

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday 12 February 2025**

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

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

### *Notices*

#### **PRESENTATION**

*[During the giving of notices of motions]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! This is not the time for debate. Members can debate their motions at a later time.

*Later,*

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Riverstone of the time limit for the giving of notices of motions.

### *Bills*

#### **AUTOMATIC MUTUAL RECOGNITION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

##### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 20 November 2024.**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (10:17):** I rise to lead for the Opposition in the debate on the Automatic Mutual Recognition Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I wish to make it clear at the outset that the Coalition is in support of the bill. This bill introduces a series of amendments to refine the automatic mutual recognition [AMR] scheme and ensure it operates fairly and consistently across key industries. AMR was introduced to reduce red tape and improve workforce mobility, allowing individuals with valid licences from other jurisdictions to work in New South Wales without the burden of obtaining additional local licences and, indeed, vice versa. These amendments aim to improve the scheme's application whilst ensuring that AMR participants are held to the same consumer protections and regulatory standards as locally licensed practitioners.

The Coalition has long championed policies that cut bureaucracy and improve workforce flexibility. Indeed the AMR scheme was first introduced under the Mutual Recognition Amendment Act 2021, a reform led by the former Coalition Government. That reform was designed to reduce costs for businesses and workers whilst maintaining essential compliance, safety and consumer protection standards. It is important to recognise that the heavy lifting on AMR reform was done by the Coalition and, while we support efforts to refine the framework, we must also ensure the Government does not undermine the principles of AMR with any unnecessary complexity or excessive regulatory burdens.

The changes in this bill primarily address three key areas. First, the bill allows NSW Fair Trading to calculate and impose compensation fund obligations on AMR practitioners under key licensing frameworks, including the Conveyancers Licensing Act 2003, the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013 and the Property and Stock Agents Act 2002. This ensures that those operating under AMR contribute to consumer protection funds in the same way as New South Wales licence holders. Secondly, it confirms that AMR practitioners must comply with the same obligations as local licence holders under the Fair Trading Act 1987 and the Tow Truck Industry Act 1998, ensuring fairness in competition and compliance. Thirdly, it clarifies that New South Wales regulatory enforcement powers extend beyond the State's borders, ensuring AMR participants can be held accountable for compliance regardless of their licensing jurisdiction.

Importantly, this bill also expands the AMR framework to cover a wider range of occupations, particularly in the automotive and property sectors. The automotive industry will now see AMR extended to skilled tradespeople, including motor mechanics, motorcycle mechanics, panelbeaters, vehicle painters, transmission specialists, radiator repairers, exhaust repairers, automotive electricians, and various licensed motor dealers and repairers. This will enable greater workforce mobility, ensuring that skilled tradespeople can operate efficiently across jurisdictions while maintaining regulatory compliance.

In the property and real estate sector, AMR will now apply to real estate agents, auctioneers, conveyancers, stock and station agents, strata management agents, and assistant agents across various specialisations. These changes will remove unnecessary regulatory duplication and support professionals in providing essential property services across State and Territory borders. The inclusion of these additional occupations in the AMR framework is a positive step towards reducing red tape, improving business flexibility and ensuring a more streamlined licensing system. The Coalition will closely monitor the implementation of these changes to ensure that consumer protections, industry standards and regulatory oversight remain strong and effective.

I am aware of some concerns raised by the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales [REINSW] that AMR may enable interstate agents without sufficient local knowledge to work in New South Wales. There is a concern on their part that New South Wales may, in effect, be lowering the bar given the different occupation entry requirements for the sector around the country. However, I have been advised that under AMR, interstate licence holders must comply with all New South Wales laws and regulations, including all industry compliance obligations.

The AMR scheme did not require nor presume the harmonisation of occupations or entry requirements across borders, so we will look carefully at this and monitor and seek feedback on these areas. I acknowledge those views put to me by property professionals. The Coalition remains committed to working to ensure that AMR will continue to reduce barriers for skilled workers and businesses while maintaining robust consumer protections and regulatory oversight. AMR should be a tool that makes it easier for businesses and professionals to operate across borders, not one that imposes unnecessary layers of compliance.

I would like to acknowledge the stakeholders across the automotive, property and real estate industries that have engaged constructively in this process, including the Motor Trades Association of Australia and REINSW. I also acknowledge the Minister and his department for bringing these amendments forward and engaging in consultation with industry groups. The Coalition will always advocate for a fair, efficient and streamlined regulatory framework that supports businesses, workers and consumers alike. We support these refinements to AMR but will remain vigilant to ensure that the scheme continues to work in the best interests of those it was designed to assist. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (10:23):** I am delighted to make a brief contribution to debate on the Automatic Mutual Recognition Scheme Legislative Amendment Bill 2024. At the outset, I note that I will refer to automatic mutual recognition as AMR. The bill amends several Acts across the Better Regulation and Fair Trading portfolio. I commend the Minister, his team and the department for bringing it before the House to ensure that the legislation is fit for purpose for the industry and all stakeholders. The amendments in the bill seek to clarify the application of the legislation to AMR practitioners and enable new occupations to participate in the AMR scheme. The proposed amendments will clarify the application of the law and the regulatory enforcement powers to AMR practitioners, as well as enhancing consumer protection measures for New South Wales residents.

I will now go into detail about the proposed amendments. Firstly, they will create a framework that enables NSW Fair Trading to calculate and impose compensation fund obligations on AMR operators working in New South Wales. Secondly, they will insert a new provision into relevant Acts to clarify that State laws apply equally to AMR operators as they do to New South Wales licence holders. Thirdly, they will insert a new provision to clarify that New South Wales regulatory powers have extraterritorial application insofar as the powers of the State permit.

Turning to the key numbers and information, since adopting AMR in July 2021, New South Wales has introduced 127 occupations under the AMR scheme, and over 720 eligible interstate workers have notified New South Wales regulators of their intention to participate in AMR. The bill will enable workers in up to 37 new occupations across the real estate and property, conveyancing, and motor dealer and repair industries to participate in the AMR scheme. Workers participating in AMR will save time and money. For example, a class 2 real estate agent in New South Wales pays \$579 for a new one-year licence and compensation fund contribution. The introduction of AMR will allow an interstate licence holder to pay only \$43 for one year for the mandatory compensation fund contribution. The bill enables new occupations to join the AMR scheme, and the Government is dedicated to supporting key industries and workers. I acknowledge and thank the Minister and his team for their broad stakeholder engagement to ensure that the legislation is fit for purpose.

The bill's proposed changes will remove barriers to enable more occupations to join the AMR scheme. Those amendments will allow interstate workers in conveyancing, real estate, automotive and other related occupations to work in New South Wales and to support New South Wales industries. The bill contains amendments that clarify that New South Wales laws apply to AMR operators working in the State. That is to ensure that all operators play by the same rules and consumers have the same level of protection. Those reforms will lead to consistency in the application of laws across all workers in key industries, regardless of their entry pathway to working in New South Wales.

The bill also enables NSW Fair Trading to undertake regulatory activity fairly across all workers for the benefit of New South Wales consumers. The Government is committed to ensuring that consumers across New South Wales are protected from harm. The bill enhances consumer protection measures to ensure that AMR practitioners meet the mandatory compensation fund obligations required across the conveyancing, real estate and motor dealer industries, regardless of where they are licensed. Those industry compensation funds have been set up to assist New South Wales citizens who are out of pocket because traders have breached their obligations.

