car or bus. At peak periods, traffic can back up for many kilometres along Five Islands Road, all the way to Fennell Bay. People are facing delays getting to work, school and appointments daily, and they are fed up.

Along with the community, I have been calling for a solution to this pain point for around seven years. Now, finally, we seem to be getting somewhere. Transport for NSW has committed \$11 million to upgrade the intersection. The department released a report in October responding to key matters raised by the community on potential solutions. Concept design is currently being developed and will be displayed for community feedback

in due course. That all sounds good, right? But progress feels slow and we are yet to see any movement on the ground. But there is another problem: The proposed solution does not address predicted population growth.

Around 12,000 residents and 6,000 jobs are expected to come to north-west Lake Macquarie alone over the next 20 years, not to mention that we can expect growth linked to the Government's Transport Oriented Development precincts, four of which are in my electorate. Three of those precincts—Morisset, Booragul and Teralba—are south of the roundabout. The fourth precinct, Cockle Creek, is north of the roundabout on TC Frith Avenue. Without careful planning to accommodate more housing, people and jobs in the area, there will continue to be traffic management and safety issues at Speers Point roundabout.

While valuable, the current upgrades are only a short-term fix. We obviously need a longer term solution. To ensure that Lake Macquarie is ready to support more people and jobs, the Government must invest in efficient and reliable road infrastructure now. The upgrades should be considered more broadly as part of planning to ensure that people's movements throughout the transport network, and from one mode of transport to another, are as efficient, enjoyable and frictionless as possible. I call on the Government to tackle the issue head-on in its Hunter Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan. The plan takes a 20-year view of the evolving transportation needs in the region. It must clearly articulate the initiatives needed to cater to expected population growth in Lake Macquarie.

More importantly, the Government must ensure the initiatives do not sit on the page and gather dust. They must be funded in a timely manner so that those living in Lake Macquarie and the Hunter do not bear the burden of poor planning in the future. We cannot kick the can further down the road. Speers Point roundabout is just one example in Lake Macquarie of how not planning for population change can put pressure on our roads. Just look at Mandalong Road and Dora Creek down the other end of my electorate in the greater Morisset area. The people of Lake Macquarie, who live there now and will live there soon, deserve a reliable transport network that enables access to work and opportunity.

### INTERNATIONAL TEST CRICKET

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (14:15):** Today marks the start of the five-test series between Australia and India, which is hugely anticipated by cricket fans all across Australia. My electorate has the highest percentage of Indian-born people living in it than anywhere else in the world outside India so the excitement about this test series is enormous. I cannot wait to go to this much-anticipated test series. I am very pleased that it coincides with the announcement in June by Cricket NSW of the South Asian Engagement Strategy. The strategy is important for engaging with South Asian communities and getting them more involved in cricket in New South Wales. It is also a huge testament to the people at Cricket NSW who recognised that they could do better. They have worked out a way of working with the community, cricketers from South Asian backgrounds and its Cultural Advisory Council to do that. They have received a million dollars in funding over four years from the State Government to work with the communities from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan to increase their involvement in cricket at all levels, including participation, volunteering, and developing the talent and fan base.

One of the important goals of Cricket NSW is to double the number of five- to 12-year-olds playing registered cricket by June 2026. It has set itself an incredibly ambitious goal but I hope it is one that it achieves. I mention, in particular, the members of the Cultural Advisory Council, who were engaged in the development of the strategy. Like so many in the Indian-Australian community, they are absolutely passionate about cricket but they also have a depth of knowledge about all sorts of strategic issues and the community. They have certainly provided valuable insights. Those members are Raj Panchal; Abdul Hameed Kherkah; Giles Guneseckera, OAM; Joydeep Hor; Darshak Mehta, OAM; Sheba Nandkeolyar; Hamish Solomons; and Mahjabeen Zaman. I thank them for their work.

A few years ago I attended an event that coincided with the T20 World Cup at Cricket Central. The event was organised by Cricket NSW so that South African and Pakistani fans could meet the teams. Cricket NSW members were a little surprised—but not me—that the Pakistani fans outnumbered the South African fans by 20 to one. Cricket NSW members were totally overwhelmed in a very good way with the number of people who turned up that mid-week afternoon to Cricket Central in Silverwater to meet the teams. It was an absolutely fantastic thing to see and it showed the level of passion that the different South Asian communities have for cricket.

Cricket NSW is planning to do really important things that will help it engage with the community. It will establish events like the South Asian communities' cricket and tape ball competitions and identify champions within those communities.



People who have played first-grade cricket for Australia or for New South Wales, like Tanveer Sangha, Fawad Ahmed and Usman Khawaja—although Usman is playing for Queensland these days—are finding opportunities for talented South Asian coaches and administrators. That is an area where cricket in New South Wales really needs to improve. A lot of young kids from a South Asian background are playing the game, but it does not filter up through the clubs. That is an important goal that the strategy is setting out to achieve, and it reflects a huge opportunity for Australian cricket. I am very much looking forward to the Test series. We have the two most popular teams amongst people who live in Australia competing in this five-test series. It will be a fantastic summer of cricket.

#### **DR PAUL HINE**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) (14:20):** The growth and development of a young man can be difficult, and even more so during high school. An all-boys high school is more difficult still. Young men nowadays deal with more problems than ever before. Mental health challenges and high suicide rates are only some of the hurdles that young men face today. Taking those challenges into consideration, being the head intermediary for the parents of students at an all-boys high school is one of the highest responsibilities one can take on. Dr Paul Hine, headmaster of St Ignatius' College Riverview, is a man who has taken on this challenge for nine years. Not only has he been able to manage and assist in the growth and development of thousands of students for the past nine years, but he has done so with tremendous success.

Maintaining priorities of learning has kept the students at Riverview focused and purpose driven. The world after school is one massive competition. It would be unfortunate for a student not to have the most opportunities available to them once they finish high school. Students at Riverview say they receive "a better opportunity" once they graduate. It is in the numbers. St Ignatius' college is one of the highest performing comprehensive boys schools in New South Wales, with several top ATAR scores over the past number of years. That is the opportunity that Dr Hine has strived for—not just for the top performers but for every student as they move through the college program.

The alumni of St Ignatius' College spread what it means to be an Ignatian far and wide, from Oxford University to Ole Miss in Oxford, Mississippi. The entire college encapsulates this and strives to increase a student's opportunity. Dr Hine's management has been incredible, and his staff funnel it down to the individual teachers, coaches and mentors, especially the strong student culture, to encourage the boys to reach their potential in taking every opportunity that presents itself. This past year has marked the final year of Dr Paul Hine's service as headmaster of St Ignatius' College. He has taken upon his shoulders the future of the school, in the form of the development of the master plan to guide the building and capital works of the college over the years ahead.

In 2019 the Ignis Project was completed. The new agriculture precinct now provides better access and outcomes for students studying agriculture. With so many boarding students who come from rural New South Wales, maintaining and nurturing their knowledge and understanding of the subject of agriculture to then take home to their parents and families has been a great success. The Wingaru building, to be completed in 2025, will house the new science and technology facility. The space will also provide learning spaces for engineering, mathematics, and personal development health and physical education.

However, the culture and community of a school extends well beyond the walls of its buildings. For St Ignatius, the culture of the school is reflected in the school motto, "Quantum potes, tantum aude", or "As much as you can do, so much dare to do". Dr Hine has driven that meaning home for so many graduates, continuously challenging his students to aim for superiority, not amongst their peers but against their former selves. It is a challenge and a call to action that Dr Hine has met himself, reflected in his generosity of spirit, humility, caring and nurturing nature, and intellectual curiosity. He is indeed a man for all seasons and a true man for others. He represents a true Ignatian man—a man of conviction and principle. Once again, I thank Dr Hine for his decade of service to the college community. He leaves behind a truly irrepressible legacy and has shaped the college for the better. I wish him all the very best in his future endeavours, and I hope that God continues to guide him on his journey.

#### **MARINE RESCUE SUSSEX INLET**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (14:24):** It is an absolute honour to celebrate 50 incredible years of service by Marine Rescue Sussex Inlet. It was a special joy to celebrate the milestone at Pelican Shores Cafe and Marina, a venue with its own history as a temporary base for Marine Rescue in the 1970s and 1980s. Past and present members came together to share memories, enjoy friendships and reflect on the incredible journey of the past 50 years. I honour not just an organisation but a legacy built on courage, dedication and an unyielding commitment to saving lives on our waters.

Since its founding in 1974, the unit has been a lifeline for our community. What began as the vision of local butcher John Nicholas to establish a Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol base closer than Greenwell Point has grown into an indispensable service that spans over 100 square kilometres of water from Sussex Inlet and St Georges Basin to Swan Lake and Bendalong Point. Over the past decade alone, the unit has launched more than 500 search-and-rescue missions, ensuring the safe return of nearly 600 individuals. Those are not just numbers; they are the lives of friends, family members and neighbours who were all brought home safely because of the bravery and skill of our volunteers.

Marine Rescue Sussex Inlet's success is a testament to the strength of community spirit. David Jones, who was instrumental in forming the Marine Rescue Sussex Inlet all those years ago, shared stories spanning from the early days, when volunteers sold lamingtons out of a caravan to fund their first rescue vessel, to today's dedicated team of 69 volunteers. The unit has been built by and for the community. David's stories of camaraderie and mateship among the Marine Rescue Sussex Inlet volunteers is evident in their teamwork and mutual dedication to saving lives. David's story of lamingtons falling off the back of the car along the Princes Highway had everyone laughing and reminiscing of days gone by.

During the past 50 years, Marine Rescue Sussex Inlet has continually evolved to meet the challenges of the times. As Deputy Unit Commander Wright said, one of the greatest advancements has been the integration of mobile phone technology. It is hard to imagine how challenging it must have been in the early days to locate someone lost at sea, particularly at night or in rough conditions. Today, with a simple text message, rescuers can pinpoint someone's location, even in the open waters. The recent addition of the U SAFE device, a remote-controlled, jet-powered lifebuoy, marks another leap forward in lifesaving technology. Whether it is rescuing someone stranded on the rocks or reaching those in places too perilous for a boat, the unit continues to demonstrate how technology and determination can work hand in hand to save lives.

The need for Marine Rescue Sussex Inlet has never been greater. Last year the unit recorded its busiest year yet, with 60 missions. This year it is already on track to surpass that, with nearly 50 missions completed. That is more than one mission per week. That remarkable effort speaks to the vital role Marine Rescue Sussex Inlet plays in safeguarding our waters. As we look to the future, we can all take pride in knowing that the unit remains steadfast in its mission, equipped with the latest technology and led by a dedicated team of volunteers who are willing to go far and wide to help those in need.

I thank the past and present volunteers of Marine Rescue Sussex Inlet. Their courage, selflessness and unwavering dedication have saved countless lives and brought peace of mind to our community. They embody the very best of what it means to serve. I look forward to seeing them over the summer and being their "pike" when undertaking their next personal watercraft training session. As it celebrates 50 years of service, may Marine Rescue Sussex Inlet continue to be a beacon of safety, compassion and resilience for the next 50 years and beyond. I congratulate them on their incredible milestone.

#### FILIPPO NAVARRA

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (14:28):** From Le Montage to Riverwood's Conca D'oro, and from Curzon Hall to Oatlands Estate, the remarkable journey of my friend Filippo Navarra began five decades ago. A determined young Italian migrant from the distant land of Sicily, Filippo set foot on Australian shores at the tender age of 17. Armed with nothing but dreams and determination, he embarked on a journey that would not only transform his own life but also leave an incredible mark on Australia's hospitality landscape. Filippo's early days were defined by relentless hard work as he juggled not one, not two, but three jobs to make ends meet. That unwavering work ethic and thirst for success were the cornerstones upon which he laid the foundation that would eventually become an empire in the world of hospitality business. He shared that journey with his beloved wife of 50 years, Sarina Navarra—rest in peace—who has since passed away but played a huge role in the Navarra legacy.

As we celebrate the golden jubilee of Navarra, we are not just honouring a milestone but celebrating an extraordinary story of resilience, passion and triumph. In these five remarkable decades, Filippo, Sarina and their entire family have turned a humble immigrant's aspirations into a thriving business that has stood the test of time. Their empire is no longer a one-man show; it has blossomed into a thriving family enterprise spanning three generations, all built on determination, hard work and the pursuit of success. What sets Filippo and Sarina Navarra apart is not just their remarkable journey but the legacy they have built along the way. Their empire serves as a shining example of what can be achieved with unwavering dedication and a shared dream. Their enduring success is testament to their vision and dedication, which are the values they have instilled in their children and grandchildren who run the business today.

As we gather to celebrate this incredible milestone this year, Filippo Navarra wants the entire hospitality industry to know the deep appreciation he holds for the field that has been his life's passion. From the long hours

and late nights to the satisfaction of creating many memorable experiences for countless clients, Filippo and Sarina understand the unique challenges and joys of the industry, and they have cherished every moment. They have also hired many young people from my local community and throughout Sydney. This 50-year business anniversary is not only a celebration of the remarkable accomplishments of Filippo and Sarina Navarra but also a heartfelt tribute to the entire hospitality sector. Their unwavering determination has not only shaped their own journey but also permeated the next generation, as their children and now third-generation grandchildren continue to carry forward this remarkable legacy.

As we celebrate the past half century, we look forward to a future filled with new challenges and triumphs. Let us remember Filippo and Sarina Navarra and their journey as an inspiration and a humble reminder to us all that with unwavering determination, a strong work ethic and a passion for what we do, we can turn dreams into reality and build legacies that endure for generations to come. I thank the Navarra family.

### ST RAYMOND'S PARISH CHURCH

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (14:31):** I recognise and commend the incredible work of St Raymond's Parish Church in Auburn for its unwavering support for the people of Lebanon, particularly during the festive week of Lebanon's independence day celebrations. Its dedication to fostering hope, unity and faith amidst challenging times deserves our heartfelt appreciation. At the heart of its efforts lies an extraordinary achievement: a monumental Lebanese flag made from 10,452 balloons, symbolising the area of Lebanon in square kilometres. This masterpiece, created under the inspiring leadership of Father Charbel and with the collective efforts of the parishioners, is not only a stunning display of artistry but also a profound testament to their love for Lebanon and its people. Such a creative endeavour has brought the community together and drawn attention to the ongoing struggles faced by Lebanon. I thank Father Charbel and the entire St Raymond's community for their vision and hard work in bringing this remarkable tribute to life.

For those who wish to witness this extraordinary symbol of unity and devotion, St Raymond's Church, which is located at 37-39 Wellington Road, Auburn, will open its doors to the public from Thursday 21 November to Saturday 23 November from 1.00 p.m. to midnight and on Sunday 24 November from 8.00 a.m. until 8.00 p.m. Visitors will have the opportunity to not only marvel at the flag but also light a candle and pray for Lebanon in the sacred presence of the relics of St Raymond. This space offers solace and a chance for reflection, serving as a spiritual haven for many during these trying times. As part of the celebrations, a significant journey of peace will take place tonight, commencing with a walk from Our Lady of Lebanon in Harris Park to St Raymond's in Auburn at 7.00 p.m. This symbolic journey will be preceded by the arrival of St Raymond's relic, which is currently housed at the church.

After the arrival of the relic, mass will be held, uniting the community in prayer and solidarity for Lebanon and all those impacted by the ongoing loss of life in Lebanon and the Middle East. This walk and the accompanying ceremonies provide immense comfort and hope to those who are grieving and longing for peace in the region. The dedication of St Raymond's parish to Lebanon's people is a shining example of how faith communities can rally together to support those in need, both locally and internationally. Their efforts not only highlight the resilience of the Lebanese spirit but also foster deeper connections within our diverse Australian community. I commend the acts of compassion and unity by the parishioners of St Raymond's, which also reminds us of the strength that lies in community and faith. May their efforts be an inspiration to work towards peace, justice and solidarity with those enduring hardship. I take this opportunity to wish everyone in the St Raymond's community and across the Christian community in Auburn a very merry Christmas.