The bill also ensures that New South Wales regulators have the extraterritorial powers required to take action against AMR practitioners in the case of misconduct. That will ensure that regulators have adequate and fair compliance and enforcement powers to protect New South Wales consumers. The bill also seeks to reduce the time and cost burden imposed on workers seeking a licence in New South Wales where they already hold a licence in another Australian State or Territory. That very commonsense amendment will ease the burden and provide support to the industry. The duplication of licence application forms and fees is an unnecessary and costly deterrent to worker mobility and to skilled workers supporting New South Wales industry. The bill removes many of those barriers.

Of course, improving mobility, reducing red tape and costs for workers in key industries, and enhancing consumer protection measures for New South Wales residents is a key part of the legislation. The bill demonstrates this Government's continued dedication to supporting workers whilst also protecting consumers across New South Wales. In closing, I take this opportunity to thank the Minister and the staff in his office and the department who have worked diligently to ensure that these reforms came before us today, and that they are fit for purpose to provide balance and fairness to consumers and the broader industry as well as the workers. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (10:29):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Automatic Mutual Recognition Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The legislation represents the Government's commitment to reducing unnecessary regulatory barriers while maintaining robust consumer protections. It will support a seamless and dynamic labour market, enabling skilled professionals from across Australia to contribute to New South Wales' economy without undue administrative burdens. The bill represents a major step forward in fostering interstate workforce mobility and ensuring fairness and consistency across critical industries. At its core, the legislation addresses the practical challenges that interstate workers face, aligning with the spirit and objectives of the Mutual Recognition Act 1992 [MR Act].

The bill proposes amendments to five key Acts under the Better Regulation and Fair Trading portfolio. It is designed to align State-specific occupational licensing laws with the MR Act and the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997. By addressing legislative barriers, we enable the smooth functioning of the automatic mutual recognition [AMR] scheme, ensuring that both New South Wales and interstate workers operate under equivalent obligations and consumer protection standards. A cornerstone of the bill is the reinforcement of consumer protections. It ensures that the rigorous standards we expect from our licence holders extend to interstate professionals working under AMR. Whether in conveyancing, property, automotive or tow truck operations, consumers deserve the same protections and recourse mechanisms, regardless of the licence holder's State of origin. That includes mandatory contributions to compensation funds for industries like real estate and motor dealerships.

Those funds are essential safety nets for consumers who experience financial loss due to the misconduct of a licensee. By extending those requirements to AMR participants, we not only level the playing field but also maintain trust in our regulatory systems. The AMR scheme is a visionary initiative that removes unnecessary red tape for professionals who are eager to work across State borders. Currently, the need for multiple licences creates duplication, financial burdens and delays for workers. This bill changes that for conveyancers, property agents, motor dealers and repairers, ensuring they can start working in New South Wales without needing to reapply or pay for an additional licence. However, it is not merely about easing regulations for workers. The bill ensures that regulatory authorities in New South Wales retain the ability to oversee, enforce and apply our laws to all professionals operating within our borders, whether local or interstate.

The bill introduces some key provisions and industry-specific changes. Some of the significant amendments include changes to the Conveyancers Licensing Act 2003. The bill introduces sections clarifying that interstate conveyancers under AMR are treated the same as New South Wales licence holders. They must contribute to compensation funds and comply with our regulatory framework. Similar amendments to the Property and Stock Agents Act 2002 will ensure that real estate professionals from interstate meet all obligations, including financial contributions for consumer protection mechanisms. Amendments to the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013 ensure that interstate licensees in automotive-related fields will now be required to meet New South Wales standards, ensuring their compliance with existing laws, including contributions to industry funds.

Amendments to the Tow Truck Industry Act 1998 will ensure that interstate operators and drivers will also fall under the ambit of New South Wales regulations, ensuring fairness and accountability in that critical sector. Amendments to the Fair Trading Act 1987 confirm the extraterritorial application of our regulatory powers, guaranteeing that enforcement mechanisms apply uniformly. The bill strikes an important balance between reform and safeguards. It ensures that the rights and protections of New South Wales consumers are never compromised, while opening doors for skilled professionals who are eager to contribute to our vibrant economy. By enabling interstate professionals to seamlessly join our workforce, we also address skill shortages and bolster industries critical to our State's growth and prosperity. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (10:35):** In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Automatic Mutual Recognition Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. In particular, I thank my shadow ministerial colleague, the member for Willoughby, the member for Campbelltown and the member for Mount Druitt. Although the bill before the House makes a range of minor amendments to various Acts, it remains a critical piece of legislation. Automatic mutual recognition [AMR] provides a quicker, cheaper and easier pathway for already skilled workers to enter New South Wales.

The bill before the House demonstrates this Government's continued commitment to supporting both workers and consumers. The bill will not only enable licensed interstate workers to support key industries here in New South Wales, but also allow them to work in New South Wales while benefiting from the reduced time and cost burdens they would otherwise face. The bill also clarifies the application of consumer protection measures and regulatory powers across several pieces of fair trading legislation, demonstrating the importance we place on protecting consumers across New South Wales.

I will address a number of points made during the debate. I acknowledge that the shadow Minister, the member for Willoughby, has heard concerns from some stakeholders regarding the operation of AMR. I clarify that the AMR scheme does not require or presume the harmonisation of occupations or entry requirements across Australia. The principle underpinning the Commonwealth scheme is that when an individual is authorised to carry out activities in one State, they are deemed eligible to do those same activities in another State. It is important to specify that this does not mean that AMR allows unauthorised workers to work in New South Wales. Only authorised and verified interstate workers will be eligible to enter under AMR. While working in New South Wales, AMR restricts them to only carry out activities that their home State authorises them to perform. That applies even if the occupation in New South Wales allows workers to perform a broader range of activities than those allowed under the operator's home State licence or registration.

As such, AMR is not expected to compromise industry standards in New South Wales. When working in New South Wales under AMR, interstate licence holders must comply with all relevant New South Wales laws and regulations, including all industry compliance obligations. Anyone who fails to comply with those obligations will face penalties that can include losing their home State licence. To ensure that all industry participants are doing the right thing, New South Wales' compliance and enforcement activity will continue and, as the bill reinforces, those powers will apply to AMR participants as they apply to New South Wales licence holders. It is also important to note that AMR operators in New South Wales will need to meet continuing professional development [CPD] obligations where they apply to New South Wales licence holders.

The current AMR exemptions are due to expire on 1 July 2025. The bill attempts to ensure that there are appropriate controls to regulate people coming from interstate under AMR to ensure they meet all New South Wales obligations.

I am confident that the citizens of New South Wales, and workers across Australia, will benefit from the amendments this bill intends to carry out. I thank our dedicated departmental officers for their efforts in bringing this bill to the House: Caroline Woolger, Charlotte Robertson, Tim Richardson and Warren McAllister. I also thank the NSW Treasury officers who worked on this bill: Cathy Thurley, Morgan Fardy and Marion Martin. I also thank my dedicated team members, Jonathan Stanbury and Alicia Sylvester, as well as our hardworking department liaison officers, Khamena Zaya and Praveena Shyamala, for all their hard work on this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **STRATA SCHEMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 11 February 2025.**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (10:40):** As I was saying, the Strata Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 requires strata managing agents to make a record of functions they exercise for the owners' corporation and the manner in which it is exercised. The record must be given to the owners' corporation every six months, instead of every 12 months, currently. This change will help owners' corporations to conduct their oversight role more effectively. The bill also provides an additional ground for termination of a managing agent or a building management agreement at the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal—that is, where a managing agent is carrying on their business in a way that is contrary to law. This is a broad ground for termination of the agency agreement and is intended to capture circumstances where the agent does not comply with their legal obligations. The change will strengthen the ability of an owners' corporation to end an agent or building manager appointment and ensures that a dispute about an agreement can be authoritatively decided by the tribunal.

I now turn to the changes in the bill to strengthen the accountability of building managers. Stakeholders have highlighted the need to redefine a building manager in the legislation, and to introduce additional duties and accountability measures specific to building managers. The bill, therefore, provides a regulation-making power to allow for any exclusions to the definition of a building manager. The bill also imposes a duty on the building manager to act in the best interests of the owners' corporation, with further duties to be prescribed in the regulation following proper consideration and consultation with stakeholders. Like strata managing agents, building managers hold a position of trust, influence and responsibility, so it is important that necessary accountability and transparency measures are applied to building managers. Overall, these reforms will improve owner confidence in the professional services they engage and make it easier to hold them to account. I congratulate the Minister on the work that has been undertaken to make these greater protections for strata schemes and for people living in rental units. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (10:42):** The Strata Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 aims to amend the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 to implement various recommendations arising from its 2021 statutory review. It also proposes related amendments to the Community Land Management Act 2021 and other legislation, and I thank Minister Chanthivong and Minister Dib for their work on these really important reforms. The amendments that are being discussed are aimed at improving the management and governance of strata schemes in New South Wales. The proposed amendments would enhance transparency, accountability and the overall functioning of strata schemes. There are over 86,000 strata schemes in New South Wales, with over 40,000 residents in the Granville electorate living in strata.

The Government remains committed to reforms that will protect owners' corporations, improve the accountability of strata management services, ensure owners' corporations maintain their buildings, and make strata living easier for residents. That is what the bill does. The Government is committed to meeting our State's housing needs, and has already introduced significant reforms to planning, building quality and rental affordability. To meet our housing targets, we must make strata living a key part of the discussion, which includes ensuring that people want to live in strata because it is safe, affordable and reliable. People should not fear the possibility of open-ended costs and be deterred from strata living by horror stories about disputes, defects and a lack of transparency.

Specific reforms contained in the bill include reforms to enhance accountability and trust in strata managing agents and building managers. These reforms complement the Government's recent changes to disclosure requirements, ensuring owners have confidence in their managers. The key provisions prevent agents from avoiding liability by prohibiting management agreements that make owners' corporations or associations pay for the agent's professional indemnity, or limit the agent's liability to a set amount, unless the agent is covered by a professional standards scheme under the Professional Standards Act 1994. They increase the frequency with which managers need to provide key reports to residents, and they allow schemes to terminate a strata managing agent agreement, building management contract or facilities manager contract where the agent or manager is carrying on their business in a way that is contrary to law.

While the reforms will enhance protections for owners from misconduct by strata managers, they will also strengthen accountability of building managers. The bill imposes a statutory duty on building managers to act in the best interests of the owners' corporation or association in carrying out their duties, unless doing so would be unlawful. To ensure that the new obligations are fit for purpose, the bill includes a regulation-making power allowing for further obligations to be imposed. The reform is also calling to protect owners. Owners' corporations

or associations are run by volunteers who may be vulnerable to unfair contract terms. The great news is that this bill prohibits unfair terms in standard form contracts for the supply of goods or services, as well as the sale or grant of an interest in land to an owners' corporation or association. The bill does this by amending the Fair Trading Act 1987 so that prohibited unfair contract terms, and associated remedies under the Australian Consumer Law, apply to such contracts.

Prohibiting unfair contract terms will help strengthen consumer protections and encourage suppliers of goods or services to ensure their contracts have compliant terms. This matter has been brought to my attention by Merrylands resident Ms Kirby. She criticised the lack of regulation that has existed until now, and asked why tradespeople have one set of prices for house owners; however, as soon as the work is to be paid for by strata the job rate increases. She has found it unreasonable and unfair that strata owners inevitably have to pay through the nose for, sometimes, even the most basic services and repairs.

This change will complement reforms to prohibit certain terms from agency agreements. This is a significant realignment of contractual rights of the owners' corporations and associations as buyers of goods and services. I am proud that New South Wales will set a new high watermark for protection for owners' corporations. The bill introduces additional duties and obligations on members, including complying with strata and community land scheme laws, and acting with honesty and fairness. This will be a big change for some committees. The Government will work with the sector to roll out mandatory training to support committee members in meeting their duties under the Act.

The bill addresses concerns about strata committees refusing minor renovation requests without explanation. It requires committees to provide written reasons for any refusal and, if they fail to do so within three months, the application will be deemed approved. This aims to reduce uncertainty and improve trust within the owners' corporation. The bill will prevent owners' corporations or associations from postponing necessary work if it impacts safety, access, or the use of a lot or common property, ensuring timely action to maintain the building. This has been an issue of grave concern to members of my constituency, including people living in Wentworthville and those in Westmead and Merrylands.

Mrs Pera, one of my constituents, complained that people have no power to intervene when strata schemes do not follow their obligations regarding safety, maintenance and repair, that the whole system is unregulated, and that the only way to get repairs done is to go to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. She has complained that the process is not easy, and it cannot be navigated without expensive lawyers. The people of New South Wales should not be made to jump through hoops to repair and maintain their own properties. The bill introduces measures to ensure developers properly hand over necessary information to new owners' corporations for future maintenance and repairs.

The bill addresses concerns that the initial maintenance schedule, which impacts funding and levies, is often of poor quality, leading to insufficient levies for ongoing costs.

The bill requires the schedule to meet minimum standards, be reviewed and certified by an independent surveyor, and ensure initial levies align with expected expenses. Developers must provide certification evidence at least 14 days before the first annual general meeting. All of these new requirements will be backed with a maximum court-imposed penalty of \$55,000 on the original owner to ensure they prepare quality schedules and realistic estimates of the initial levies for current and prospective owners.

The bill also addresses concerns about embedded networks, which are private utility arrangements where owners' corporations supply services like electricity to all owners, and they are not individually metered. Those networks can lead to higher costs and limit access to competitive contracts. The bill extends section 132A to cover electricity supply through embedded networks and applies that change to community land schemes as well. It is important to note that many of the issues with embedded networks are beyond the scope of the bill, but the bill addresses the most egregious aspects that apply within strata schemes. Many people in strata had never heard of an embedded network before moving in, and that has certainly been the experience of my constituents.

Embedded networks allow an entire site to be billed together at the meter, with the electricity used to be split across residents, with no access to competitive contracts. That situation arose decades ago in caravan parks, where each site used very little power and it saved them money by not paying individual network charges for each cabin or caravan. It is no longer realistic for what is now a modern home. That has been particularly distressing for many residents of my electorate. My office has received complaints directly related to this issue whereby units as small as two bedrooms with two tenants living in them are rated by both electricity and gas providers as being a household of five or six people, with limited power to reduce their energy costs. To quote my constituent Mr Hancy, "How does this work?" Many of my constituents have eagerly awaited these changes.

I also attended a site meeting in Veron Street, Wentworthville, a few years ago, in a fairly new building in which no-one had been aware of the embedded network arrangements when they moved in. Their bills were astronomical, and there was nothing they could do to reduce them because they were not individually metered and they were not able to negotiate a more competitive contract. To make matters worse, the building did not have the standards of sustainability that they had been led to expect when they purchased off the plan. A lot of the building was not properly insulated, which made things incredibly hot and meant people needed to run their air conditioners 24 hours a day in some units.