### NURSES AND MIDWIVES INDUSTRIAL ACTION

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (14:34):** New South Wales has a world-class healthcare system that relies on the highly skilled workforce of nurses and midwives. I place on record my support for the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association campaign for improved pay and conditions. Nurses and midwives in public hospitals and clinics work in high-pressure, high-stakes environments to keep the community safe. The State is experiencing record levels of activity in emergency departments and across the public health system, putting additional expectations on nurses and midwives and resulting in high levels of exhaustion. That rising pressure has not been reflected in their remuneration.

Nurses and midwives have suffered from over a decade of wage stagnation at a time of rising cost-of-living pressures. New South Wales nurses and midwives are now the lowest paid in the country, with pay rates 16 per cent lower than their counterparts in Queensland. As a result, they are leaving the State in droves, finding jobs elsewhere that provide higher remuneration and access to more affordable housing. They are also leaving the profession to seek better pay in a less stressful workplace, particularly in response to significant burnout caused by the pandemic. I am chairing an inquiry into essential worker housing that is uncovering the extreme difficulties nurses face in securing a home they can afford close to where they work. Shiftwork makes living far from a job

especially challenging. I hope the inquiry will result in policies that reduce the housing burden for nurses and midwives, but it is not a replacement for equitable pay.

If we do not deliver pay rates that reflect the skills, knowledge and value of nurses and midwives, we will struggle to retain and recruit a workforce that will keep the community safe. The Government has introduced safe nursing ratio policies and new hospitals are being built, but we will not be able to deliver improved services if we cannot engage the nurses and midwives needed to fill positions. I understand that a shortage of midwives in rural areas is forcing women to travel long distances to give birth. The Nurses and Midwives' Association is calling for a 15 per cent pay increase effective from 1 July this year, with doubled penalty rates for night shiftwork. Thanks to the removal of the public sector wages cap, the Government has created an opportunity to negotiate with frontline workers and ensure they can be compensated fairly.

The State has achieved record deals with teachers and police, and I understand negotiations with nurses and midwives over the pay increase are continuing. Improving pay rates for nurses and midwives is not just about recognising their contribution but also about investing in a healthy future for the State. The viability of the health system relies on nursing being an attractive profession. Increasing pay rates by 15 per cent will recognise the skills, knowledge and experience of nurses and midwives and their importance in delivering a safe, high-quality, timely, equitable and accessible healthcare system. The wider community supports the campaign, and I call on the Government to continue working with the association to deliver a better pay deal for nurses and midwives.

That was my final contribution for the year in this Chamber. I wish all members a very merry Christmas and end of year. I wish everyone who works in the parliamentary precinct a safe new year and Christmas. I also wish everyone who comes to visit or protest outside this place a very safe and merry Christmas and new year.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** I wish the member for Sydney a merry Christmas.

#### **NSW STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE NORTH EASTERN ZONE AWARDS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (14:38):** They protest inside as well, not just outside! I speak about the North Eastern Zone presentation of the NSW State Emergency Service, which took place on 2 November at the Lismore Workers Sports Club in Goonellabah. I acknowledge the wonderful work that the SES does. I will also mention a whole lot of names because it is important to do that. I refer to the National Emergency Awards. Ex-Tropical Cyclone Debbie went to Harley Armstrong, Kelley Bohn, Susan Brown, Neil Coulter, Neville Graham, John Habib, Kenneth Hudson, Paul Kohlhagen, Judith Lindsay, Lacy Loloa, Daniel Martin, Lynette Jones, Troy McDonald, Cheyne Paul, Kenneth Squires and Karina Tait, who are all from the Lismore City unit.

I refer to the National Emergency Awards. The 2019-20 Bushfires Medals recipients were Katrina Bloomfield from the Casino unit, Kevin Boyd from the Broadwater unit, Joanne Brown from the Lismore City unit, Venus Chardon from the Casino unit, Mark Davenport from the Tabulam unit, Larry Ferguson from the Casino unit, Jenna Finnigan from the Lismore City unit, Amy Gill from the Coraki unit, Donna Lamont from the Casino unit, Sonya Marks from the Coraki unit, Kirsty Marks from the Casino unit, Eathan McDonald from the Casino unit, Inspector Karen Rea from the Casino unit, Bart Plenkovich from the Broadwater unit, Charmaine Robins from the Ballina unit, Stephen Walton from the Yamba unit, Ashley Slapp from the Woodburn unit and John Hewson from the Northern Rivers capability unit. The 2019-20 Bushfires Clasps were awarded to Deb Castledine from the Kyogle unit, George Robinon from the Ballina unit, Lacy Loloa from the Lismore City unit, Neville Graham from the Lismore City unit, Karina Tait from the Lismore City unit and Kelley Bohn from the Lismore City unit.

As for the National Awards, Inspector Susan Brown and Larry Ferguson received a clasp 1, and Lynette Jones and Cheyne Paul received a national medal. Ezekiel Knight from the Ballina unit received the Commissioner's Commendation of Courage. The Commissioner's Certificate of Appreciation went to individuals Jessica Egan, Warwick Jansen and Serge Killingbeck from the Lismore City unit, as well as to the North Eastern zone, Lismore City unit, Broadwater unit, Coraki unit, Woodburn unit, Casino unit, Tabulam unit, Kyogle unit, Tweed Coast unit, Ballina unit, Murwillumbah unit, Tweed Heads unit, Northern Rivers capability unit and Mullumbimby unit. Long service awards went to Susan Brown for 25 years of service, Wilson Richmond Cluster; Larry Ferguson for 25 years of service, Casino unit; Joe Frankland for 20 years of service, Murwillumbah unit; Cheyne Paul and Lynette Jones for 15 years of service, Lismore City unit; and Joanne Brown and Mark Youngberry for 10 years of service, Lismore City unit.

I want to put on record everyone who was there. There were a lot of volunteers, family members and guests. I pay tribute to the families of all of our SES because it is a shared responsibility and duty. They back them every step. The host officer was Chief Superintendent Greg Swindells. The guests included Assistant Commissioner Sean Kearns; Tamara Smith, the member for Ballina; Jay Gibson, representative of Kevin Hogan, the member for Page; Lismore mayor Steve Kreig; Superintendent Joanna Jones, deputy zone commander of Wilsons Clarence

command; Superintendent Scott McLennan, deputy zone commander of Coffs Clarence command; Superintendent Daniel Ainsworth, NSW Rural Fire Service district manager for Northern Rivers; and operations readiness officers Chief Inspector Lacy Loloea and Chief Inspector Kirsten Yeats. I was also there.

The master of ceremony was Superintendent Kristine McDonald, deputy zone commander of Richmond Tweed command. It is always a pleasure to be present at an event like that. SES do not do what they do to get awards. They are quite humble. It is nice when they do get them and we can show our appreciation. I wish everyone a merry Christmas in this joyful season. I look forward to seeing you all again next year, refreshed and reinvigorated.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** I wish the member for Lismore a merry Christmas. After the terrible troubles she has had in recent times, I hope that her electorate is spared from natural disasters next year. I thank her for all she does.

#### CASTLE HILL ELECTORATE

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (14:43):** As we move towards Christmas and the new year, we can now take some time to reflect on the lows, the highs and everything in between over the past 12 months. We can also take some time to hope that the new year will bring good health, prosperity, peace and goodwill to all. Over the past 12 months my role representing my local community—like the roles of some other members in this House—has changed. Like some other members, at the commencement of the year I held a dual role of working in the interests of the community: as a councillor on the Hills Shire Council and also as a member of this House. I wish the mayor and the councillors of the Hills Shire Council with whom I served, and their families, a happy, healthy and wonderful Christmas. I also wish the current councillors and the mayor who was elected in September, and their families, a very happy Christmas and new year. I also wish the general manager and the staff of the Hills Shire Council a happy Christmas.

I thank the Speaker and the entire team, including the Deputy Speaker and the Assistant Speaker, for keeping this House running. We all appreciate that the role of the Speaker can be difficult at times. On behalf of my community, I thank you and I wish you and your team a happy and merry Christmas. I thank the Premier, Ministers and members of the Government for their service. Whilst we can all agree that we will often have opposing views on policies and legislation, it is nevertheless clear that we all work to try to improve the prosperity, health and welfare of our communities. I thank you for your service and wish you all a safe and happy Christmas. I thank the Leader of the Opposition, Mark Speakman, and the entire Coalition leadership team. I thank Mark in particular. It is in no small part because of his efforts that we have been an effective, strong and united Coalition team. I look forward to working with him in two years' time in what will be a Speakman government. We could not do what we do every day in this House without the Whip and his entire team. I thank Adam for his friendship, guidance and support.

The Castle Hill electorate has many charitable organisations, which continue to give back to our communities. The charitable organisations include wonderful hardworking community organisations such as Rotary clubs, Lions clubs, masonic clubs, men's sheds, women's sheds, domestic violence prevention groups, Hills Community Aid, the Positive Vibes Foundation, the India Club—whose event I attended recently on the harbour—the Community Foundation of North Western Sydney, the Sydney Community Group, Fit Kidz Foundation and many more community groups. I wish all the community groups and each of their members a prosperous, safe and happy Christmas.

We are not able to serve our communities without our electorate staff. I am very fortunate to have some wonderful and hardworking staff. This year Helen Russell, who served as our senior electoral officer, retired after many years. We are now very fortunate to have a new senior electoral officer, Maria Connolly, who has been working tirelessly over the past six months. My office could not function without Maria's efforts. Maria, I thank you for your wonderful job over the past six months. The Castle Hill electorate office would not be as effective and well run without your tireless efforts. Leanne, I thank you for dealing with all the correspondence, emails and representations to Ministers, which you attend to on a daily basis. Your work is so important to the running of our office. I thank you.

Molly, I could not do the communications and social media without you. I thank you very much for your service over the past year. Dougal, I thank you for your work in helping run my office effectively during the times that you have been there. Lastly, and most importantly, I acknowledge my family. I am indebted to the loving support of my family: my wife, Raylee; our children, Natalie and Matthew; Natalie's partner Michael; and our grandson, Charles, who recently had his third birthday. I know my family sacrifices so much to afford me the privilege of serving the community. I wish everyone a happy Christmas and a prosperous and safe new year. I will see you in 2025.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** I thank the member for Castle Hill. I wish him a merry Christmas. Before I depart the chair for the last time in 2024, I wish all of my parliamentary colleagues—those in the Chamber and those who have already left for the day—a very merry Christmas. I thank the Clerk and the staff in the Clerk's office for the guidance they have given us this year. I thank everyone who works in this place for all they do to support us and to make our days easier and this place run so smoothly.

### WORKPLACE PRACTICES

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (14:49):** I speak today about the future of work in New South Wales. In his recent book *Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism*, Greek Australian economist, Yanis Varoufakis, posits that the rapid emergence of new cloud technology with particularly sophisticated algorithms, combined with the ongoing impacts of the global financial crisis in 2008, have fundamentally changed capitalism. In a traditional market economy, rational actors are said to buy and sell commodities, including their labour, in service of their own needs, interests and goals. Feudalism, in its most basic form, is a system where peasants or serfs serve their lords through labour such as farm work, and in return are permitted to live within the fiefdom.

Far from the freedom of choice, which is ostensibly available under capitalism, the living and working conditions of serfs were entirely dependent on the generosity of their masters. Varoufakis argues that, under "technofeudalism", individuals are both the consumers of goods and are the products themselves because massive tech companies generate earnings from harvesting data and content from users. Varoufakis also talks about "cloud proles", who are exploited workers in factories and warehouses that serve billionaires. The most well-known and notorious of these companies is Amazon. The horrific conditions workers face in Amazon fulfillment centres are well-documented.

Workers are denied toilet breaks, forced to work in unsafe conditions in extreme temperatures and have their every move closely monitored across their shifts. One employee in a United Kingdom fulfillment centre described the conditions as "slave like". Amazon has also engaged in significant union-busting activities, including paying consultants huge sums to devise anti-union campaigns and engaging in intimidation and character assassination tactics against union leaders and employees who wish to unionise. I am concerned that this brutal, United States style treatment of workers is increasingly infecting other workplaces in Australia.

Five Woolworths distribution warehouses are currently on strike, including one in Erskine Park in Western Sydney. Workers are demanding fair pay and a national agreement for warehouse workers across the country. One of their most pressing demands, however, is that Woolworths abandons its plans for a punitive system of productivity quotas for workers and reduce the extreme degree of surveillance that workers are currently subject to. Woolworths warehouse workers report that they are constantly surveilled by cameras and management and are routinely questioned about the length of toilet breaks or the speed of their work. This constant surveillance has devastating psychological effects. It leaves workers feeling stressed, anxious and isolated from their colleagues.

Woolworths intends to implement a system of productivity targets that requires workers to be 100 per cent productive 100 per cent of the time while performing this laborious and physically demanding work. This is an unrealistic requirement in any job. The productivity targets will be set at an arbitrary level and will not account for personal characteristics such as age, ability, injury or pregnancy. Workers who fall below the target will face disciplinary measures, including termination. One mistake will put workers on probation for 12 weeks, meaning that most people will constantly be at risk of losing their jobs. It raises the question: How has it got to this point? Are these the kinds of conditions we want to be imposed on workers in New South Wales? Frankly, it is inhumane.

No person should be forced to work under these conditions. I visited a procurement centre in Moorebank. While it was incredibly efficient, it is no place to put a human in the middle of. Workers are effectively there as machines, not human beings. Are workplaces where you can have a chat and a smoko now a privilege for the wealthy? The technological ability to survey and strictly police the conduct of workers, or to replace their jobs entirely, is already available and becoming increasingly sophisticated. Developments in AI will only exacerbate this. This is not just a problem for Woolies workers; it is something that should be of concern to every working person in this country and State.

Now is the time to decide what kind of society we want to have and how we will manage changes in technology and the functioning of capitalism. Australia has historically had strong workers protections and a good balance between work, rest and play for workers. This is largely thanks to Labor governments and the labour movement. There is no reason Australia cannot be a workers' paradise again, where ordinary workers have a good quality of life and access to meaningful unionised work, education and health care. We tamed the worst excesses of capitalism during the twentieth century, and we can do so again in the twenty-first century.

## NEWTOWN ELECTORATE

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (14:54):** The 2024 year has been massive for the Newtown electorate. I often say that I represent one of the most progressive communities in New South Wales, if not the country. But this year has proven that the Newtown community must also be one of the most active. Our office runs a community and activist calendar where we spotlight events, movements and activities in our area and across Sydney. This year there has been so much going on that it has been difficult to keep up. Our resident action groups do so much, like REDWatch, Friends of Erskineville and the Alexandria Residents' Action Group. They rely on active volunteers and do incredible work to unite and mobilise our community around local issues, from accessible stations to public housing campaigns and from badly lit pedestrian bridges to improved cycleways.

Our local P&Cs also do an incredible job to fill the gaps left by under-resourced infrastructure and learning needs in schools. I recently had the pleasure of attending the incredibly impressive Erko Berzerko at Erskineville Public School, a P&C fundraising event. It reminded me of how wonderful those activities can be but also that thinly stretched, exhausted and overworked parents run the fundraisers on their weekends—in addition to their various day jobs—to raise money through bake sales, second-hand markets and other activities for the necessary supports and infrastructure for their children's schools. When I spoke at the opening of Erko Berzerko, I reminded everyone of a vintage piece of Greens merchandise that came from the peace movement. The tea towel reads:

it will be a great day when our schools get all the money they need and the air force has to hold a cake stall to buy a bomber

In this day and age, that would be when we fully fund free, high-quality public education—from early childhood through to fee-free and HECS-free TAFE and university—rather than spending billions on AUKUS. Newtown is home to some critical services that support those who are doing it tough in our area and in our city. We regularly connect people to the wonderful teams at Newtown Neighbourhood Centre, Redfern Legal Centre, Marrickville Legal Centre, the Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre, Lou's Place, Addi Road and the Older Women's Network.