The New South Wales Government recognises the cost-of-living pressures communities are facing around the State, and the bill also addresses those. It aims to prevent unnecessary legal or bankruptcy actions by providing support for those facing financial difficulties. Key reforms include requiring levy notices to include information on payment options; financial counselling and dispute resolution; and allowing committees to directly set up payment plans with owners, without needing approval from the owners' corporation. Owners can challenge a refusal of a payment plan in the tribunal if it is deemed unreasonable.

The bill also makes it easier to install accessibility infrastructure for owners with disabilities by lowering the voting threshold needed for changes to common or association property. A majority vote is now sufficient to make accessibility improvements, which is incredibly important. The bill shows that we are committed to implementing the recommendations of the review as well as addressing other issues facing strata and community land schemes in New South Wales. The Government is determined to deliver reforms that improve the lives of strata and community land residents in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (10:53):** I speak today on the Strata Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, a significant piece of legislation that impacts over 1.2 million residents across 86,000 strata schemes in New South Wales which. That includes 4,388 strata schemes across my beautiful community on the coast—a growing number. The New South Wales Government is committed to addressing the significant housing challenges our community faces. It has an ambitious housing plan that will likely see an increase in strata residents across our State. As such, this bill ensures that strata residents can have confidence in the homes they live in now and into the future. Importantly, this legislation focuses on governance, transparency and accountability, while tackling the practical issues facing residents and owners.

The bill includes reforms to make it easier to install accessibility infrastructure, provides better financial support options for owners in hardship, and protects owners' corporations from unfair contracts. This is an important change for people living with disability and our increasing older population across New South Wales. The bill introduces important reforms for strata management agents and building managers in response to concerns about business practices in the sector, including the prohibition of management agreements that limit agent liability, unless agents are covered by a professional standard schemes; the requirement of a six-monthly report from managing agents; and the imposition of a statutory obligation on building managers to act in the best interests of owners and corporations.

Further, the bill strengthens the protections against unfair contract terms, aligning the protections for owners' corporations under the Australian Consumer Law. This means that those measures will help ensure strata residents are protected from exploitative practices. The bill also addresses the need for better strata committee governance, motivating training for committee members, producing duties to act with honesty and fairness, and ensuring that minor renovation requests cannot be denied without proper justification. This is an important part of the bill, because I know lots of people put their hand up and are possibly pressured into being on their strata committees without a lot of education about what that really means.

I also know that strata committees are put under a lot of pressure to not spend across their buildings because it does not benefit all of the people in the building. Having some equitable fairness and education across the strata committee is an additional bonus for people who are voluntarily putting their hand up to represent the building owners in their facilities. Another key reform is to ensure that owners' corporations meet their obligations to repair and maintain common property. The bill extends the time for lot owners to claim damages for failure to maintain common property from two to six years. It stops owners' corporations deferring repairs where safety or access to use of property is affected, and it strengthens enforcement by empowering NSW Fair Trading to ensure compliance notices and investigate breaches.

As a side comment, I thank the Government and the Building Commissioner for their proactive work to protect property strata owners. In my community, a number of developers have not done the right thing in their builds. That causes incredible grief to the strata committee and ongoing costs that owners coming into new apartment builds are not used to. If we had had the Building Commissioner when the work of a developer called Tony Denny was going on, I do not think the strata committee would now be facing the challenges it is. I thank the Building Commissioner and their team. They have been empowered to proactively interrupt building that is not good quality to protect the people living in strata in my community and across New South Wales.

The bill also encourages sustainability by requiring owners' corporations to consider energy and water consumption in common areas at each annual general meeting. That is also an important component because water consumption and water meter delivery creates some stress and confusion for strata owners. That is an important consideration. By removing barriers to sustainability, the bill paves the way for more energy-efficient and environmentally friendly strata schemes, and that is what we are looking for in New South Wales.

The bill also introduces measures to support residents facing financial hardship, requiring levy notices to include information on financial support and payment plans without unnecessary debt recovery actions. That is important as the cost of living hits home across my community and New South Wales. People are facing financial burdens not just in houses but in strata schemes, so any support that can be provided for residents is important. People who are living in financial stress are not necessarily aware and often do not seek support outside their own environment. That proactive provision of information is important.

Importantly, the bill also lowers barriers to accessible infrastructure to make it easier for people with disability to install necessary features. That is a massive victory. It is not just about people with disabilities; it is about our ageing population. Reducing the voting threshold for installations from 75 per cent to 50 per cent ensures better access for all strata residents. It has been ridiculously unfair to assume that we need 75 per cent of people to vote for changes such as ensuring that handrails could be installed in common areas. It is a great change. Further, the bill requires the owners' corporations to think holistically about accessibility infrastructure before making decisions considering cost, ownership, installation, maintenance and the use of infrastructure.

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

#### *Announcements*

### **OVARIAN CANCER MORNING TEA**

**The SPEAKER (11:00):** Welcome back, everybody. I welcome our guests in the gallery to question time in the Legislative Assembly. I make note of the reason that members are wearing a teal ribbon today. Earlier today I attended a morning tea hosted by the Minister for Health on behalf of Rare Ovarian Cancer Incorporated to raise awareness about ovarian cancer. I acknowledge the member for Bega, whom I saw there. I was also able to meet with members of that organisation. February is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. Any cancer diagnosis can be emotionally, physically and financially stressful for those affected and their loved ones. Ovarian cancer can be very difficult to detect early. Awareness is essential. I have a number of people in my life who have been diagnosed with ovarian cancer and have had generally bad outcomes. It is an insidious disease that needs much greater attention. I thank members for supporting the movement.

#### *Visitors*

### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I extend a warm welcome to guests of the member for Canterbury. They are a delegation of forestry workers, including Manu Risoldi and Kai He from the Australian Workers' Union NSW Branch; Bronwyn Ellis, Forestry Corporation of NSW delegate; Sharon Musson, NSW President of the Timber Workers' Union and Tumut timber delegate; Alison Rudman, Luke Hayden and Anna Dinh from the Timber Workers' Union; John Gunst, Kempsey timber delegate; Tong Ty Tang and Van Leng Trinh, south-west Sydney timber delegate; Andrew Hurford, Chair of Timber NSW; Dr Bill Jackson, Acting President of Forestry Australia; and Bipasha Roy and Avishai Conyer, Unions NSW interns. I apologise for any mispronunciations. Welcome to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly.

I also welcome guests of the member for Rockdale, including Magda Kamper. It is lovely to see you here. I know that the member for Rockdale is proud to have you here. We had a little discussion outside; he was a bit nervous. I also acknowledge, on behalf of the member for Rockdale, Nickolas Moustakas, tourism spokesperson for the Island of Andros, Greece; Chrisanthe Moustakas; and Peter Poulos and Georgia Poulos. The Minister was telling me amazing things about the Poulos family. Thank you for being here. We also have a guest of the member for Camden, Inge Marais, who is the new senior electorate officer for the office of Camden. Welcome.

#### *Question Time*

### **HEALTH SERVICES**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:07):** My question is directed to the Premier. Hospital wait times are skyrocketing. Nurses are picketing. Psychiatrists are resigning en masse. Doctors are threatening their



first strike since the Wran Labor Government. Why is the healthcare system going backwards on the Premier's watch?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:07):** This Government has achieved record investment, a reduction in wait times for elective surgeries and, most crucially, the removal of the wages cap.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order or they will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Make no mistake that a return to a Coalition government would see a 2.5 per cent wages cap reintroduced into the public sector in New South Wales, unless there is a health emergency when—guess what?—they will reduce it to zero. Under the Coalition, the best way of dealing with undeniable difficulties in the health system is to pay healthcare workers less. We have struck agreements with the Health Services Union, with public sector workers who work in NSW Health.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

That is true. I accept that. We have not struck an agreement with the Nurses and Midwives' Association.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** But the reason that is so difficult is because of 12 years of underpayment. Is that not true? The howls of indignation from members opposite are as if it did not happen. We remember what happened: year after year of a wages cap being in place, and no matter how hard nurses worked, no matter how many hours they put in, no matter how many shifts they undertook, it was 2.5 per cent, unless there was a global emergency, when those opposite reduced it to zero.

We will not adopt that approach to healthcare workers in New South Wales.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will resume his seat. The Clerk will stop the clock. The Leader of the Opposition rises on a point of order. Government frontbench members will come to order. Question time has just started and I will not tolerate that kind of behaviour. I warn members that they will be removed from the Chamber if they continue to interject. What is the Leader of the Opposition's point of order?

**Mr Mark Speakman:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The question was about what is happening in this term of government. Why are we going backwards?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I am happy to answer.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Why are you cutting health spending two years in a row?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Eurobodalla hospital—built under Labor, opposed by those opposite.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will come to order. I have not ruled on the point of order.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Rouse Hill hospital—three elections in a row.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. Members will come to order.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** We have to get through these questions.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the Premier to order for the first time. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time. That is not how business is conducted in this Chamber.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I need to be able to get an answer out, surely.

**The SPEAKER:** I rule that the Premier has been relevant. There is no point of order. The Premier has the call.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** It took a while, Mr Speaker, but we got there. I will give three examples: The introduction of safe staffing levels in New South Wales public hospitals—

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:**—the building of Rouse Hill hospital that was promised in three elections in a row by those opposite; and the last one for the member for Bega, Eurobodalla hospital, level 4, delivered under Labor.

### HEALTHCARE WORKERS SOCIAL MEDIA VIDEO

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (11:12):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister please update the House on the New South Wales Government's response to the appalling video circulating on social media?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:12):** I thank the member for Strathfield for his question. Early this morning I was made aware of a vile, disgusting and shockingly appalling video circulating on social media. Two healthcare workers from Bankstown hospital engaged in vile, disgusting, defamatory behaviour in conversation. I say from the very outset that, with a workforce of 180,000—one of the largest in the country and certainly one of the largest health systems in the world—this shocking and disgusting behaviour reflects in no way the work that the men and women of the New South Wales health system do every single day to care for and treat patients in their time of need.

This morning the New South Wales police, through Strike Force Pearl, went to the Bankstown hospital. NSW Health will assist the New South Wales police with that investigation, as will the Health Care Complaints Commission, if called upon. I will say this—and I make it very clear to everyone in this House and more broadly to the people of New South Wales—those two individuals will never work for NSW Health again. There is no place in our community, let alone our health and hospital system, for that type of disgusting view or behaviour to in any way, shape or form emerge among healthcare workers. We go to hospitals, and members' communities go to hospitals, in some of the most difficult of circumstances. Members' communities have every right, regardless of their cultural background, their race and religious beliefs, when they present to that hospital to feel safe, to get high quality care and to be treated by healthcare professionals.

Those two individuals in no way are healthcare professionals. They are disgusting individuals. The Government will do everything it can to make sure that this issue investigated. That is one issue. I do not want to give those two individuals a skerrick of light to be able to somehow weasel their way back into NSW Health. That investigation has already commenced. I thank the NSW Police Force, Minister Catley and Commissioner Webb. *[Extension of time]*

I thank the police for their immediate action. I also inform the House that I have spoken to Dave Ossip of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies. I was grateful for the call. It was a difficult conversation to say to him, once again, that his community has been attacked in this way. To be attacked by individuals who work in our health and hospital system is perhaps the lowest attack of all. We rely on highly trained, highly skilled and highly dedicated individuals to care for us, our families, our loved ones and, for each of us in this place, the communities that we love and the communities that we are so privileged to represent.

To the Jewish community today, I say very clearly that not only will we get to the bottom of this individual issue, but we will examine any of the cases that these individuals may have been involved in. We will make sure that there are no other adverse patient outcomes as a result of this terrible view they hold. Importantly, I want the Jewish community to know that our hospitals are safe. The trained men and women who provide that care are highly dedicated and highly skilled. They go above and beyond for their patients every day, and they will continue to do that. Today is a very, very difficult day for the New South Wales health system, but I can assure you, with every fibre of my being, that we will get to the bottom of this. We will ensure that this never happens again.

#### MATERNITY SERVICES

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (11:17):** My question is directed to the Premier. Since the start of 2024, how many mothers have been forced to give birth on the side of the road because their local hospital maternity ward was closed or short staffed?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:17):** I just do not have that figure on me for question time. I do not have it. I do know that the Government is putting record amounts of money into maternity units across New South Wales.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** What about the Rouse Hill hospital?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The Rouse Hill hospital does not exist at the moment—we are building it—so figure it out yourself. I have seen a lot of things in Parliament. I have never before seen a member of Parliament claim a hospital that has not been built.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Hawkesbury to order for the first time. The member will be directed to leave the Chamber if she continues to behave in that manner.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Look, in fairness, under the Coalition the Rouse Hill hospital ran like a charm. There were no patients in there. It met all its benchmarks. It just didn't exist.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** For three elections in a row, the Rouse Hill hospital was promised by those opposite and it is being delivered by a Labor Government in New South Wales. I was reminded by the Minister for Health

as I sat down that, as we looked closer at the budget that was handed down by the previous Government, 1,000 COVID nurses were about to be sacked by the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals.

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

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** That is the truth, and there is nothing worse than hypocrisy.

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

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question is very clearly about maternity services.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I have answered.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** You came nowhere near it. You said you don't know, but do you care? Do you care about maternity services?

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Dubbo to order for the second time. The Premier was directly relevant and has remained directly relevant.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Look at the faux indignation and the fakeness displayed by the Leader of The Nationals. He is defending the previous Government, which had promised in its budget that 1,000 COVID nurses, who had been recruited during an emergency, would be sacked—

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** I will hear one more point of order. The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order: It is under either Standing Order 73 or Standing Order 78. If the Premier would like to debate the issue via substantive motion under Standing Order 73, I am happy to do so. The Premier has also made personal reflections, which are considered disorderly under Standing Order 73.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** So in any event, there is a situation—

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** He is completely ignoring you again, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** Yes, he has been.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** This tells you everything you need to know about The Nationals.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will resume his seat. The member for Dubbo will resume his seat. The member for Dubbo is creating the problem and he will be removed from the Chamber if he continues to behave in that manner. I will deal with the Premier later. I am sure we will have some conversations. The member for Dubbo knew what he was doing, and he got the reaction he expected. The Premier has the call.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Ultimately, I am allowed to provide answers to the House. This answer has been interrupted three or four times, but I do answer questions and I answer them directly. The question was in relation to nurses. I said I do not have that information to hand. I am not trying to obfuscate. But I do believe that it is relevant that, under the funding agreement that the previous Government had, 1,200 nurses would have been taken out of the health system, including 138 from the Hunter New England health district, 109 from Western Sydney, 50 from Nepean Blue Mountains and 57 from Central Coast. It is a disgraceful record from those opposite.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The amount of money that we are investing in the health system is, in many respects, designed to fix the problems that were given to us by the previous Government.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Anyone who looks at the situation objectively with a straight face would say that it would be utterly heartless for a government to go to an election promising to cut a thousand nurses and reintroduce the wages cap, but that is exactly what the candidate for the electorate of Port Macquarie did.