We love working with countless other local organisations, providing vital support to those who need it most, from the Settlement in Darlington to Addi Road in Marrickville and the long established First Nations led organisations in Redfern and beyond. Volunteers are at the heart of our community. The current cost-of-living crisis means that too many people are going hungry. I give a special shout-out to the volunteers and organisers of Food Not Bombs, whose dependable presence at Newtown station and Campo Park is the perfect illustration of how locals are ready to jump in to fill the major gaps in our welfare safety net and deal with the fact that people are making decisions every day as to whether they pay their rent and go hungry that night.

While the Newtown electorate community is well connected locally, we also think and act globally. It has been a source of continual inspiration to witness the tireless organising and solidarity action that has occurred this year for a free Palestine, in response to the genocidal attacks on Gaza and the inhuman attacks on Lebanon. With over a year of mass rallies in Hyde Park, organised by the Palestine Action Group, the 24/7 Little Palestine picket that lasted for months outside the PM's electorate office in the inner west, and the various workplace and community actions organised by Unionists for Palestine, Families for Palestine, Nurses and Midwives for Palestine, Teachers and School Staff for Palestine, Hospitality for Palestine and many more, our community has made it clear that we will not stop until Palestine is free from the river to the sea. It is worth noting that overnight the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Netanyahu. It is high time that the international community and our national leaders stepped up and recognised their ongoing complicity in the war crimes occurring inside Gaza right now.

The cost of living continues to bite for so many in our community and across the State. Local union members have stood strong together. It has been an absolute joy to join with the nurses at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and with various other workers across our community, including members of the Fire Brigade Employees Union and other firms, to stand in solidarity with workers for their pay and conditions. I will have more to say about our local community in a moment.

## RYDE ELECTORATE

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** I welcome the partner of the member for Ryde, Natalie, who is in the Speaker's gallery.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** His much better half.

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (14:59):** Indeed she is my better half. I use my final address in the Parliament for 2024 to wish my constituents in Ryde a very merry Christmas and a safe and happy new year. Throughout the course of this year, we have worked hard to fight for our fair share. We have always been pragmatic, constructive and fiercely defensive of the things that make Ryde the very best place to call home. I am particularly proud of our efforts to push for real and pragmatic rental reforms. Many of the ideas raised over

12 months ago at my rental forum held in Eastwood are now enshrined in law. That was a demonstration that community input can lead to real legislative change, and that no matter how apathetic we may feel as a society towards politics, parliaments and governments, change is possible with the right people in the right places at the right time.

The Ryde community is also finally seeing progress on the long-overdue school developments in Melrose Park; the demolition of the old Meadowbank Public School, which will pave the way for much-needed open spaces; and the distribution of almost half a million dollars to local school P&Cs, community organisations and sports clubs for local projects and initiatives. This is a demonstration of real impact at a grassroots level, made possible through considered collaboration and advocacy. The realisation of these outcomes is the driver that will motivate me to pursue what remains unfinished, like the Ryde Hospital rebuild, the new school needed for Macquarie Park, and the unwinding of poorly executed bus timetable changes, which has left many local residents worse off this year.

Over Christmas, many will take time to regroup with family and friends, reassess their direction and enjoy some well-earned rest. I hope those looking to improve their health and wellbeing will make it a new year's resolution to join me in our newly established Macquarie University Parkrun, something I had the privilege of championing alongside my then council colleagues at the City of Ryde. On that note, I congratulate the new local government representatives overseeing my electorate, and particularly acknowledge Ryde's mayor, Trenton Brown, and Parramatta's mayor, Martin Zaiter, for their leadership. They play an important role in our community and have already hit the ground running, working closely with my office and I on delivering for the community.

I thank my staff—Kathy Tracey, Tommy Bae, Jasmin Ahlawhat, Jem Craddock, Andrew Tutos, Lisa Li, Kim Ng and Cristopher Kong—for pushing boundaries, innovating and always having the best interests of the community and I at the forefront of their minds. To my colleagues, thank you for your advocacy on behalf of your communities. Especially, I thank the Opposition leadership for its steadfast commitment to a better New South Wales. The events of this week, with strikes and wholesale industrial disputes, are a reminder that we absolutely can do better. To do that, we must always put people at the centre of our decisions, not vested interests or the expediency of politics. As a child growing up, this principle was emblazoned in my mind. I honestly cannot thank my family enough for their guidance, support and unbridled belief in doing what is right.

My parents, Janelle and Richard, are the best and most honest example of that virtue in action, and this year has been no exception. I share that learning with my sisters, Kendall and Madison, who throughout this year have gone from strength to strength, both personally and professionally. I am so grateful for their unconditional support and hope 2025 shapes up as they hope it to. Finally, I acknowledge my family at home. My partner, Natalie, who is in the Chamber today, never ceases to amaze me. She has been the driving force behind most of my good ideas and initiatives. Natalie, while I love this job, I love you more, and cannot conceive of any part of my life without you. With you in my life, I have lost sense of "me" and can only really comprehend "us". I cherish every moment with you, even the hard ones, and am so grateful for the life that we are now living.

I acknowledge Oscar, the Parliament's most famous cat. Oscar lights up the lives of all who meet him—with the exception of the Premier, whose unhealthy fixation on our little ragdoll has raised more than a few eyebrows across the aisle. He is adored in Ryde and, at the current rate, is on track to be mentioned more times in *Hansard* than some of the Premier's own Ministers. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the Hansard team's dedicated service. I extend my thanks to everyone who makes this place tick. As members, we are awfully fortunate to have them, and I hope they will be able to enjoy some well-deserved time away from this place. I will finish where I started, by affirming my love for the Ryde community. I wish the people of my electorate all the very best for the Christmas break and look forward to fighting for a bold and ambitious agenda in 2025. The honour and privilege of serving them throughout the course of this year is unrivalled, and I wish them all every joy and wonder.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** I thank the member for Ryde. I wish a merry Christmas to him—and to Natalie and Oscar.

#### NEWTOWN ELECTORATE

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:04):** In my previous private member's statement I thanked the wonderful people of Newtown. Anyone who has walked down King Street would know that Newtown is one of the most proudly queer communities anywhere in the world. This year the queerphobes supported local council-led bans of books about rainbow families. They argued that their areas were not like Newtown or Marrickville. Leaving aside the ridiculous suggestion that there are not queer people everywhere in our city—or, indeed, everywhere in our State, in our country and around the world—I acknowledge that our community's strong support for LGBTIQ+ rights was not accidental but rather the result of years of hard work and commitment by local



activists and organisations who have been fighting for equality. That includes community-building activities like the launch of the *Genderbilly* zine at the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre, which we supported. It also includes local businesses like Sock Drawer Heroes and No Milk in my T. The community has built our rainbow culture from the ground up. I acknowledge the work of activist group Pride in Protest, which is holding another rally in Newtown this weekend for the Trans Day of Resistance. I acknowledge also Twenty10's newly established Pride Centre in the heart of Newtown.

Students at the University of Sydney also make up a significant part of the culture of Newtown. I thank and acknowledge those who take part in the hub of activism at that campus. In particular, I acknowledge the students of the Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association, who were successful in collecting over 20,000 signatures on a petition to debate the need to extend travel card concessions to all students, regardless of their visa status, the colour of their passport, or their part-time or full-time status as students. This year there was yet another horrific example of hazing and sexual violence at the elite University of Sydney residential colleges, and it is not the first time that has occurred. I spotlight the long-term campaign by victim-survivors and the USyd Women's Collective to abolish the colleges and replace them with publicly owned and student-run housing. I am committed to continuing to work with them on that campaign in future.

This year we were visited by the King. While the colonial pomp and pageantry went on in this place, a group of incredible Aboriginal activists from the Blak Caucus reestablished the Sydney Basin Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Victoria Park, at the corner of Parramatta Road and City Road. It is critical that the tent embassy remains there and that its demands are heard and met. All of that local work in our community would not be possible without the wonderful team of people, past and present, who have been part of the Newtown project. I put on record my appreciation and gratitude for the current Newtown electorate office team, including Patricia, Eleanor, Donny, Luc and Dani, as well as all of the people who have provided short-term relief for us and others who have been a part of the office over the past year. I acknowledge also the wonderful Greens local councillors whom I have had the pleasure of working with in service of our local community in the City of Sydney and Inner West council areas. For years I have had the pleasure of working with Councillor Sylvie Ellsmore and Councillor Liz Atkins.

It is very exciting that our new Greens local council team in the City of Sydney has doubled from one to two, with Councillor Matthew Thompson joining Sylvie Ellsmore. The Inner West Council has newly elected Greens councillors too, including Andrew Blake, Izabella Antoniou, Olivia Barlow and Ismet Tastan. The Greens are committed to grassroots participatory democracy, and our members are key to designing and developing policy and priorities. That is why members who live in their local Greens group areas that make up the electorate of Newtown form the Newtown reference group, which is convened in order to provide support, advice, political guidance and staunch solidarity to me. They also hold me to account as the member for Newtown. I acknowledge the ongoing support of my long-term political ally and friend Gareth, who convenes that group. Next year will mark 10 years since we made the seat of Newtown Green. In that time we have made our mark. This year we have finally delivered on our commitment to end unfair no-grounds evictions in New South Wales.

The collective power of community has come together to advance change, as we are doing right now in Newcastle through Rising Tide. That is how we create change politically. Personally, as part of a radical left movement for change and as the member for Newtown, my work is only possible because of the heavy lifting done by my partner, Kristian, who holds our family life together. My parents provide fly-in fly-out help and our daughter, Scarlett, enjoys care from Auntie Tee Tee and her dear Faithy. In many ways this year was very brutal, because standing up to power is not easy. Without the staunch support of the Newtown electorate office, my family and, indeed, the wonderful people who make up the electorate of Newtown, I would not have been able to do that. Merry Christmas.

### ILLAWONG PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (15:09):** I update the House on the situation at Illawong Public School, which has continued over the past week. This time last week I brought to light concerning allegations that had been made at Illawong Public School. Many of those concerns have been well canvassed in the media over the past week. I thank the media for assisting me to bring that important situation to light for my community. From the outset, I thank the parents at Illawong Public School for raising their concerns with me about the types of discussions about advanced sexual content that were had with their children in year 6 and about the way that was handled by the senior staff member in question. The Minister for Education and Early Learning has now stated publicly that that staff member was the principal.

I acknowledge that many parents were quite distressed and upset to find out that their children had been exposed to that content, and then, in following up, to have had to have conversations with their children about it. I find that gravely concerning. Furthermore, after raising concerns in this place and after having the media report on my speech last Friday, I was more troubled that some parents were writing to me on Sunday evening after

reading the media reports about what had transpired at the school. Those parents were even more concerned because they were not notified by Illawong Public School—they found out not from their children or the school but through the media. I cannot imagine how distressing it is for those parents to then try to follow up with conversations with their children and not have any further information. When they approached the school, every attempt was obstructed.

I am grateful that due to the media attention that was brought to the situation, after I completed an interview on air on 2GB on Monday, the Department of Education finally sent communication to Illawong Public School advising them that there is a relieving principal in place. I understand that many parents knew that earlier. It was formally communicated to parents that counselling would be available for each student in year 6 if that was wanted by the children. I am extremely grateful to the department for acting on that matter in that way and honouring the requests of the parents in my community, who wanted both to make sure that their children had professional support in relation to a sensitive topic and also to have a contact person if they would like to follow up and ask questions about how to manage the situation with their children. It has been incredibly distressing to those parents, so a little bit of information goes a long way. I am grateful to the parents for continuing to inform me of the situation at the school and how they are feeling about the way that the school is being managed.

Since I am in this Chamber, I take a moment to reiterate to everyone in the community that Illawong Public School is an exceptional school. I have had only the most positive interactions in that school environment. I have loved visiting the students this year and seeing the projects that they have worked on to highlight environmental issues. The teachers go above and beyond and have shown their level of care towards the students. I note that whilst people have been alarmed at this one incident, there are far more positive examples that outweigh what has happened at that school.

I reaffirm that an investigation is underway. I have every confidence that the department is taking it seriously and understands that the school community has highlighted its level of distress. The process will be completed in the appropriate manner. The school community has highlighted its concerns. I hope that the department honours the school community's requests moving forward and considers whether it is appropriate to place the individual who is under investigation back in that environment moving forward. I thank the House for not only listening to me talk last week about the situation that transpired but also affording me the opportunity to provide an update to my community about a situation that has been of serious concern to many.

#### MANLY ELECTORATE

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (15:14):** I am the last to speak today. I do not know whether that is a good thing or a punishment. I am not sure what I have done.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Last, but not the least.

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN:** Not the least, according to the Whip's office. Nonetheless, it great to be here to acknowledge, as we approach the end of 2024, some of the amazing people and organisations in the electorate of Manly that make representing this community one of the greatest honours and privileges that one can have. This year has been an amazing opportunity to deliver a number of programs and projects, big and small. One that the community particularly enjoyed seeing come to fruition was the demolition of the old aquarium site at Manly Cove. The aquarium, no longer fit for purpose, had been vacated some years ago and we demolished it to create a beautiful public open space that will be available for visitors and locals alike to come and enjoy one of the best harbours in the world. We hope that the fencing will be removed this side of Christmas. It will be a wonderful additional for locals and for visitors to Sydney.

The Dalwood Spilstead Service and the wonderful staff who work there supporting families and young people in need came close to losing funding this year. Thankfully, the community rallied together, the Government heard our call and ongoing funding was secured for that wonderful organisation. I thank all the team at Dalwood and the auxiliary that put in so much effort to ensure that funding into the future. The Manly Adolescent and Young Adult Hospice, the first and only one of its kind in the State, welcomes people from across New South Wales for world-class palliative respite care. We had a wonderful fundraiser for the hospice this year, which brought together amazing people in the community. Over \$100,000 was raised to purchase a new bus to enable young people who stay at the hospice to get around the community.

I especially thank the Rotary Club of Manly and the Community Bank Freshwater, which each donated \$50,000 and then ran a fundraiser on top of that to deliver a great outcome for the hospice. We had a wonderful anniversary for the Australia Remembers committee commemorating the attack on Sydney Harbour. The thirtieth anniversary of the commemorative event is coming up next year. That will be a good one. I took part in the Bravery Trek, which saw me stupidly run over 180 kilometres—not all at once but over a couple of weeks—to

raise funds for our veterans community. It was a great way to get around Manly and enjoy the sights and raise awareness of a wonderful organisation.

In April we held the poorly named—I guess it depends which way you look at it—Make Manly Great Again business forum. It was just a catchy name; it is not an endorsement of any particular individual. We have brought together some wonderful local businesses and stakeholders to discuss how we could strengthen Manly's visitor economy. I thank everybody who got involved. A number of smaller local parks and reserves projects are also coming to fruition, which will make our community an even better place to live. But we will take the wrapping off next year.

I sincerely thank my wonderful and outstanding electorate team. I thank my senior electorate officer, Kim Preston Hiney; Adele Heasman, who will become a grandma in the next couple of weeks—I wish her all the best and I know she will thoroughly enjoy herself—and newcomer Chester Fitzhardinge, who has done an amazing job in 10 months in the role. He is an outstanding staff member. I am incredibly grateful to have that team, who do so much work for me to make sure that Manly is one of the best places to look after. Finally, I thank Phil Corbett, who has been there helping over many months. I also thank the Whip, Bo and the team for doing an outstanding job; the Clerks, who keep this place running and whom we could not do without; and the Department of Parliamentary Services and the team that make the Parliament the place it is. I wish everybody a safe and enjoyable holiday. I hope we will see one another safe and sound in the bearpit in 2025. With that, I will turn the lights out and lock the door.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** I wish all members a very merry Christmas. I particularly acknowledge our Clerks. On behalf of the Speaker's panel, I thank you for all your support. You have gotten us out of some curly situations. We very much appreciate your advice and counsel. To our attendants who are there every single day for us, thank you so much. We are a rowdy bunch, but you are always so accommodating.