#### **FIRST HOME BUYERS**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (11:21):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on the New South Wales Government's work to help first home buyers enter the property market?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:21):** As a result of the Government's first home buyer tax cut changes, 50,000 first home buyers in New South Wales have been able to purchase their dream home. First home buyers have saved an average of \$20,000 as a result of the changes to the tax cuts, which have delivered more than \$1 billion for first home buyers since the Government came to office. The member for Parramatta would be interested to hear that more than 3,200 first home buyers in the City of Parramatta have bought their first home since the changes, saving a total of \$74 million. In Western Sydney 18,000 first home buyers have saved an average of \$20,000 when purchasing their new home.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** You are exciting your team.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I can understand that the member for Wahroonga does not particularly care about first home buyers in Western Sydney, but we do. Given that he has been the leading advocate to stop the new builds of homes in New South Wales, I am unsurprised that he is not excited by my answer. I contrast our plan with the previous Government's plan for an annual land tax that first home buyers will have to pay forever.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** We said from the very beginning that we would much rather individuals pay no tax than pay a land tax forever. That was what the previous Government was offering so, presumably, that is what the member for Wahroonga is offering.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** It is about choice, mate.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** There you go: It is about choice. Those opposite would say, "Here you go, young lady or young man. Here is an annual land tax on your house that you have to pay forever. But there is good news: We believe in choice." This Government believes in giving first home buyers a break by having them pay no tax. That is the difference between our parties. Under our exemption scheme, there is a full exemption for eligible buyers purchasing a property under \$800,000 and a concession for those purchasing a property valued between \$800,000 and \$1 million. It makes a difference in our property market. But it can only be matched and it can only work if more supply is put into the housing market. That is why the Government and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces have been working incredibly hard on transport oriented developments, changes to the planning system and increasing density in the city. We will continue that work even if it is opposed by the member for Wahroonga.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** That was a wet lettuce.

**The SPEAKER:** Was that the member for Tamworth?

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** Yes.

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

## HOMELESSNESS

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (11:24):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health, representing the Minister for Housing, the Minister for Homelessness, and the Minister for Mental Health. Ballina shire has had a huge increase in homelessness over the past three months. The Homeless Health Outreach Team does outstanding work in places like Byron shire to support better health outcomes for rough sleepers. Will the Minister fund the Homeless Health Outreach Team to extend its reach so it can also serve Ballina shire?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:25):** I thank the member for Ballina for her question. I know that she has a long-term interest in the issue and has been a long-term advocate. It is deeply concerning to see the rising numbers of people sleeping rough across our community, especially in the member's electorate of Ballina in northern New South Wales. The New South Wales Government recognises the challenges facing people who are homeless across the North Coast, particularly those who are sleeping rough in Ballina and Byron area. In 2024 the homeless street count counted 63 rough sleepers in Ballina, double the number counted in 2023. Neighbouring Byron shire counted 348 rough sleepers and Tweed Shire counted 174.

The Government is investing \$5.1 billion to deliver new public housing which will prioritise at least half of the homes built for the victim-survivors of family and domestic violence. The North Coast is a particular focus for this Government. The New South Wales Government is committed to making sure New South Wales is a place where everyone has access to safe and secure housing and where experiences of homelessness are rare, brief and not repeated. In May 2024 the Government invested \$1.3 million to establish an assertive outreach team to help those in the North Coast community access appropriate services and accommodation. That one-off funding

is an initial step to strengthen the homelessness response in Byron and is in addition to the Government's 2023-24 \$11-million investment for homelessness services in northern New South Wales, which covers the local government areas of Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed.

In June 2024, under the Minister for Mental Health, NSW Health committed to five mental health and housing liaison officers across the State, including one in the northern New South Wales area. In June 2024 a one-off funding grant of \$250,000 was provided via the Mental Health Branch on behalf of the Minister for Mental Health to support employment of a service coordinator at Fletcher Street Cottage. As the member would know, the cottage provides breakfast, showers and laundry facilities, as well as community support workers. The Government is also supporting the people of Ballina through a Homes NSW office in Lismore. Homes NSW has been working with local organisations to bring buyback properties up to standard and put them back into the region's transitional housing stock. *[Extension of time]*

As of February 2025 that includes 11 properties leased through Homes NSW to community housing providers. The \$100-million Homelessness Innovation Fund grant program will provide 100 temporary accommodation units in those areas. Importantly, funding for this financial year is \$826,000, which will be invested in five new mental health and housing liaison officer positions across New South Wales. The positions will be established in Western Sydney, South Western Sydney, Hunter New England, Northern NSW and Southern NSW local health districts. Specifically, the outreach mental health liaison positions will support care coordination and pathways into housing. Working with the team at Homes NSW, the positions will link to housing people at risk of experiencing homelessness who are also accessing mental health services, which often go together, and help them sustain their tenancies.

Uncapping temporary accommodation is key for the North Coast to provide people with the basic human right of shelter. We are pleased to fund transitional accommodation while long-term solutions to deal with the housing crisis are worked on and resolved. I know this issue is important to the member for Ballina and other members from the Northern Rivers. During my time in other roles, this issue was raised with me. I know those members have strong engagement with the Minister in the other place. I thank the member for her question and advocacy on behalf of her community members, who are often the most vulnerable our society.

**The SPEAKER:** Before I call the member for Camden, I welcome to the public gallery guests of the member for Barwon, Garry and Jenny Trindall from the Walgett Community Working Party. I welcome to the Cooper Gallery the guests of the Minister for Health from Rare Ovarian Cancer. This morning many members attended a morning tea to raise awareness about ovarian cancer. I thank our guests for their work.

### PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (11:30):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Deputy Premier please update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to build quality public schools that meet the demand of rapidly growing suburbs?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:31):** I thank the member for Camden for her very important question. On Thursday the member was at the opening of Gledswood Hills High School—a sentence we would have never been able to say under the previous Government. How did it feel on that day, member for Camden?

**Mrs Sally Quinnell:** Amazing.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It was pretty amazing for the people of that community because the previous Government said that school was not even required. Since coming to government, we have spoken a lot about building the schools that are required in rapidly growing communities on the back of clear projections and the enrolment growth audit, which showed that previous predictions about how many students are going to be living in high-growth areas were all off. We are correcting the wrongs of the past. We are righting those wrongs. We are building the schools that the previous Government failed to deliver, including schools it promised but never delivered and schools that it never even promised because it said they were not needed. The list includes schools in Gledswood Hills, Medowie and Jordan Springs.

There are lots of examples of former Government members saying, "Don't worry about what happens when students leave year 6. I don't know what happens to them after that"—even though it is the law that they go to secondary school. The fact is the Minns Labor Government inherited that situation and is now going through, school by school, to fund, deliver and open the schools that the former Government failed to even think of during its more than a decade in office. Opposition members hate hearing the truth, which is that they actually closed more schools than they opened during a time when the population of New South Wales was growing. They left government with fewer schools than they started with.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I do not think you have to be any kind of expert to work out that does not add up. One of the best examples of the growth that has occurred in the community is in Box Hill.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** A lot has been written in the media about Box Hill over the past 12 months. Tens of thousands of families live in the suburbs of Box Hill and Gables and in that area. After 12 years, not a single school was opened. When the member for Hawkesbury, who is the local member, was asked why, she was very honest and said she did not have an answer. While she figured that out, we stood up the school. [*Extension of time*]

While Opposition members tried to figure out that children need to go to school—

**Ms Robyn Preston:** What about the before- and after-school care?

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The member for Hawkesbury talks about before- and after-school care, but under her Government there was no school to worry about. She is on a hiding to nothing. I am sorry, but she is. On Friday, when I went to speak to those family—

**Ms Robyn Preston:** I spoke to them on Friday as well.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The member for Hawkesbury has absolutely no right to speak on this issue, I am sorry. Those families can now put their kindergartners in little shirts that say, "Box Hill Public School, established 2025". That is because of the Minns Labor Government.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. The Deputy Premier will be heard in silence.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The school development application was approved on 17 December and students walked through the doors on day one of term 1.