To Hansard, thank you so much. I give you lots of scribbled notes and somehow you make me sound very coherent in the official record. We really do appreciate it. You are here as long as us, sometimes longer, and those long parliamentary sitting days are tiring. Thank you very much for all your support. Members, I wish you all a very merry Christmas. I hope you get to spend some time with your family and loved ones. As we all know, it is our family, our loved ones, our partners and parents who miss out on quality time with us. I hope that you make the best of this time. I thank the House for its indulgence.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 15:21 until  
Tuesday 11 February 2025 at 12:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

#### **GRADUATION - MIKAYLA TRIEU**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Mikayla Trieu on their recent graduation from Ryde Secondary College. Having attended the ceremony in person, I witnessed the culmination of Mikayla's years of dedication and hard work. Completing Year 12 is an impressive achievement, and Mikayla 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 Mikayla 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 Mikayla and congratulate them on this exceptional achievement. May the future be bright and prosperous for Mikayla and their family.

#### **GRADUATION - JESSICA TSANG**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Jessica Tsang on their recent graduation from Ryde Secondary College. Having attended the ceremony in person, I witnessed the culmination of Jessica's years of dedication and hard work. Completing Year 12 is an impressive achievement, and Jessica 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 Jessica 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 Jessica and congratulate them on this exceptional achievement. May the future be bright and prosperous for Jessica and their family.

### GRADUATION - HILARY YIM

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Hilary Yim on their recent graduation from Ryde Secondary College. Having attended the ceremony in person, I witnessed the culmination of Hilary's years of dedication and hard work. Completing Year 12 is an impressive achievement, and Hilary 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 Hilary 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 Hilary and congratulate them on this exceptional achievement. May the future be bright and prosperous for Hilary and their family.

### ISABELLA PETRIE – MUSIC TO YOUR EARS

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—From the tender age of three, Isabella Petrie was drawn to the violin. Her weekly trips to Wagga Wagga Conservatorium and the countless hours of dedication, both from herself and her teachers at the Conservatorium and West Wyalong High, have culminated in the captivating performances of this young 19-year-old, who enchants her audience with every note. Isabella has recently been offered a position to tour in Germany and Austria with the Regional Youth Orchestra to showcase her spectacular musical talent. What an incredible opportunity for a young Tallimba girl to not only showcase her exceptional musical talent but also to represent the community of the Bland Shire on a global stage. As part of this world tour, Isabella will have the chance to study at one of the world's most esteemed music schools in Vienna, where her passion for music and her dream of extending her musical journey will come to light. I congratulate Isabella on her commitment to this extensive musical talent, and I commend everyone, including the local community, who has supported her on her path. Let's continue to support Isabella as she embarks on this exciting musical journey.

### REMEMBRANCE DAY IN COOLAMON

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—The crowds gathered in the main street where the Coolamon War Memorial stands for Remembrance Day this year. An Obelisk, tall and strong like the men it commemorates, their names engraved on each side. Those who went to war and came back and those who are resting on foreign soil but will never be forgotten for their ultimate sacrifice. Popular music from the period of World War I was playing to the street as people found a seat or stood to the side. Coolamon Central School arrived, and the students quietly took their places. RSL Sub Branch President Mr Allan Smith spoke of the sacrifices made both overseas and at home and Mayor Dave McCann recited the poem, in Flanders Fields by John McCrae and a thoughtful hush came over the assembled group. Central School Students Eva Luca and Arron Deshawn spoke about what Remembrance was to them, the bugle played and a Minute of Silence followed. Thanks must go to Angela McCann for her co-ordination of the day's commemorations.

### HEALTH DISTRICT AWARD FOR JASMIN JONES

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I wish to congratulate Jasmin Jones, a Registered Nurse, who has recently been recognised at the Western NSW Health Awards for her exceptional contributions to patient care and her commitment to improving health outcomes in her community. Jasmin was awarded as Staff Member of the Year for the Grenfell Multipurpose Service. The Western NSW Health Area is unique for many reasons but mainly because of its sheer size which includes some of the most remote towns with some of the most vulnerable people of our community. These conditions make this award even more impressive. Throughout her career, Jasmin has gone above and beyond in her role, especially as rural communities face unique healthcare challenges. Jasmin's efforts not only improve patient care but also strengthen her team's ability to respond effectively to local health needs. In receiving this award, Jasmin expressed gratitude to her colleagues and mentors, emphasising the collaborative spirit that drives healthcare in Western NSW. Her passion for nursing and dedication to rural health make Jasmin a true asset to the community. The award celebrates her tireless work and her commitment to delivering compassionate, high-quality care. Congratulations Jasmin.

### BEACH BREW CAFÉ - STEVE NIBBS AND TERRIANNE MOORE

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Steve Nibbs and Terrianne Moore of the Beach Brew Café in Forster for their initiative to host a community Christmas lunch. Rather than celebrating with their own family, Steve and Terrianne are opening their hearts and their festive table to those in need - including individuals experiencing homelessness, emergency service workers, and those who might otherwise spend Christmas alone. Their vision of a traditional Christmas lunch served along a festively decorated Wharf Street has already received overwhelming support from local businesses, which have generously contributed food and gift donations. The event will cater to 100 people, with half the tickets provided free to those in need and the remainder sold to raise funds for important causes like women's shelters and men's health initiatives. Steve and

Terrianne's efforts are a reminder of the true spirit of Christmas - coming together to support one another. I commend them and wish their inaugural Christmas lunch every success.

#### **GREAT LAKES PEARL DRAGONS**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge the successful 11th regatta hosted by the Great Lakes Pearl Dragons at Elizabeth Reserve foreshore in Forster, last weekend. Teams from across New South Wales competed in sprint and endurance races, in both 500 and 200-metre events, as well as the challenging two-kilometre race. It was a weekend full of hard work, teamwork, and excitement, with the Pearl Dragons once again proving to be wonderful hosts. Special mention to the volunteers, officials, and local SES members, whose efforts ensured a smooth and safe event for all. A highlight was the special 500-metre race, recognising paddlers who are also our first responders, a group who work around the clock to keep our community safe. Congratulations to all who took part.

#### **JACINTA BRYAN**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of McGrath Foundation specialist breast and gynaecological nurse, Jacinta Bryan, to our community. Jacinta, based in the Manning and Great Lakes region, provides care and guidance to patients navigating the challenges of breast cancer. Relocating to Taree in 2018, Jacinta has expanded her role to meet the growing needs of the region, supporting patients from Hawks Nest to Johns River. Working out of Mayo and Forster private hospitals as well as Manning Base Hospital, Jacinta ensures families receive the care they deserve, no matter where they are treated. With more than 20 years of nursing experience, including a decade in acute oncology and hematology, Jacinta offers not only medical expertise but also compassionate support, helping patients navigate complex health systems and reducing the burden of their cancer journey. Jacinta's work, funded through the McGrath Foundation and supported by Hunter New England Health, shows the profound impact of accessible breast care services in regional areas. I thank Jacinta for her efforts to improve outcomes and provide comfort to so many in our community.

#### **BOOBALICIOUS MORNING TEA**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—On Friday, October 25, the Stuarts Point Community House came alive with laughter and camaraderie at its annual Breast Cancer Awareness Morning Tea, themed "Boobalicious." This cherished event invited attendees to wear creatively decorated brassieres, transforming the gathering into a colourful celebration of support and community spirit. With around 30 participants, the atmosphere buzzed with excitement as friends and neighbours enjoyed delicious treats and shared stories. Raffle tickets were eagerly sold, raising approximately \$300 for Breast Cancer Awareness Month—a meaningful reminder of the strength found in unity. As a not-for-profit organization, the Community House is more than just a place to shop; it's a haven of support that does amazing work for the community. It offers information, counselling, and referrals, connecting individuals to vital government and health services. The morning tea was not just about raising funds; it was a celebration of hope, resilience, and the power of community. Each smile and laugh shared that day reinforced the bonds that unite the people of Stuarts Point, reminding everyone that together, they can make a difference.

#### **AFCA WINNER**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—At the recent Australian Forest Contractors Association [AFCA] Business Summit and Gala Dinner, a heartfelt celebration highlighted the remarkable contributions of individuals in the forestry industry. Local Bostobrick resident Kirsty Parker was honoured as a Finalist for her outstanding leadership. As the evening unfolded in beautiful Tasmania, the atmosphere buzzed with camaraderie among contracting businesses, suppliers, and supporters from across the country. Kirsty, a truly inspiring individual, exemplifies strength of character, resilience, and unwavering belief in the forestry industry. Her dedication and hard work were recognised as she took home the winning award for Female Leader. This honour not only celebrates Kirsty's exceptional contributions but also reflects the challenges she has overcome for her business and team. Kirsty's success highlights her commitment to the industry and the passion she gives to her business. Kirsty is a great example of the vital role women play in forestry and the importance of perseverance in the face of adversity. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to her for this well-deserved recognition and for inspiring others in the field. Her achievements will undoubtedly encourage future female leaders in the industry.

#### **A DAY OF STRATEGY AND CONNECTION**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—A sense of trust and community spirit was created as forty-two students took to the chessboard in a spirited tournament against local police and fire and rescue personnel. St Mary's Primary School in Bowraville came alive as pawns moved across the boards, showcasing the students' dedication to chess while strengthening invaluable connections within the community. The day was filled with valuable life lessons and experiences for the children. A standout moment was their encounter with Grandmaster Zong Yuan

Zhao, one of Australia's top-ranked players, who participated in a simultaneous exhibition. This unique opportunity allowed the students to cultivate vital life skills such as patience, problem-solving, and resilience. The tournament not only highlighted the game of chess but also positively influenced the students' perceptions of police and emergency services. Engaging in friendly competition allowed the students to interact with local officers and firefighters in a relaxed, supportive environment. This experience helped humanise these figures, shifting their views from seeing them solely as authority figures to recognising them as approachable members of the community. This day fostered lasting connections, that students will remember for a long time.

#### **ROHANNE AND PHILIP TIEFEL**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to commend Rohanne and Philip Tiefel, outstanding members of our community who exemplify selflessness and compassion. As active members of the Orange community, they consistently support vital local initiatives, but their most extraordinary contribution stems from their advocacy for the Sanfilippo Children's Foundation. Rohanne and Philip's journey became deeply personal when their son, Lucas, was diagnosed with Sanfilippo Syndrome, a rare genetic condition often described as childhood Alzheimer's. Despite the profound challenges this diagnosis brought, the Tiefels' channelled their love and resilience into raising awareness and advocating for greater research and support for families affected by this devastating disease. Their efforts have inspired campaigns such as "Hope for Lucas," which has gained national and international recognition, spotlighting the urgent need for a cure. Through media outreach and fundraising, Rohanne and Philip have brought hope to countless families, fostering a sense of community and determination among those facing similar struggles. The Tiefels' unwavering courage and dedication are a testament to the power of advocacy and the strength of family. I am proud to honour Rohanne and Philip for their extraordinary contributions to our community and the broader fight against Sanfilippo Syndrome.

#### **JESSICA HICKMAN**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I would like to commend Orange's Jessica Hickman on her outstanding efforts to stamp out bullying. Jessica is doing this by sharing her experience, during which she was hospitalised and left battling post-traumatic stress as a result of the relentless bullying she was subjected to while working overseas. Jessica has now shares her very personal story to help others in a similar situation. She bravely talks of her vulnerability and the impact the actions of others had on her life with the goal of showing victims they can come through the other side. Jessica reinforces the message that no form of bullying is ok and if people feel they are being victimised, there is help available. So much so, Jessica is now known as the Bullyologist. Her transformative approach has changed workplaces and organisations for the better. Jessica offers a proactive approach, instead of waiting for the issue to arise, she offers organisations tools and strategies to prevent it becoming a problem. I congratulate Jessica for having the courage of share her story and then change the narrative around her case. I thank her for the work she is doing in this field and wish her well.

#### **MAGGIE MORRIS**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Excellence in business is applauded through a swathe of award ceremonies but I would like to give a shout out to Maggie Morris for being recognised in a unique community setting. A mum of three, Maggie is the force behind Lumiere Beauty in Orange and has just been awarded digital platform Central West Mums' business of the year. To be nominated for a 'Mummy Award', businesses must demonstrate best practice when it comes to fostering and nurturing fellow mums. Maggie is a great example of a can-do attitude. When she was 27 weeks pregnant with her second child she enrolled in lash-extension course. She has built that into two businesses which cultivate a sense of wellbeing for women. Maggie's business also offers the Broke Beauty Queen initiative, offering discounted treatment for those with financial constraints and clients often pay it forward. In 2022 Lumiere Beauty raised \$12,000 for flood-affected communities in the district while in 2024 Maggie completed in the Stars of Orange dance competition and raised a staggering \$50,000 for the Cancer Council. Maggie is an amazing asset for the Orange district and I congratulate her on success.

#### **KHALIA MCWILLIAMS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to Khalia McWilliams, from Rutherford Technology High School, who has created an eco-friendly surfboard aimed at reducing waste in our oceans. A deep love of both the environment and the ocean led Khalia to build the sustainable, fibreglass-free surfboard as part of a school STEM project. Khalia and her Coastal Currents team won the Creative Industries award at this year's Young Business Mind Awards. Utilising bamboo from her mother's garden and a bio-based resin that she made at Rutherford Technology High School, the prototype was conceived after noticing fibreglass and other waste come off a friend's surfboard in the water after a small break in the board. Khalia is thinking big for the future of her surfboard, and is currently seeking investment to build a fully functioning prototype. Khalia's long-term aim is to take the board to market, creating a business with sustainability at its heart. A big thanks and congratulations to Khalia's teacher, Jade Bassett, who also won the Teachers Award

with her Women in STEM Industries Initiative, aiming to build capacity in STEM skills and career pathways. Congratulations Khalia on your design and award, and to Jade for being such an inspirational teacher.

#### **ST PETER'S ANGLICAN CHURCH**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to Rev. Scott Dulley and the congregants of St Peter's Anglican Church in East Maitland, who last weekend celebrated the completion of the new roof on their magnificent church. Replacing a slate roof at such a height is no small task. Congratulations to Jamie McCulloch and the team at East Coast Slate Roofing who completed the project. Approximately 80 tonnes of scaffolding, 20,000 pieces of slate, 160 metres of copper gutters and 40 metres of copper downpipes were used to complete the 14 week works. The final piece of work was putting the St Peter's Bell back in its rightful place above the west end of the church. The bell was cast by J Warner & Sons of London in 1868 before being brought to Australia the following year by Archdeacon Lovick Tyrrell, Rector of the parish for 40 years. The bell lovingly connects the past to the new works. The project was celebrated in a special service last Sunday, presided over by the Bishop of Newcastle, the Right Reverend Dr Peter Stuart. Congratulations to all congregants, diocese staff, contractors and community members involved in this wonderful project.

#### **SOUTH MAITLAND PHOENIX FC**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to South Maitland Phoenix FC who will take over the running of the 'Maitland Football for All' program for 2025. Football for All is an initiative which creates an invaluable opportunity for children with disabilities to play football, socialise and build confidence. The program provides players with a familiar environment by playing all their games at home at Maitland Park. It is a normal football competition but is played at the player's own pace and in a safe environment. Players can feel more comfortable with the consistent surroundings, sounds and smells. This creates a more welcoming experience that's inclusive for all involved. The South Maitland club is also looking at ways to make the Football for All initiative at low-, or no-cost to participants, and the club are encouraging sponsors to assist with the costs of registration and running the initiative, removing financial barriers that can often be in the way of participation. I thank the Phoenix for their commitment to sport for all and look forward to seeing the 2025 season kick-off next year.

#### **HILLS COMMUNITY AID**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I acknowledge the fantastic community service of the Committee of Hills Community Aid over the past twelve months. Over the past twelve months the Committee has tirelessly worked to foster the growth of a safe, healthy, inclusive and sustainable community. The Annual General Meeting of Hills Community Aid was held on 15 November 2024. The 2024 Committee included: President: Sarah Tolhurst CPA GAICD, Vice President: Vincent Riordan, Treasurer: Samuel Uno B Com CA MAICD, Secretary: Peter Durie GAICD, Members: Emily Boxal BE (Hons) GAICD, Carmen Leung BBA CPA GIA (Affiliated), and Jag Dhaliwal BActSt GAICD. I also acknowledge the tireless contribution over the past twelve months by Executive Officer, Micci Beer. The achievements over the past twelve months include the upgrade of the Community Bus Program, made possible through generous funding from the Community Builders Partnerships and The Hills Shire Council, the expansion of Learning in The Hills and the new initiatives including Self Defence for Women and Girls and the Uniform 4 Kids partnership. Thank you to the 2024 Committee for your valuable contribution to society.