**Mr Ray Williams:** It's a temporary site.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I will get to that. It was the fastest ever school stood up in history. Yes, it is a temporary school while we build permanent schools in 2007 and 2008 and a high school.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Kellyville to remove himself from the Chamber under Standing Order 249A until the conclusion of the Deputy Premier's answer.

[*Pursuant to standing order the member for Kellyville left the Chamber at 11:35.*]

**Ms PRUE CAR:** This Government is building three schools in Box Hill, whilst the previous Government built none. In the budget there are pages and pages of investment in new school infrastructure. The former Government left of legacy that members opposite are ashamed of.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I will also talk about what has happened in Melonba and Marsden Park. I am sure the member for Miranda has no idea where that is. The Minns Government just delivered a high school and a primary school six months ahead of schedule. The former Government announced those schools two elections ago and failed to deliver. We have done everything and pulled out every stop to deliver the schools that the former Government failed to deliver.

### HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (11:36):** My question is directed to the Premier. In February 2024 the Premier said, "People are waiting too long in emergency departments." Since then, less than half of patients presenting to the emergency department at the Coffs Harbour hospital have started their treatment on time. The statistics are the worse they have been since data collection began. After two years in government, will the Premier finally take some responsibility for his Government's failure?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:36):** Of course, this Government will take responsibility for the record investment it has put into NSW Health. I am happy to answer any question about public health, but I do think it is reasonable and fair for the people of New South Wales to hear Opposition members say whether they will reintroduce the wages cap in New South Wales. I will give the Opposition an opportunity to answer.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order: My point of order goes to direct relevance.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order at this stage.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** If we are going to have a debate about the future of funding for our healthcare workforce, it is incumbent on Opposition members to answer whether it will reintroduce a wages cap. It is over to them.

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

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will come to order. I cannot hear the point of order from the member for Wahroonga.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 74. This is question time. The Premier is not answering the question. He is inviting a quarrel across the Chamber instead of answering the question he was asked. Obviously, he does not want to answer the question. He is afraid of the question. He ought to be made to answer the question.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wahroonga will resume his seat. The Premier is being somewhat quarrelsome but not enough to uphold the point of order.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** This is a debate about the future of New South Wales. Will the Opposition reintroduce a wages cap? I seek leave to hear an answer from the Leader of the Opposition.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wahroonga will be removed from the Chamber if he continues to interject.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order: It was a pretty easy question. Will the Premier take responsibility? He is obviously trying to obfuscate the responsibility, but guess what? He is the Premier.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Dubbo will resume his seat and cease debating across the table.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I will try again, Mr Speaker. I seek leave to hear from Opposition members about whether they will reintroduce a wages cap—over to you.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** If the Premier wants to walk down to Government House and swear us in as a government, we will happily take questions as Ministers.

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

[Interruption]

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** If that were to happen, would members opposite reintroduce the wages cap?

**The SPEAKER:** Leave is not granted for the Premier's question. Members will come to order.

### REGIONAL YOUTH CRIME

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (11:40):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to create a safer New South Wales by addressing regional youth crime?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:40):** I thank the member for Cessnock for always being supportive of the New South Wales police. They think he is a great member. I acknowledge that any crime, big or small, can have huge impacts on individuals, families and the broader community. Nobody wants to see communities living in fear, and certainly not this Government. That is not the kind of society we want to live in. I stress that the Minns Labor Government and the NSW Police Force are doing everything that they can to keep our regional communities safe. I am proud to say that the police are working around the clock to fight those crimes and arrest offenders. They are doing everything that they can.

It is our priority to address the serious crimes being committed by young people across regional New South Wales. That is why Operation Regional Mongoose was stood up: to prevent, disrupt and respond to escalating instances of these serious crimes. Between September 2023 and January 2025, we saw some startling but pleasing results from Operation Regional Mongoose. In the Northern Region, 376 individuals were arrested and charged, of whom 238 were juveniles. In the Western Region, 249 individuals were arrested and charged, of whom 158 were juveniles. In the Southern Region, 202 individuals were arrested and charged, of whom 79 were juveniles. That is a total of 827 individuals charged with committing serious crimes in regional New South Wales just in the past 18 months.

New South Wales police are going the extra mile. I know all members in the Chamber agree with that because they have sat on my couch and told me so—and I thank them for their support of the New South Wales police. They are engaging in critical prevention activities to break the cycle and keep kids away from criminal activities. The Minns Labor Government has invested in expanding our Youth Action Meetings, known as YAMs. We have now included nine extra locations. So far, 210 YAMs have been held, with over 1,400 young people assessed at those meetings. [*Extension of time*]

They are being referred to get assistance with health, education and other interventions that they need to get on the right path and stay out of trouble. We know that we need to get to the bottom of those complex issues right across our communities, but particularly in our regional communities. We know that we need to tackle the root cause of these problems holistically as a community. If there was a silver bullet, then previous governments would have already fixed this complex problem. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. These deeply entrenched problems need to be resolved, and we need to work on them together. We know that the best thing we can do is to prevent crime in the first place, and that is what we are aiming to do through our 2024 \$26.2 million package, complemented by our regional community safety inquiry.

I thank the chairman of that inquiry and Parliamentary Secretary, the member for Mount Druitt, for his excellent work. I also acknowledge a further investment of \$4 million for place-based efforts across both Bourke and Kempsey, which was announced by the Premier today. That funding boost will match the Commonwealth Government's investment in the Stronger Places, Stronger People program, which supports community-led, place-based responses to local issues. There is a lot of work to be done but we recognise that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work for issues like youth crime in regional communities. We are committed to tackling this issue head-on and we will not stop.

#### HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (11:45):** My question is directed to the Premier. On his watch, the proportion of Ryde Hospital emergency department patients starting treatment late has blown out by a third, from 13 per cent to 33 per cent. Why is the Premier's Government failing to fix wait times in our hospitals?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:45):** Looking at the elective surgery waitlist, as a result of the work that the surgical taskforce same-day surgery benchmark group has established over the past 18 months, the waitlist is back to pre-pandemic levels. In March of 2023, the waitlist was—

**The SPEAKER:** Members will allow the Premier to answer the question. He will be heard in silence.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** —back to pre-pandemic levels. In March 2023, the number was 14,059. In September 2024, which the last quarter recorded, it was 3,991.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Mark Speakman:** The question referenced emergency department waiting times, not elective surgery lists that were cut because of the Perrottet Government's COVID funding. Emergency department waiting times are the slowest on record under this Government.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier is answering the question directly. He is in order at this stage.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Over the same period, the New South Wales Government has recruited, according to a headcount across the public health workforce, an additional 4,000 healthcare workers in our system. Retention rates are at 92.8 per cent. Particularly important is that the retention of nurses in the public workforce is now at pre-pandemic levels, or above 91 and a bit per cent. It had dropped significantly below that, so that one out of every 10 nurses was being lost from our public health system. We are now at the level we were at before the pandemic. Before the pandemic—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Why won't you talk about emergency departments?

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** It may come as a surprise to the Leader of the Opposition, but nurses work in emergency departments as well.