#### **MS ANH LINH PHAM**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—I recognise Ms Anh Linh Pham, a dedicated and an invaluable asset to my Cabramatta electorate and beyond. Ms Pham arrived to Australia on 22 May 1986. Recently, she shared that the minute she stepped out of the plane at Sydney airport and saw the blue sky, she felt she could finally breathe the fresh air of freedom, a renewed sense of life after years of hardship and discrimination under the communist regime in Vietnam. Determined to live to the fullest, she strived to build up a meaningful life while helping others in difficulties both in her paid and unpaid work. Through her active participation in the Vietnamese Community in Australia and the Vietnamese Women's Association in NSW, she enriches the multicultural heritage of Australia by preserving and promoting Vietnamese traditions. She also teaches Vietnamese traditional instruments: Đàn Tranh (16-string zither) and Đàn Bầu (monochord) to pass on her cultural knowledge. Ms Pham is also a passionate activist for freedom, democracy, human rights for those who could not speak for their rights. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Ms Pham for all the wonderful contributions she has made to my local community.

#### **MISS COMPASSIONATE 2024**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 11 October 2024, I had the privilege of attending the Miss Compassionate 2024 event, which celebrates compassionate women and promotes kindness, unity, and spirit of

giving back to those in need. The contest not only highlights the inner beauty and aspirations of these remarkable women but also serves as a powerful platform to raise funds for causes that uplift families and individuals facing hardship. At its core, their objective embodies the spirit of generosity and the importance of coming together to make a positive impact. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the contestants for their incredible contributions to the community and their exciting future plans. A special thank you to Ms Thao Le for the kind invitation and for once again successfully organising such a meaningful event. I look forward to seeing how Miss Compassionate continues to grow and empower others in the years to come.

#### **ASIAN WOMEN AT WORK IN PARLIAMENT**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 24 October 2024, I had the great pleasure of meeting members of Asian Women At Work in Parliament. I was delighted to connect with the passionate members of Asian Women at Work together with my NSW Parliamentary colleagues: Minister for Multiculturalism Steve Kamper, Minister for Women Jodie Harrison, Member for Strathfield Jason Yat-Sen Li MP, Member for Parramatta Donna Davis MP, Member for Liverpool Charishma Kaliyanda MP, Member for Blacktown Stephen Bali MP, and Member for East Hills Kylie Wilkinson MP. Asian Women At Work is an important organisation that not only upskills migrant women but also provides a supportive community to help them integrate into the Australian society. With over 2,000 members, the organisation tackles low-paid, precarious employment while empowering women to excel in the workforce. We also had constructive discussions on key issues and initiatives aimed at creating a better and fairer workplace for all. I would like to extend my special thanks to Ms Ronnie Wang, Coordinator at Asian Women at Work for helping to organise this event. I hope the members and volunteers had a memorable and interesting visit to our NSW Parliament.

#### **GREATER HUME CHILDREN SERVICES FAMILY DAY CARE CELEBRATES 30 YEARS**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Greater Hume Children Services Family Day Care as it proudly celebrates 30 years in our community. Since its inception in March 1994 the services have evolved from 8 dedicated educators to a team of 57, that look after nearly 500 children weekly. The milestone reflects their commitment to providing high-quality childhood education and care, whilst adapting to challenges and changes in the environment. The efforts of the educators over the years has built trust with families and strengthened community ties. Last weekend the Family Day Care Hub in Lavington celebrated this milestone with activities for all. Thank you to all who have supported the Family Day Care over the years, may we look forward to nurturing future generations and continue a supportive environment for children and families in our community.

#### **ELLE CHURCH**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Elle Church, student at the Shellharbour Anglican College, who, studying French, participated in the Education Perfect Language Championship 2024. Elle was awarded a Credit Award for answering 1,281 questions, earning 834 points and placing in the top 20% of competitors worldwide. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Elle for this outstanding achievement.

#### **MAIYA HEWITT**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Maiya Hewitt, student at the Shellharbour Anglican College, who, studying French, participated in the Education Perfect Language Championship 2024. Maiya was awarded a Bronze Award for answering 1,847 questions, earning 1,167 points and ranking in the top 10% globally. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Maiya for this outstanding achievement.

#### **WILSON FEATHERSTONE**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Wilson Featherstone, Year 12 student at the Shellharbour Anglican College, who has received a nomination for possible inclusion in Encore, for his performance programs in HSC Music. Encore is a showcase of outstanding performances by students from the HSC music examinations and a nomination is a remarkable achievement. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Wilson on this this wonderful achievement.

#### **COLIN LEE (OAM) AUTHOR OF TURNING THE TIDE**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise Colin Lee OAM, not only to congratulate him on the launch of his wonderful book "Turning the Tide", but also recognising his incredible contributions to our community over many decades. "Turning the Tide" chronicles the brave and altruistic actions of volunteers in the Rotary Club of Ballina - on - Richmond who provided front line support to thousands of flood impacted people across the Northern Rivers after the 2022 floods. This includes delivering 40 temporary pod homes, door knocking and giving food vouchers to hundreds of people in need, fundraising over \$1 million and putting on free



community events in impacted communities. Ballina Rotary's response to the 2022 floods was nothing short of heroic, and "Turning the Tide" is a compelling and moving story of the power of community spirit and volunteerism in regional NSW. Huge congratulations to Col with the assistance of former journalist Christine McNeil on the book, all the members of the Ballina - on - Richmond Rotary Club, editor Lauren Cohn, David Lowe and Jodie Shelley for their photography and the boys from the Ball and All podcast who hosted the book launch.

#### **THE SHED CAFE ST CLAIR**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate and commend The Shed Cafe St Clair and its owners Mr Brij Parekh and Mr Dhwait Parmar on the recent opening of their store. Fortunately for me, they decided to open right next to my electorate office at the St Clair Shopping Centre. The cafe has done well to add to the vibrancy of the shopping precinct and judging by the crowds there each day, it appears locals and visitors alike are enjoying the coffee, good food and other items on the menu. Local businesses are the fabric of our community and they not only work to meet the demands of their customers, but they also contribute so much to employment and the wider economy. I congratulate Mr Parekh and Mr Parmar, their families and their staff and I wish them success in this new venture.

#### **GIDGET FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA & FEDERATION UNIVERSITY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—It was a pleasure to join Gidget Foundation Australia & Federation University at Parliament House on Thursday 21 November 2024 for the launch of a Graduate Diploma in Perinatal Mental Health course. Gidget Foundation Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that exists to support the mental health of expectant, new and potential parents to ensure they receive accessible, timely and specialist care. Gidget Foundation Australia promotes awareness, drives advocacy, educates and delivers services to prevent and treat perinatal mental health issues through early detection and intervention. 1 in 5 mothers and 1 in 10 fathers will experience perinatal depression and anxiety. 50% of new parents will experience adjustment disorders. 100,000 Australians are affected by perinatal depression and anxiety each year, with maternal suicide being a leading cause of death amongst expectant and new mothers. 'Gidget' was the nickname of a vibrant young mother who tragically took her own life while experiencing postnatal depression, a diagnosis that she kept to herself. In her honour, her family and friends created Gidget Foundation Australia, which evokes Gidget's warmth and lively spirit.

#### **TRAVIS CAMPBELL AND LIAM DREBBER**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate and commend Nepean Christian School students Travis Campbell and Liam Drebbler for both being awarded a Youth Community Service award, a trophy and a certificate of commendation from Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales. Travis was recognised for his outstanding work with his family, taking in babies in need of care, which saw them create the organisation and initiative 'Kassie's Cases'. Kassie's Cases provides comfort, dignity, and hope to children experiencing crisis either through entering the foster system or escaping domestic violence. Liam was recognised for his help restoring the Cumberland Woodland of the Mulgoa Valley, in which he embarked on a program of plant identification to map out the current vegetation and plan site restoration to its native state and recruited a team of volunteers to work alongside Landcare personnel in replacing exotic species with congeneric species. Liam publicised his work widely in the local community and generated interest in restoration of similarly degraded Cumberland woodland areas in the district. I thank Liam and Travis for their service and wish them the best for the future.

#### **KINGSGROVE COMMUNITY AID CENTRE**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate the team at Kingsgrove Community Aid Centre for their campaign to educate senior residents about online safety and scams. Kingsgrove Community Aid Centre invited officers from St George Police Area Command to address residents about how to remain safe online. The presentation taught seniors how to avoid fraud, protect parcel deliveries, and safeguard their personal data while shopping online. Senior citizens across NSW are increasingly using the internet for banking, socialising, and shopping, which has had the unfortunate side effect of opening the door for nebulous characters who use techniques such as fake emails and websites to exploit and scam elderly residents. The presentation recommended ways senior citizens can protect themselves online, including strong passwords, two-factor authentication, verifying emails and messages before responding, as well as refraining from sending sensitive data across untrusted networks. The internet has provided opportunities for our senior citizens to remain connected and independent longer than previous generations, but this has also created new challenges. I congratulate and thank Kingsgrove Community Aid Centre and St George Police Area Command on this campaign to help seniors stay safe online.

### GEORGES RIVER LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to take a moment to congratulate Honey and Rose Bakery Cafe and GC Dental and Facial Aesthetics for their outstanding achievements in winning prestigious awards at the Georges River Local Business Awards earlier this year. This annual event is dedicated to recognising and celebrating exceptional businesses within our local community. Honey and Rose Bakery Cafe received the award for Outstanding Bakery/Cake Business. This beloved local bakery is renowned for its exquisite cakes and cupcakes, crafted with love and artistry for any occasion, be it a wedding, birthday, or a simple celebration. Their commitment to quality is evident in every bite, making them a cherished destination for dessert lovers in our area. GC Dental and Facial Aesthetics receive the award for Outstanding Health Improvement Services. At their state-of-the-art dental practice, the dedicated team believes in providing patients with access to the most advanced and innovative dental care available, offering a comprehensive range of services. Their focus on patient-centred care and comfort sets them apart, making them a trusted provider in our community. Congratulations to both Honey and Rose Bakery Cafe and GC Dental and Facial Aesthetics!

### OMNIA WHEEL

**Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend)**—On Friday 18 October, the Hunter Manufacturing Awards celebrated its 20th Anniversary by acknowledging the excellence of local manufacturers. Beresfield firm, Omnia Wheel won the Excellence in Manufacturing Capability Award for its strategic investment in automation and new machinery. Omnia Wheel were also awarded the Manufacturer of the Year (in the category of fewer than 50 employees) Award and the Manufacturing Leader Award for employee Peter McKinnon who has been with Omnia Wheel for 18 years. Starting out with three people, Omnia has grown into a global industry leader with 73 employees. It operates with a hybrid business model that spans manufacturing, distribution and retail. Known for its innovative "omni wheel" technology, the business has invested heavily in research and development, automation and sustainability. These automated systems and advanced tools have enabled a reduction of 54 per cent in production costs and increased output from 500,000 to 2 million wheels per year, cutting labour requirements by 95 per cent. Omnia has also achieved considerable export growth, with up to 94.2 per cent of its 2025 sales to come from international markets. Congratulations to Omnia Wheel on pushing the boundaries of what is possible.

### SAFEGAUGE

**Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend)**—The 2024 Hunter Manufacturing Awards celebrated its 20th anniversary on Friday 18 October, acknowledging the excellence of local manufacturers. Beresfield firm, SafeGauge won the Excellence in Product Design Award for their SafeTest Tachometer and MultiTool Pro. These cutting-edge tools are enhancing safety in heavy vehicle maintenance. Managing Director and Founder Luke Dawson started SafeGauge five years ago, and the business has grown to 20 employees. They are led by a team of skilled and innovative engineers who have a strong focus on safety and design. The firm recently won the NSW Mining Small Business of the Year, the Good Design Awards, and the APAC Insider Award for Safety Tech Innovation of the Year. They opened a US office this year, allowing them to grow their business across the Americas, and globally. SafeGauge are also expanding their local warehouse office, reflecting an ongoing commitment to our local area. Congratulations, SafeGauge, on pushing technological boundaries and setting high industry standards.

### VALE ALISTAIR TODD – THE SCOTS SCHOOL

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge the passing of former Principal Alistair Todd of The Scots School in Albury. Mr Todd was the second principal of The Scots School from 1978 to 1998. His dedication and passion for co-education underpinned the success of the amalgamation of the Albury Grammar School and Woodstock Presbyterian Girl's School in 1972. Together with his late wife Joy, Mr Todd worked to "Build" the school for the equality of all students and, at his leaving in 1998, was satisfied that every aspect of education at Scots was well-presented by the students. The school has acknowledged his contribution by naming the Alistair Todd Chapel Hall in his honour. Our thoughts and prayers are with Mr Todd's family and loved ones. Vale Alistair Todd.

### VALE WAYNE KREUTZBERGER

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—It is with deep sadness that I acknowledge the sudden and tragic loss of Wayne Kreutzberger, a beloved and respected member of the Rand community. Always a constant presence, willing to lend a hand, helping and supporting his community. Wayne's unexpected passing on October 15, 2024 in a tragic farming accident has left a void in the Rand Community. The land was central to Wayne's life – as a farmer, and a wool classer who travelled to many shearing sheds across the region. Community was also important to Wayne, and among other things he dedicated much time to football - both on and off the field. During this

difficult time, our thoughts and deepest sympathies are with Wayne's family, friends, and everyone in the Rand community affected by his loss. His contributions to the Rand community and his warm spirit will not be forgotten. Wayne's legacy will continue through the many lives he touched and the lasting impact he had on the local community. Vale, Wayne Kreutzberger.

#### **JAI DAVIS – SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I would like to acknowledge the 2024 Greenmeadows Health Centre Sportsperson of the Year Jai Davis. Jai Davis was awarded the coveted Sportsperson of the Year at the Port Macquarie Hastings Sports Awards this month for his exceptional talents covering Rugby Union, Rugby League and shot put at both national and state championships. Jai claimed a silver medal this year in shot put at the National Athletics Championships and NSWPSA Athletics Championships, elevating his ranking to number two in Australia for his age bracket. In Union, Jai was awarded the prestigious Players' Player for his Club team and has represented in League at zone, Diocesan and Polding levels including competition at the NSW PSSA Championships. At just 10-years-old Jai is accomplishing some extraordinary feats in the sporting world and inspiring us all along the way through his dedicated efforts to perform to the best of his potential. The Rotary Club of Port Macquarie Sunrise established the Port Macquarie Hastings Awards in 1999 aimed at encouraging the participation in sport for our youth. Congratulations Jai on your success at the 2024 Port Macquarie Hastings Sports Awards and best wishes for the future.

#### **ARIELLE REID – CRIMSON GLOBAL ACADEMY**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I recognise an extraordinary achievement in education awarded to 15-year-old Arielle Reid of Port Macquarie for recently receiving a scholarship to the prestigious Crimson Global Academy. Arielle Reid is a Year 9 student from St Columba Anglican School Port Macquarie. In 2025, Arielle will be among a cohort of 1500 students representing 65 countries, studying at an internationally accredited, online private school called Crimson Global Academy. Arielle was awarded the Founders Scholarship covering three years of tuition until she graduates. At the Crimson Global Academy, students receive real-time learning, earning university recognised qualifications through accelerated courses. The Crimson Academy offers one student in Australia a Founders Scholarship each year. This is a remarkable accomplishment by Arielle in itself to come from the regional town of Port Macquarie in NSW and be selected above all the other applicants in Australia. Arielle's dedication and commitment to her studies is forging her pathway to success. Arielle hopes to study medicine at Oxford University after visiting the campus previously on an academic program. The curriculum offered at Crimson will open the doors to Oxford University and a career in medicine. Congratulations Arielle and best wishes with your studies.

#### **ZONTA PORT MACQUARIE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I recognise the Zonta Club of Port Macquarie and acknowledge its contribution to the Zonta Says NO campaign and the UN Women's 16 Days of Activism. The Club has joined with Zonta District 24, New South Wales/ACT, to yarn bomb 15 trees at Sydney's Circular Quay to raise awareness of this worldwide campaign to stop gendered violence against women and girls. The yarn bombing is a striking display to attract attention and call for action to end gendered violence. The Club's knitters Michelle Hogan, Linda Hodge, Fiona Wicks and Charlotte Gillespie were joined by community volunteers Kay Deasey, Narelle Fox, Vicki Davie, Lyn McWhirter, Maggie Smythe and Deborah Page. Thank you! In Port Macquarie, the Zonta Club will host a charity golf day and raise money for Liberty Domestic and Family Violence Services and will bring the campaign to our Town Green on 7th December 2024. Zonta NSW/ACT has supported local Clubs to raise their advocacy voice and bring the Zonta Says NO campaign to the fore. Where you see this orange themed campaign, SEE the determination in the Zonta International vision for a world free of violence against women and girls.

#### **BROADWATER PUBLIC SCHOOL, PREMIER'S AWARD FINALIST**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I Wish to congratulate Broadwater 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 RIVERS SECONDARY COLLEGE RICHMOND RIVER CAMPUS, PREMIER'S AWARD FINALIST**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—AS NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery, I wish to congratulate The Rivers Secondary College Richmond River Campus 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.

#### **LISMORE SOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOL, PREMIER'S AWARD FINALIST**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I Wish to congratulate Lismore South 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 offer my warm congratulations.

#### **ISSAC RICHES**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of St Mary's Catholic Primary School student Issac Riches on being selected to play at the School Sport Australia Golf Nationals, captaining the side and named champions at the National Titles. I congratulate Issac on this impressive win, adding to his many accolades. In the lead up to this event Issac came second in the Primary School Sports Association [PSSA] State School Titles and impressively Issac has represented his school, Diocese and State previously at this national event. I commend Issac on his hard work, practice and preparation leading up to the nationals, for his commitment to the sport of golf and for being a wonderful ambassador for his school. Thank you to Issac's family, school Principal Belinda Burton and staff, for enabling and encouraging Issac to achieve his best.

#### **BRUCE MCMULLEN**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Uralla local Bruce McMullen, on being awarded Volunteer of the Year at the annual NSW Golf Industry awards held recently. These awards celebrate the outstanding contributions of individuals, clubs and professionals over the past year. I congratulate Bruce on this impressive award and for his many years of service to the Uralla Golf Club and community. Among his accomplishments Bruce served 10 years on the Board of Directors for the club, including six years as Vice Captain and two years as Vice President; launched the junior coaching clinic in 2003 which continues today; and is a PGA Professional Coach, coaching both locally and in the wider golfing community. I commend Bruce on this accolade and for the countless hours of voluntary service given to others, sharing his skills and expertise. Sporting clubs and community organisations in regional towns cannot function without the wonderful support and commitment volunteers give.

#### **GRAVESEND PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of Gravesend Public School students on being ranked No 2 statewide for Touch Football and No 8 for Netball, competing in the PSSA State Small Schools Knockout Competition recently. I congratulate each of the students on this impressive accolade, team spirit, sporting abilities and more than anything sheer grit and determination, with many of these

children not only playing in the Touch Football competition but backing up to also play in the Netball competition. I congratulate each of the students including Lottie, Flo, Cybelle, Hunter, Dougal, Cate, Miaah, Annabelle, Thomas, Makiitah, Emily, Islah and Maggie and thank coaches Amber Barnett, Kay Rolfe and Chelsea Buggy for supporting the students. I commend the students on their hard work, practice and preparation leading up to the competition and for being wonderful ambassadors for their school. Thank you to children's families, school Principal Jackie Todd and staff, the School P & C and Gwydir Shire Council staff, for enabling, preparing and encouraging students to achieve their best.

#### **JOANNE & PAUL FENNA - BALRANALD**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I would like to recognise Joanne and Paul Fenna of Balranald Bakery. In 1988, Paul and Jo were presented with an opportunity to purchase the Balranald Bakery and made a plan for five years. They embraced the rural lifestyle, the friendly people, and they grew their connections with the Balranald community. They are still there after thirty-six years! The Balranald Bakery has become a popular meeting place where good food and coffees are served with the staff providing exceptional customer service. Over the years, Jo and Paul have provided sponsorship to local sporting clubs, schools, community groups and are valued community representatives. Jo and Paul are to be commended for the contributions they have made to the Balranald community and the warm welcome given to all who enter the bakery, whether local or from further afield.

#### **LEETON JOCKEY CLUB**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I recognise the Leeton Jockey Club which was founded in 1944 to help raise funds for the prisoners of war in WW2. Originally the Mug's Club, it held gymkhanas for station bred horses to raise money for the Prisoner of War fund. The first stand-alone race meeting was held in 1946, and the first Leeton Cup race meeting was held in 1947. The club is proud of surviving into the 21st century and has many or more facilities than most country club, including a female jockey's room. During COVID – 19 the club stepped up to host abandoned community race meetings. It has been a great nursery ground for young jockeys including Tim Clark, ranked 4th in the top 10 jockeys in Sydney. The Leeton Jockey Club is to be commended for their significant contribution to the community and the local economy across eight decades.

#### **BRISBANE WATER OYSTER FESTIVAL**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It was an honour to officially open the Brisbane Water Oyster Festival recently, and what a spectacular day it was! Thousands of locals and visitors gathered at Lions Park in Woy Woy to celebrate the 24th year of this iconic community event. The festival featured a wonderful lineup of entertainment and an impressive 4,000 dozen oysters—all supplied by Whittens Organic Oysters, Hawkesbury River Oyster Shed, Davo's Seafoods, and Westray. A highlight, of course, was the famous "How Many Oysters Can You Eat in 30 Seconds" competition, drawing a lively crowd and a new record of 25 oysters! It's always heartwarming to see such a supportive and spirited community turnout, and even our local NSW Police noted it as one of the best events they've been part of. Congratulations to Matthew Wales President of the Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, and all who made this fantastic event possible. Thank you also to the sponsors, with Deepwater Plaza as the naming sponsor, celebrating 40 years on the Peninsula, alongside Bruce Kerr Real Estate, Mars Group, and many others. Planning is already underway for next year's 25th anniversary celebration—an event we're all looking forward to.

#### **LASALLE CATHOLIC COLLEGE – NOMINATION TO THE NSW SHAPE AWARDS**

**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 two students from LaSalle Catholic College – Jamie Turner and Robbie Latouff – for achieving outstanding results in their HSC Industrial Technology, Multimedia, and Timber and Furnishing this year and receiving a nomination to the NSW Shape awards. The NSW Shape Awards for the HSC is an annual recognition of outstanding student work in the areas of design and technology within the HSC curriculum. The awards celebrate the innovative and creative achievements of students who have completed a major design project as part of their HSC studies. These awards highlight the exceptional skills, creativity and problem-solving abilities of students who demonstrate a high level of technical expertise and design thinking. Jamie Turner, who created a battle flight 3D game and Robbie Latouff, who created a Blackjack table both incorporated a range of complex skills and design elements in their major projects. Not only are their designs an outstanding display of skill and creativity but the nomination for a SHAPE award is a true testament to their talent and dedication to their work. On behalf of the Bankstown community, congratulations and all the best.

**CHRISTINA HADDAD – NSW SCHOOLS CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION (ST CHARBEL'S COLLEGE)**

**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 Christina Haddad from St Charbel's College on being selected to attend the NSW Schools Constitutional Convention held at the NSW Parliament House on Tuesday 5 November. The NSW Schools Constitutional Convention is an annual event held by the NSW Parliament, which provides an opportunity for year 11 students to engage in meaningful discussions about democracy and the constitution. This event is a unique educational experience that aims to inspire the next generation of leaders, thinkers and informed citizens by fostering a greater awareness of how the country's political and legal systems function. Selected from hundreds of applicants across the state, Christina's participation exemplifies the dedication and high academic standards that St Charbel's College strives to foster in their community. This amazing opportunity provided a platform for Christina to deepen her knowledge about our political system and actively contribute to discussions on national issues. Being chosen to participate in this event is an incredible honour, and it reflects the dedication and curiosity Christina has shown in exploring the fundamental aspects of our democratic system.

**CLAUDIA DIVANIS**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—Congratulations to Claudia Divanis on winning her category in the 1st Greek Youth Creative Arts Competition at the Greek Festival of Sydney! Claudia's artwork is a heartfelt tribute to her Greek heritage and the enduring influence of her yiayia which means grandmother. Through classical inspired details, she captures the strength, wisdom, and resilience that define both her family and Greek culture. Driven by a deep passion for art and mythology, Claudia's work beautifully bridges the past and present, celebrating her heritage in a powerful, timeless way. Claudia's exceptional talent and dedication have earned her this well-deserved recognition, showcasing the incredible potential of our young community members. Her achievement not only reflects her personal passion and creativity but also highlights the deep connection she has with her Greek heritage. Through her art, Claudia has brought a unique and powerful expression of culture to life, inspiring others to explore their own artistic pathways. I am incredibly proud of Claudia's accomplishment and excited to see how she continues to develop her skills and share her creativity with the world. Once again, congratulations Claudia on your well-deserved award and keep up your great work.

**GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE, CHATSWOOD**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—One of the most sacred sites in my community is the beautiful Garden of Remembrance in Chatswood. The Garden of Remembrance commemorates the Australian men and women from the Willoughby district who died during the Boer War, First and Second World Wars, Korea, Malaya and Vietnam. Created after WWII the Garden hosted its first Anzac Day service in 1955 and was officially dedicated on Anzac Day 1964 with its signature white Cross of Remembrance erected. To honour our fallen the Garden is adorned with rose bushes along each side of the main path and plaques that commemorate the dead. I would like to acknowledge the Chatswood RSL Sub-Branch and the Willoughby Legion Ex-Services Club for their dedication to maintaining the Garden along with Willoughby Council. In particular I want to commend Barney Flanagan for his tireless efforts in ensuring the Garden is always presented to the highest standard. I am also proud to have played a role in facilitating the installation of CCTV cameras at the Garden. The Garden of Remembrance stands as a symbol of our community's respect and gratitude for the brave men and women who have served our country.

**ZUCCHERO CAFFÉ, ARTARMON**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—During small business month in October, I had the pleasure of visiting many of the outstanding local businesses in my community of Willoughby. One of these was the Zuccherò Caffè Bar, established by Valerio Domenici in 2018. Located in Artarmon, Valerio and his team serve fantastic coffee and food coupled with amazing service, making it a favourite spot for locals and visitors alike. Zuccherò's is fondly patronised for its delicious, sweet treats including pastries and desserts, as well as its main meals with an Italian twist such as pizza, pasta, salad and antipasto. With a real heart for small businesses like his, Valerio is proudly involved with Artarmon Village, a local business organisation so ably led by local pharmacist Nick Logan, which works to bring local businesses together and support the vibrant Artarmon community. Small businesses like Zuccherò are the heart of our local economy and they help to make Artarmon the unique and lively suburb that it is. All credit to Valerio and his team for running such a terrific local café with real character.

### JACK HILLERMANS SMASH REPAIRS

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—Our State boasts an extraordinary 850 000 small businesses, and I had the pleasure of showcasing one of these in my community during small business month in October. I refer here to Jack Hillermans Smash Repairs, a family-run business in Artarmon with a history of almost seventy years. Proudly operated by Jack Alajajian and his son Steve, the team at Jack Hillermans pride themselves on their quality workmanship and attention to detail with the repair of motor vehicles. The business features a multi-level 2000 square meter premises which allows them to carry out the highest standard in autobody repairs. Jack Hillerman's genuine care for their customers have made them a trusted name in the area since 1955. Whether it's handling complex repairs or providing helpful advice, Jack, Steve and their team pour their expertise and dedication into every job. Their commitment to quality service is the foundation of their business, and it's what keeps customers coming back, making Jack Hillermans Smash Repairs a true community pillar. They are a true asset to our community.

### HORNSBY RELAY FOR LIFE

**Mr JAMES WALLACE (Hornsby)**—I ask the House to join me in recognising Hornsby Relay for Life's twentieth annual event. It was once again an overwhelming success as they exceeded their goal of fundraising \$110,000. The event has now raised over \$1.8 million for cancer research since it commenced. Congratulations to Robyn Twigg OAM who has participated in all twenty relays. She has previously recorded the most individual laps and been the highest fundraiser, as well as serving on the Hornsby Relay for Life Committee at various times. An incredible 59 teams and 435 walkers participated. Along with Robyn's team, Pink Ribbons II, other teams included the Rangers Baseball, Hornsby Men's Shed, Waitara Girl Guides, Cherrybrook Girl guides and Pennant Hills High School. Every team and participant fundraised to provide vital support for Cancer Council NSW research, education programs, prevention and support services. Well done to the organisers including Nicola MacGee, Ruth Swadling and Karen Humphries for a successful event. It was a privilege to walk alongside them.

### MARGARET MCCLINTOCK

**Mr JAMES WALLACE (Hornsby)**—I ask the House to join me in recognising Hornsby resident Margaret McClintock, who was awarded Upper North Shore Volunteer of the Year for her mentorship with the Women's Justice Network. Margaret helps women affected by incarceration to develop the skills and confidence necessary to overcome challenges as they reintegrate into the community. She stays in regular contact with her mentees and offers practical support. She also provides help with court and hospital visits and serves as a link between these women and the essential services they need. As a mentor with the Women's Justice Network, Margaret helps women affected by incarceration develop essential skills and confidence to overcome obstacles as they transition back into society. Margaret is motivated by the women she works with and says some are the most courageous she has ever met – deserving of compassion, support and a chance to rebuild their lives. Women's Justice Network has had incredible success. 93% of women who engage in the program for one year or more have not re-offended. Margaret McClintock's recognition as Upper North Shore Volunteer of the Year is a testament to her compassion and dedication, and I congratulate her on this well-deserved honour.

### GREGORY TURNER OF THE WEEKLY TIMES

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr Speaker – I would like to thank Father Greg Morgan, Father Gerard Woo Ling and the Manning Funeral Home for organising, in conjunction with his family, such a fitting tribute to the late great Gregory Turner of the Weekly Times. The service, held on the 21st of November, was a celebration of an amazing life. Greg was taken from us too soon, but he truly lived his life to the fullest.

### NICOLA RICHES AND SHARON CURBY - THE VILLAGE OBSERVER

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr Speaker – as we near the years end, I want to thank and acknowledge the tireless work of Nicola Riches and Sharon Curby of the Village Observer. A publication that has served the Lane Cove community for decades, the Village Observer does wonderful work in helping to keep our community well informed, largely thanks to the dedication of Nicola and Sharon. Thank you for everything you do.

### IN THE COVE

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr Speaker – as the year comes to a close, I want to extend my sincere thanks to Jacky Barker, Renee Maxwell and all the team at In the Cove. The team, led by founder Jacky, have worked tirelessly throughout the year to keep the residents of Lane Cove informed and in the know. It is often thankless work, but they push on regardless, all for the love of the community. Thank you once again for everything you do for our community.

### MANLY LAGOON FRIENDS 2ND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to recognise the outstanding work of Manly Lagoon Friends and to congratulate them on hosting their second Annual General Meeting next month. Founded and led by local environmental and conservation powerhouse, Mel Koeman, Manly Lagoon Friends continues to play a pivotal role in advocating for and raising awareness of the need to manage and protect the Manly Lagoon ecosystem and its catchment areas. In just a short time, Manly Lagoon Friends has managed to cultivate a culture of ecological custodianship and a genuine enthusiasm for rehabilitating and managing the health of our lagoon and waterways. From hosting events and running community projects to collaborating with local government and stakeholders, Manly Lagoon and Friends remains one of the most important environmental organisations on the Northern Beaches. I congratulate Mel and all the hardworking volunteers and Queenscliff residents at Manly Lagoon Friends and I wish them well for what I am confident will be a productive and informative second Annual General Meeting.

### MANLY SALSA

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to acknowledge a wonderful community group in the Manly Electorate, Manly Salsa. Founded all the way back in 2015, Manly Salsa has consistently been bringing people together through a love of Salsa and dance. Offering weekly classes in both Salsa and Bachata, community, connection and enjoyment is at the heart of everything this group strives to achieve. Manly Salsa was founded by Rich Lees and today boasts a team of friendly and skilled instructors who dedicate their time to teaching thousands of students living in and visiting the Manly area. Attracting newcomers and experienced dancers alike, Manly Salsa has helped so many others to unlock genuine friendships, build on their confidence, and improve their mental and physical health – and not to mention foster a greater awareness and education of the origins of Salsa. I commend Rich, his team of teachers and all those involved in Manly Salsa for the friendly and professional environment they have fostered, and the great work they have done in making our community an even better place to call home. Well done Manly Salsa!

### GRAFTON PRIMARY SCHOOL PSSA CRICKET STATE RUNNERS-UP 2024

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—Sending a huge congratulations to the Grafton Primary School cricket team who played in the State finals in Bathurst this week. Winning their semi-final against Timbumburi in the first game by only seven runs took the team through to play in the grand final gold medal match against Riverbank Public School. Batting out their 25 overs had the year 5 and 6 students in good stead for the next innings however Riverbank came home a little too strong in the end. Under the guidance of teachers Mrs Geary and Mr Dayne, there was lots of fun had by all and a huge effort put in over a couple of full-on days of travel and play. What a great achievement playing at this level, team sport is essential in these early years. Lots of memories made for these kids, and parents, I wish you all, all the best in your future cricketing careers.

### CASINO DIY HARDWARE CELEBRATES 20 YEARS

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to send my congratulations to Mark and Judy Leale who are celebrating 20 years in business in 2024. Casino DIY Hardware opened their doors in 2004 to provide the Casino community with hardware needs, friendly service, and advice. Judy and Mark opened the hardware store 20 years ago in partnership with Kaylene and Gary Robbins and in 2017 they became the sole owners, what an achievement. There will be celebrations galore with Home Hardware mascots, Rusty and Sandy making an appearance on a family fun day. The store will have giveaways and festivities to celebrate. Over the years Judy and Mark have not only helped the community providing products and advice, and fantastic old-fashioned service with a smile, they have also given back to the community with sponsorship of sporting clubs and schools and donations to local charity organisations. Congratulations to you both and all your team, keep up the great work.

### CWA NURSING GRANTS

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I congratulate three outstanding women from the Clarence Valley who have been awarded South Grafton CWA Nursing grants. These \$1,000 grants provide essential support for local nursing professionals pursuing their studies and careers in healthcare. This year's deserving recipients—April Shannon, Sophie Lambert, and Elle Woodham—were selected from a highly competitive field of 12 applicants. Their passion, dedication, and commitment to nursing were evident in the inspiring speeches they delivered at the North Coast Group CWA AGM in Coffs Harbour. Each of these remarkable young women embodies the values of compassion and determination that will shape the future of healthcare. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the South Grafton CWA for their vision and generosity in establishing this grant program. Funded through the proceeds of the 2005 sale of the South Grafton CWA building, these grants are a testament to the enduring legacy of community spirit and support for future generations. To April, Sophie, and Elle: you make the



Clarence Valley immensely proud. Your dedication to healthcare inspires us all. And to the South Grafton CWA, thank you for nurturing the future of nursing and making a meaningful impact on our community.

#### **LAKE MACQUARIE FAMILY DAY CARE**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—This year, Lake Macquarie Family Day Care decided to hold a 'Pink Packing Party' as their end of year social gathering for educators and staff, packing essentials for Share The Dignity. They put the call out to families, educators and staff for donations of bags and essential items, and were overwhelmed with the response! Share the Dignity are an amazing organisation who run three collection drives every year, two for sanitary items, and one for handbags filled with essential items, as well as many other fundraising events, all for women experiencing period poverty. 17 educators and staff attended the 'Pink Packing Day' on Wednesday, 13 November, which is also World Kindness Day, to pack 50 bags total! The bags all have the essential period products and toiletries, and included in many of the bags are a few extra "luxury" items, like make-up and hair clips! Well done to the team at Lake Macquarie Family Day Care! Your donation of 50 total bags made up of 32 women's bags, 10 mum and bub bags and 8 teenage girls bags is incredible! Thank you for supporting the women and children in our community!

#### **GREG ALLUM AM**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate local surf lifesaving stalwart, Greg Allum AM, on being awarded the Commander of the Order of Lifesaving by the International Lifesaving Federation [ILS]. Greg is renowned in the Shire and beyond for his passionate work for surf lifesaving and in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2020 he was appointed a member of the Order of Australia [AM] for "significant service to surf lifesaving, to international federations, and to the community". As a competitor for Wanda and Cronulla Surf Life Saving Clubs, Greg won a long list of titles including more than 30 national championship medals and two world championships. Since retiring from competition, Greg has given as a coach, manager, referee, and administrator and has also served in a range of roles with the ILS. His other honours include the Australian Sports Medal, life membership of the Wanda club, and Surf Life Saving Sydney, NSW, and Australia. He is also a member of Surf Lifesaving Australia's Hall of Fame and the International Lifesaving Federation Hall of Fame (Sport). I join the Wanda club in congratulating Greg who continues to give much energy to Wanda as its senior vice patron and convenor of the carnival committee.

#### **TODD GANDERTON**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I join the Cronulla Caringbah Sharks Junior Rugby Football League Club in congratulating Todd Ganderton on being awarded life membership of the club. 'Gando' joined the Sharks in 2014 and the club says he immediately became a staunch volunteer. He started out as a parent helper before becoming senior vice president in 2017 while helping coach his son's team and girls league tag. In 2018 Todd was elected as president of the Sharks, a role he continues to passionately serve in today. At the club's annual general meeting this week, fellow life member Cameron Johnston highlighted how Todd continued to coach and share the gear steward role while leading the club as president. Todd Ganderton is one of those volunteers whose enthusiasm and love of the sport has a big impact for the benefit of the players, families and the game. Rugby league in the Shire is better for Todd's efforts and I echo the many people who have congratulated him on this well-deserved honour.

#### **BANKSTOWN SPORTS VOLUNTEERS RECOGNITION NIGHT**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to all the award winners recognised at the 2024 Service to Sport Awards, a night hosted by Bankstown Sports Club highlighting the contributions made by local sports volunteers. Bankstown Sports Club collaborates with over 1,000 dedicated and hardworking volunteers across 37 sporting clubs and 17 sporting codes. These volunteers enable more than 10,000 sports participants to enjoy a quality sporting experience week after week. It was truly gratifying to witness the hard work of these exceptional individuals being acknowledged and celebrated by so many. Among the honourees was the Young Volunteer of the Year, Jade Herrington, whose enthusiasm and commitment to her community serve as an inspiration to us all. Additionally, we celebrated the remarkable achievements of Olympians Jessica Hull and Bec Rippon, both of whom were inducted into the prestigious Bankstown Sporting Hall of Fame. Once again, congratulations to all the award winners at the Bankstown Sports Volunteers Recognition Night. Your contributions truly make a difference in our local community.

#### **2024 ANNUAL GALA, FUNDRAISER FOR TRILOGY FOUNDATION**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—I thank the Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce and the CEO Wally Mehanna for inviting me to attend the 2024 annual Gala dinner, in support of the Trilogy Foundation Canterbury Bankstown. The Trilogy Foundation Canterbury Bankstown is a foundation dedicated to

supporting the education of special needs children in the Canterbury Bankstown area, I was proud to be in attendance of this important fundraiser and proud to be supporting the Trilogy Foundation and their fantastic mission. The Trilogy Foundation is run by a very dedicated and enthusiastic board. Lead by President Maureen Agathadeous, Secretary Kirrily Hoscher, Vice President Bob Beer, Treasurer Pauline Hedman and Public Officer Glen Waud. I am delighted to be a Patron of the Foundation supporting the important work they do for children and families in our community. It was wonderful to see so many of my fellow western Sydney MPs along with the New South Wales Premier Chris Minns in attendance at the Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce 2024 Gala event. I once again thank the Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce for inviting me to such an important and enjoyable event.

### **WALK THE TALK**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—'Walk the Talk', is a training program provided by Women's Community Shelters at high schools to increase awareness about domestic, family and sexual violence and build young peoples' capacity to advocate. This year the program reached its major milestone, educating over 15,000 students in years 9 and 10 about relationship abuse, DFV, consent, seeking help and being an ally. Each school also adopts their own local Women's Community Shelter, supporting them in numerous ways throughout the year. This year, students at Tara Anglican School for Girls have held an Easter egg drive, pizza day, a bake sale and a Christmas fundraiser for gift cards to give to the women staying at Parramatta Women's Shelter. The students have raised over \$3,500 this year and expect to add to this with a large number of gift vouchers. Congratulations to the powerful and committed young women at Tara Anglican for your hard work in supporting a great community initiative. Congratulations as well to Education Officer Julia Fleming and Director of Education Danielle Miller OAM for your hard work on this program, these kinds of programs are essential to educating the next generation of Parramatta.

### **REGINALD RENDALL**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—This statement acknowledges the dedication and volunteer service of Reginald Rendall from NSW SES Blayney Unit. Reginald has played a crucial role supporting and protecting communities of Blayney and NSW during the catastrophic natural disasters, pandemic and incidents of all kinds. At the NSW SES Central West Command Awards Ceremony held on Saturday 16 November 2024 Reginald received NSW SES 30 Year Long Service Award in recognition for his enduring efforts and years of volunteer service. Like many NSW SES Members, Reginald continues to display resilience, agility and fortitude in adapting to changing conditions as the SES provides assistance and support in times of emergency. It takes a special kind of person to volunteer their time and put others safety before their own for the betterment of the community. Without the SES, our communities would be left unequipped to respond to natural disasters and other emergencies. Reginald's tireless efforts, bravery, and commitment to helping communities in need are truly commendable. Thank you, Reginald, for your invaluable contributions, ensuring the safety and well-being of so many. Your service has made a lasting difference.

### **BERRY ZONTA'S ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the outstanding work of the Zonta Club of Berry, the local chapter of the international human rights organization Zonta. Zonta advocates for women's equality, education, and the end of child marriage and gender-based violence. As part of their commitment to their cause, Berry Zonta are again running the "Zonta Says No to Violence Against Women" campaign from 25 November to 10 December. Locals can keep an eye out for orange shoes around Berry, a powerful tribute to the 49 women lost to intimate partner violence in Australia this year. On 1 December, Zonta members will join the third annual awareness march across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, standing united against gender-based violence. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to President Barbara Davis and Advocacy Director Fiona Mackie for their leadership and tireless efforts. Your work with members of Berry Zonta continues to inspire us all. I encourage anyone interested in supporting Zonta's mission to attend their monthly meetings at the Berry Pub. Zonta's impact shows the power of community in driving social change. Thank you, Berry Zonta, for your commitment to a safer, more equal future.

### **KANGAROO VALLEY TENNIS CHAMPIONS**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the phenomenal achievement of Kangaroo Valley Public School in the Todd Woodbridge State Cup. This local school with just 82 students has achieved what many would consider impossible, triumphing over 860 schools from across NSW. After narrowly missing out last year, the team returned with renewed focus, proving their skill and resilience by going undefeated in their journey to the finals at Sydney Olympic Park. Their victory in the final, overcoming Holy Trinity Primary School 5 sets to 3, is a testament to their perseverance. Congratulations to the ten talented students who made this victory possible: Logan Champion, Bruno Castillo, Artie Cooke, William Apps, Elijah

Hole, Claudia Moffat, Eliza Hawthorne, Juliet Mumm, Ruby Minchin, and Piper Clarke. Your hard work and sportsmanship are inspiring. I also acknowledge Relieving Principal, Jen Arnott, sports teacher, Lyn Robinson, and local tennis coaches Jan Merchant and Kate Hole. Your guidance has played a pivotal role in this success. This victory is an example of what can be achieved through teamwork and unwavering support from your community. Congratulations, Kangaroo Valley Public School—you have done your school and your community immensely proud!

#### **KIAMA HIGH SCHOOL REUNION**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Kiama High School's 50th reunion. Former classmates gathered at the Sebel in Kiama that was once their old primary school classroom. I acknowledge attendees: Andrejs Medenis, Ann Harris, Annie O'Sullivan, Ashton Buckley, Brian McCulloch, Bruce Hardman, Bruce Lay, Carol Holz, Chris Hoy, Clair Kilmore, Daryl Henson, Deborah Dixon, Denise Duncan, Dianne Parkes, Don Beverly, Glenda Chittick, Greg Harris, Ingrid Holland, Jane Heydon, Jen Walker, Jennifer Williams, Joann Timbs, Joe Chittick, Kathryn Maguire, Keith Ross, Kerry Smillie, Leanne Clark, Len Speelman, Louise Jeffrey, Mark Douglass, Maxine Morphet, Marilyn Groenewald, Mick Cook, Pam Marsden, Peter Muller, Peter Sackett, Philip Suckling, Rhonda Sellenthin, Richard Flanagan, Richard Stomps, Robert Evans, Robert James, Robert Willets, Rodney Weekes, Russell Oakes, Ruth Balding, Sandra Rock, Shona Kirchen, Sue Ross, Tony Pearson, Valerie Schrupf, Victoria Roberts, Warwick Swan, Wayne Richardson. The event was filled with lively chatter, laughter, and shared memories as classmates reminisced and reconnected. Just like the old days, they danced with joy, forming a conga line. Congratulations to these Kiama High School alumni for marking this milestone with such a memorable celebration. Here's to the enduring bond of friendship and cherished memories.

#### **WRITING TALENT AT NIB AWARDS**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—On behalf of the Coogee electorate, I would like to acknowledge the upcoming Nib Literary Awards, set to take place on November 27, and to celebrate the remarkable authors whose talents will be highlighted at this prestigious event. The Nib Awards recognize excellence in literature, with a focus on works that foster community understanding and engagement. This year, writers are set to captivate audiences with their powerful storytelling, exploring themes of identity, resilience, and connection to Country. Their contributions promise to enrich the Australian literary landscape and deepen our appreciation of various cultures, and perspectives. This year's finalists include two Indigenous authors, Shauna Bostock and Melissa Lucashenko, who through their work are showcasing the importance of Indigenous literature in fostering cultural understanding and dialogue. Other finalists also include Deborah Conway, Ryan Cropp, Dave Witty and Anna Funder who I also commend for their efforts. I commend the organizers of the Nib Awards such as Alex Buzo and principal sponsors Mark and Evette Moran for their dedication to promoting outstanding talent and look forward to celebrating the achievements of all the writers involved. Their stories will undoubtedly inspire, educate, and connect us all.

#### **RANDWICK HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—On behalf of the Coogee Electorate, I would like to acknowledge the Randwick District Historical Society for its outstanding contributions to preserving and celebrating our local heritage, as highlighted in their recent newsletter. The newsletter continues to serve as a vital resource, engaging our community with stories of historical significance and fostering a deeper appreciation for the Randwick area's unique past. The newest edition features an in-depth look at the transformation of Randwick Racecourse over the decades, shedding light on its role in shaping the cultural fabric of the district. Another standout article highlights the history of local wartime efforts, paying tribute to those who contributed to the national cause. Additionally, the newsletter includes profiles of heritage-listed sites and their architectural significance, encouraging readers to explore and protect our shared landmarks. The dedication of the society's volunteers in researching, compiling, and publishing these narratives ensures that Randwick's history remains accessible and cherished. I especially note the work of the President, Christine Yeats. I commend the Randwick District Historical Society for its exceptional work in preserving our past and inspiring future generations to connect with the stories that define our community.

#### **BRENDAN'S NEW PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS AWARENESS OF HEAD TRAUMA IN SPORTS**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I wish to acknowledge Brendan Cowell, a talented writer and actor from our local community, for his latest project, Plum. This ABC drama series explores the impacts of chronic traumatic encephalopathy [CTE], a neurodegenerative disease often associated with repeated head injuries in sports. Brendan, inspired by real-life experiences of former rugby players, has crafted a powerful and moving story centred around Peter Lum, a retired athlete grappling with the long-term effects of head trauma. Through this character, Brendan sheds light on the emotional and physical toll of sports injuries, as well as their profound

effects on individuals and their families. Not only does Plum delve into important health issues, but it also highlights the transformative role of poetry and art in healing and self-discovery. Brendan's dedication to raising awareness about these topics deserves recognition and admiration. As a Bronte resident and local hero, Brendan continues to make our community proud, balancing an impressive acting career with creative storytelling that tackles significant social issues. Congratulations to Brendan Cowell on the success of Plum and his ongoing contributions to the arts and advocacy.

### **SYDNEY SANSKRIT SCHOOL**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Sanskrit is considered one of the world's oldest languages and is a liturgical language found in the holy scriptures of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. So it is wonderful to see this ancient language thriving in Australia, in no small part to the work of the Sydney Sanskrit School, which celebrated their 18 years anniversary this month. They have since established a number of locations across western Sydney and branched out to Melbourne and Brisbane, but they have regarded Marsden Road Public School as their original home of over a decade. The event featured performances that demonstrated the varying levels of proficiency in Sanskrit across multiple age groups – from the youngest students aged 4 through to the adult learners. Following the lighting of the oil deepam to signify the light of knowledge and cast out the darkness of ignorance, students sang the national anthem in both English and Sanskrit. A unique and wonderful feature of Sydney Sanskrit School is their firm commitment to teaching Sanskrit with an Australian flavour. The various songs and dances featured descriptions of native Australian flora and fauna and imagined trips to locations around our country. Congratulations Sydney Sanskrit School on another successful year!

### **CELEBRATING ANDRÉ DE-VILLERS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I recognise the outstanding achievements of an exceptional educator, André De-Villers from Redlands Preparatory School. André has been awarded the prestigious NSW Teachers Guild World Teachers' Recognition Award, an accolade that honours teachers who have made a significant and lasting contribution to their schools and the advancement of professional education. The Teachers' Guild of New South Wales is dedicated to recognising excellence in education. André was nominated for the award by the Head lecturer of Physical Education at Macquarie University, who highlighted André's remarkable impact on teaching. In their words: 'André is presented with this award for an outstanding contribution to teaching. An amazing, proactive and outgoing individual who embodies all the attributes of an excellent educator.' I congratulate André on his well-deserved accolade. Teaching can be a thankless task, and it is through awards like this that we can show our gratitude for the incredible work done by teachers. Redland Preparatory School is a world-class institution, and it is thanks to the dedication of its staff. I especially congratulate André on receiving this incredible distinction.

### **SHARE THE DIGNITY'S - IT'S IN THE BAG**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I want to acknowledge the incredible generosity of the schools and students across the North Shore for rallying in support of the 2024 Share the Dignity 'It's in the Bag' campaign. My community always shows tremendous support and compassion for 'It's in the Bag', and I have no doubt that this year will be the same. The aim of the campaign is simple but powerful; to encourage Aussies to fill handbags with essential items – personal care, sanitary products, daily necessities, and a heartfelt Christmas card. These bags are then donated to women in need. This holiday season, many women will find themselves homeless, living in extreme poverty, or having fled domestic violence. 'It's in the Bag' provides women with necessary items they may not have otherwise been able to purchase over the Christmas period. I especially want to thank Loreto Kirribilli students for their heartwarming generosity, having sent boxes of bags to my office for women in need this year. I acknowledge students Ella and Olivia, who organised Loreto's participation in the campaign. And I thank Helen Thomas for her wonderful work in organising the collection of the bags. Amazing work girls.

### **SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Much like in the sporting arena, the North Shore schools are excelling in the academic and performing arts lane. I congratulate Benedict from St Aloysius' College, who came first in NSW at the 2024 National History Challenge. Out of over 7,000 submissions, Benedict's diorama, a 1,000-word essay, an annotated bibliography, and a short reflection piece were deemed the best in the state in the Museum Exhibit Category. Fantastic work. I also recognise the outstanding achievements of Leo and Heloise from Redlands Junior School, who competed at the International Dance Organisation World Tap Dance Championships in Prague. Heloise placed 16th in her solo, while Leo took 2nd place in his solo. Together, they also achieved 6th place in the duo's category. I congratulate Zara from Queenwood on being awarded the conference prize for Best Poster at the [Ex]plore Science Extension Conference at Macquarie University. This is an outstanding achievement. Finally, congratulations to the Queenwood girls who competed at the Independent

Girls' Schools Association Festival of Speech in public speaking, debating, reading, poetry, and drama. The senior debating team reached the quarterfinals after winning both of their pool debates, and the drama team achieved third place. Well done, girls.

#### **ASSYRIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL – AUSTRALIA INC.**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to the Assyrian National Council – Australia Inc [ANCA] on the appointment of its new Board of Directors, following their AGM on 13 October 2024. The new Board of Directors will lead ANCA's efforts to support our Assyrian Australian community in NSW, and in the global sphere. Congratulations to President Hermiz Shahan, Vice President Peter Esho, Secretary Ramsin Edward, Treasurer Leyana Alkhas, and Directors Albert Shlemon, Nirari Shahan, Evin Yalda, Adison Alkhas, and Domarena Shahan. I commend you all and look forward to working together to continue supporting our Assyrian community in the Electorate of Prospect. This distinguished group brings a wealth of expertise, passion, and commitment. Together, they will guide the ANCA's mission to strengthen the Assyrian community's voice in Australia by advocating for their cultural, social and economic interests. The ANCA have had a successful 2024, advancing key initiatives, such as youth empowerment by reviving The Young Assyrians, fostering economic development at the Assyrian Business Awards, establishing their new headquarters in Fairfield and preserving Assyrian heritage through cultural celebrations like the Assyrian New Year Festival. I extend sincere thanks to the outgoing board members for their invaluable contributions to our Assyrian-Australian community.

#### **INDIANS IN SYDNEY**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Founded in 2007, as a simple Facebook group, Indians in Sydney has developed into a cornerstone of community connection. Becoming one of the largest Facebook groups in Australia, Indians in Sydney has over 135,000 members. This dynamic platform unites our Sub-continental diaspora to share experiences, lend support and connect. Contributing to our rich cultural mosaic in NSW, Indians in Sydney expanded their reach from the digital sphere, to organise various impactful initiatives, including the Winter Drive and Meal for Everyone program. These efforts reflect the group's social responsibility and compassion, helping those in need. Through their business directory, the group support local entrepreneurs. Striving to foster cultural connection, Indians in Sydney hosted the India Independence Day Gala and collaborated to organise the Largest Diwali Festival at Harris Park. Indians in Sydney exemplify the power of community, standing as a beacon of unity, compassion, and cultural pride. Whether it's finding the best local Chhola Bhatura or sharing advice on essential services, Indians in Sydney has become the go-to platform, where members feel heard and supported. Thank you to Nadeem Ahmed, Founder, and his dedicated team for providing this meaningful space to bridge cultural gaps and build connection.

#### **WENTWORTHVILLE UNITED JRLFC**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Sunday 27th October, I was delighted to join our rugby league juniors for the annual Wentworthville United Junior Rugby League Football Club Presentation Day at The Renaissance, Lidcombe. Established in 1913, Wentworthville United JRLFC have been part of the sporting bedrock in our Prospect Electorate community for over a century. Today, the Club is comprised of historic local families who love Rugby League, as well as a new generation of Australians who call Western Sydney home. This year, the Club fielded an impressive total of 43 teams, with over 700 players and 300 officials. I was pleased to present two Club awards at the event, the Neville Reekie Memorial Shield to Ray Kattar and Dylan Coomb for their outstanding contributions as Club Volunteers of the Year, and the Warren Westlake Memorial Cup to Emad Alameddine as Club Person of the Year. I extend my warm congratulations to Elias Kassab, President, Kylie Murphy, Secretary, and all players, parents, coaching staff and volunteers at Wentworthville United on an excellent presentation. I thank you all for your dedication and your tremendous community spirit in our local Prospect Electorate, and I look forward to the 2025 season. Go Magpies!

#### **MS DEB MAGILL: PRINCIPAL OF ROSEVILLE COLLEGE**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I recognise in the Parliament of NSW the service of Ms Deb Magill, who has served our community as principal of Roseville College from 2017 to 2024. She is the 10th principal of Roseville College, that was founded in 1908. Ms Magill is well respected from students, alumni, teachers and staff, parents and the wider community. Upon her appointment in 2016, Ms Magill gave a commitment, "I'm committed to continuing Roseville College's outstanding reputation for delivering a balanced, robust and contemporary education to girls in kindergarten to Year 12." I believe Ms Magill has honoured this commitment. On behalf of the people of the Davidson electorate community, I congratulate, thank and honour the service of Ms Magill. I wish Ms Magill and her family all the very best in the future.

### **CAROLS ON CLANVILLE BY ST. ANDREW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Saturday 7 December 2024, I look forward to attending the Carols on Clanville hosted by St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Roseville. It will be a wonderful event that will include singing, reflection, face painting, camel rides and much food. I recognise the ministry team led by Senior Minister Mal York, Assistant Pastor Vanessa Hughes, Assistant Minister Scott Warner, Children's Minister Mel Bell, Youth Minister Indira Ryan, and Ministry Support Coordinator Amelia Ross. Thank you for your commitment and service to our community. I look forward to sharing and reading from the Gospel of Luke that celebrates the seasons of Advent and Christmas: "The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." This verse reflects upon the hope and joy that Jesus brings to all of us, that is amplified by bringing the community together.

### **DIWALI IN LITTLE INDIA**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—Diwali in Little India is always a beautiful celebration of light, family, and culture. This year the broader community enjoyed the biggest celebration of Diwali in Harris Park's history. Joined by my colleagues at local, state and federal levels of government, we took instruction and performed a group Bollywood performance followed by a wander through the festival to speak to the stall holders and make some purchases including delicious food. Thank you to event organisers Little India Australia lead by Gurmeet Tuli, Nitin Setin, Parag Shah and Michael Tangavelu for coordinating this event. It was a magical evening filled with joy. The celebration of Diwali in Little India is an opportunity for everyone to learn about the significance of this centuries old celebration while also attracting the Indian diaspora from right across Sydney to celebrate. Parramatta has been an anchor point for the Indian Australian community for decades and I am proud to see families and individuals return to our local area to participate in Diwali celebrations and shopping. Multicultural festivals like Diwali are a crucial component to the vibrancy of our community. I look forward to seeing the Diwali celebrations grow into the future.

### **SIR JAMES MARTIN CHILDREN'S WALK 2024**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—James Martin's story is one of incredible success and inspiration, who worked hard to overcome many challenges as a young working-class boy - the son of the Governor's groomsman, to attend school and become Premier and Chief Justice of New South Wales. It was wonderful to welcome the Premier, Minister Steve Kamper, Minister Jihad Dib, the City of Parramatta Lord Mayor, teachers and students to Parramatta Square to officially start the second annual Sir James Martin Children's Walk. To attend school, a young James Martin walked from Parramatta to Sydney, a daunting distance even for the most skilled sportsmen. On the 30 October 2024, 22 energetic and tenacious high school students and their teachers set out to follow in Sir James Martin's footsteps to Martin Place where they were greeted by Chief Justice Andrew Bell who presented them with a commemorative medal and certificate. Hats off to the students who participated from the Parramatta Electorate – Elizabeth, Kayla, Ruth, Safin, Krisha, Quentin, Sarah, Zia, Olivia, Evan, Ysabella, Scarlett, Jackson, Ashley, Rubaba, Mike, Shayasta, Shikha, Giselle, Tosia and Amelie. Thank you, John and Patricia Azaria, for your commitment to making this walk an annual fixture.

### **TRIBUTE TO PAUL HUGHES AND PETER BURGESS, WHALE BEACH SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—I want to pay tribute to two long serving members of the Whale Beach Surf Life Saving Club, Paul Hughes and Peter Burgess. Sadly, both men passed away in the last week. Joining back in 1960, Paul "Hughsie" Hughes was an aquatic legend with numerous rescues under his belt. As well as the jet boat skipper and spending 23 years on the gear team, Paul was also the winner of the first of Whaleys iconic "The Big Swim" back in 1974. Peter "Pa Pete" Burgess joined the club as a spring chicken back in 1999 and promptly started patrolling with Whale veterans. An ex-policeman and motelier, Pete was a practical man turning his hand to all things around the club be it carpentry, plumbing or just being a good handyman. Both Paul and Peter will be missed for their humour, their good nature and their friendship. In a small club, every member is vitally important. Exceptional individuals such as Hughsie and Pa Pete are noticed. We thank them for their service and for their place in the history of our community.

### **KAONI AGUIAR AND LUCETTE BULLEN**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—The Northern Beaches is the home of surfing in Australia and our local boardriders like North Avalon Surfrider's Association ensure that our young surfers build their confidence and foster their passion for surfing. I want to congratulate Kaoni Aguiar and Lucette Bullen. These two incredibly talented surfers from Barrenjoey High School and North Avalon Surfrider's Association in Pittwater have been selected for the NSW State Surfing Team! Kaoni and Lucette will soon head to the Australian Junior Surfing Titles in Wollongong, where they'll compete for a spot on the Australian Surfing Team to represent our country

overseas. Congratulations and good luck to both of you. Kaoni and Lucette – you are both doing the Barrenjoey community proud!

#### **LILLIAN HOWELL PROJECT'S GATSBY AND GANGSTERS GALA**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House the Lillian Howell Project and their amazing Gatsby and Gangsters Gala fundraising event. Lillian's is a specialist homelessness service that provides medium to long term supported housing for girls aged 13 to 17 years. Their approach is underpinned by trauma informed care in a safe and secure setting. They build the capacity of young women through modelling reliable and consistent behaviours. They have supported many young women escaping family and domestic violence and experiencing trauma, abuse and neglect to heal, flourish and break the cycle of homelessness. The funds they have raised through their Gatsby and Gangsters Gala event will allow Lillian's to provide not just shelter, but a nurturing and empowering environment where young women can reclaim their sense of self and build toward a brighter future. Thanks to organiser Natalie Britton, The Lillian Howell Project Management Team, Nicole Graham, Vivian Stavis & volunteers Justine Bulloch, Dione Fague, Anu Watmore, Jo Karabin, Mila Karabin and Lisa Campbell. Thanks as well to all who attended and contributed to the event.

#### **RICKY EVERETT**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I would like recognise a wonderful member of the Balmain community, Mr Ricky Everett, who is fundraising in support of the Girls Refuge in Leichhardt. The Girls Refuge provides short-term, crisis accommodation in a safe, home-like environment for girls aged 12 to 17 years who are going through a difficult time and are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The refuge and staff offer both emotional and practical support and link the girls with support resources to help them build resilience, develop healthy coping mechanisms, and increase their skills and confidence. Ricky has been teaming up with the refuge in recent years to fundraise in the community and collect Christmas presents for the girls who for any number of reasons find themselves in crisis accommodation on Christmas Day. The past three years this drive has been overwhelmingly successful, with 151 gifts donated or purchased last year, beautifully wrapped and handed to the girls on Christmas Eve. Thank you for your incredible work, Ricky, and all the staff at The Girls Refuge. You make our community a better place for all.

#### **JEWES AGAINST THE OCCUPATION '48**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to recognise the continued advocacy of Jews Against the Occupation 48'. Since 2003 Jews Against the Occupation '48 have been an unwavering Jewish voice calling for the protection of Palestinian Human Rights and a just and lasting peace in Palestine. Jews Against the Occupation '48 are part of a worldwide movement among progressive Jews who, importantly, challenge the state of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territories. In such distressing times, it is paramount that organisations like Jews Against the Occupation '48 are recognised for their advocacy. Week in and week out they have stood in staunch solidarity with the Palestinian people at local marches, vigils and rallies, calling on the Australian Government to act in accordance with International Law. Jews Against the Occupation '48 are a shining example of Judaism's tradition of humanity and social activism. I commend the organisations commitment to social justice and the pursuit of a free Palestine and look forward to continuing to support their vital work.

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