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



**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** We are now at a point where we have retention levels at the same rate as we had before the pandemic, notwithstanding the fact that inflation is obviously higher today than it was before the pandemic.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Retention levels are getting to where we need them to be. The reason for that across the public sector is that, immediately upon winning government, the Government made a decision to remove the wages cap and have an immediate 4 per cent lift in salaries across the public sector. After that, we would enter into negotiations with individual unions. We have done that, and 60 per cent of the public sector have entered into negotiations with the Government. We have struck deals with them, not just in health but across the public sector. I go back to my previous answer.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I believe this is important and not trivial: Will the Coalition bring back a wages cap? I know those opposite will roll their eyes and say it is not relevant.

**Mr Jordan Lane:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Ryde rises on a point of order. The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Mr Jordan Lane:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The question went to both Ryde Hospital and emergency wait times. Neither have been mentioned, and there is now less than 10 seconds on the clock.

**The SPEAKER:** I interpret whether the Premier is in order. I have ruled that the Premier has been directly relevant in his answer to the question.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Some 4,000 additional staff have been recruited, and we have lifted the wages cap. As a result of safe staffing levels, we have got retention levels to where they need to be. Whether the Opposition will return the wages cap or not is fundamental. It is not a trivial or trite issue when it comes to the workforce in New South Wales.

## ROAD SAFETY

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (11:49):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, in her capacity representing the Minister for Roads. Will the Minister please update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to ensure that New South Wales roads are a safe, quality and affordable way to travel?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (11:50):** I thank the member for Penrith, who is a very strong advocate for her community. I had a conversation with her a couple of months ago at the bus conference held in Penrith. The Minns Labor Government remains focused on building a better New South Wales and a better community for all of us. We know that families in our communities are doing it tough, and that is why we help with cost-of-living pressures. We are focused on building better roads as a key enabler of these goals to get the cost of living down. This is about safer roads, higher quality roads and more affordable travel on roads.

I have spoken many times about our massive investment in road safety, including a \$2.8 billion commitment for roads funding, which is rolling out across the State; a \$3.3 billion investment in disaster recovery over the next four years; and our investment in our Regional Emergency Road Repair Fund, Regional Road Fund and Urban Roads Fund. I will not take up all of my time talking about it, but there are also other things, such as seatbelt cameras and trialling average speed cameras for light vehicles. Some of these have not been supported by those opposite, but we pursue them anyway.

I now update the House on our demerit point program. There are now more than 420,000 eligible drivers who have had one demerit point wiped in each trial period for two years running, of which we are currently doing an evaluation. As of 17 January 2025, 1,483,926 drivers are eligible to benefit from phase three of the trial. This trial is saying to people who have made a mistake and received a demerit point, "If you can keep your record clean for a year, we will reward that." It is a carrot approach rather than just a stick. Not all of our safety initiatives get supported by those opposite—particularly by The Nationals.

Yesterday I was sad to see that, for the second year in a row, the first question out of the box from the Leader of The Nationals was not to do with road safety or regional issues. It was not about the issues that were of concern to his community or the broader New South Wales community. Instead, it was just another little political jibe about some Sydney insider politics, which is not what I hear about when I travel around the State. That is not

surprising; I am often out and about around the State and do not see them. Recently I visited some of those members in their electorates. I had a great time talking to the member for Oxley in his electorate, where he was pointing out an issue with one of his roads. I spoke to the member for Tweed in his electorate, and we had a great conversation. [*Extension of time*]

When I was in Lithgow, I had a chat to the member for Bathurst about the people in Mount Wolgan valley. I also attended the mayoral summit held by the good member for Cootamundra. A lot of work is being done on all sides. I travel all around the State. I tried to get up to Coffs Harbour for the bypass blast last year. I gave about a week's notice to the member for Coffs Harbour, but he could not make it.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** He was busy. He was probably filling his potholes.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** He was busy. I did not think about it at the time, but it was Melbourne Cup day. He told me he was not in his electorate, so I was wondering where he might have been. There are some issues with who he might have been with. I know that the member for Dubbo got overexcited yesterday and had to get punted. I love the solidarity from that side of the House. When the leader of our party used to get punted, we would all walk out. In total solidarity, those opposite sat on their benches and kept their position.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 74. The Minister is being deliberately quarrelsome.

**The SPEAKER:** I draw the Minister's attention to her proclivity to incite quarrels. She will be a little more considerate.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, I get it. Do not listen to me. I realise that sometimes I can stir members opposite up about their lack of support for the Leader of The Nationals. I want to hear from Mark "Bomber" Forrester. The Leader of The Nationals popped his head up about a roads project, and Mark "Bomber" Forrester quite rightly said, "That is just"—something I cannot say because it is unparliamentary—"You have had enough time mate. Whoever you are, whatever, you've had enough time to do it. Seven years is good enough to do anything." But not for the member for Dubbo.

#### **BANKSTOWN-LIDCOMBE HOSPITAL**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaocluse) (11:55):** My question is directed to the Premier. A NSW Health newsletter from Bankstown hospital, which was distributed to members of the public, includes a picture of a woman in a "free Palestine" T-shirt. In light of this morning's events, is there a systemic problem at Bankstown hospital?

**The SPEAKER:** Before I call the Premier, I ask all members to be mindful of the sensitivities around this issue.

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

**The SPEAKER:** I am speaking.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** A member of the Government just shouted out, "That's a stupid question."

**The SPEAKER:** I have not yet given the member for Wahroonga the call. Do you not understand a simple proposition? I will call the member when I have finished speaking. This is a very sensitive issue. Members will be mindful of their interjections. I am disappointed that there was another interjection. I rule that it is not a stupid question. The Premier has the call. Members will be respectful and listen to the Premier in silence.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:57):** It is a serious question.

**Mrs Tanya Thompson:** Yes, it's not stupid.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Myall Lakes did not need to interject. Under Standing Order 249A, I direct the member for Myall Lakes to remove herself from the Chamber until the end of question time. If she utters one more word, she will be out for the day.

[*Pursuant to standing order the member for Myall Lakes left the Chamber at 11:57.*]

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** There should not be any mirth in relation to this question or this issue. It is incredibly serious. It is also incredibly serious that the public has confidence in the health system. They should know that if they present to a public hospital in New South Wales, they will be met with someone who is credentialed and experienced, who is part of a team in a world-class facility and who cares about your care even though they are a complete stranger who you have never met before. In my experience of the health system, that is exactly what people get. It is undeniable that across the health system there are passionate professionals who care about public

health and who want to provide a service to the people of New South Wales in all conditions and regardless of where they are from.

That is why the circumstances relating to this morning's video are so distressing. It undermines confidence in the care people get when they present to a public hospital. I assure the House that a full investigation is underway. The individuals have been identified and suspended. The Minister for Health could not be clearer that they will not be returning to the hospital. It is a breach of every single industrial rule on the books in our public health system. More importantly, it undermines the confidence, which I just spoke about, in receiving world-class treatment from someone who cares about you if you go to a public hospital. We are determined to ensure that the public has confidence in our health system.

I do not know about that particular political message, but of course we will investigate that. If any member has information about that kind of political messaging, which could undermine public confidence, we want to know about it. Despite our differences, it is clear that the Government will take action when we see it—whether it is to address the health system, antisemitism in our streets or the law changes that we need to keep the public safe. We will not draw a distinction in public health either. The Jewish Board of Deputies will meet with the Parliamentary Friends of Israel today. The Minister for Health and I will attend that meeting, and I encourage other members to come along and show solidarity with the Jewish community in Sydney. I also spoke to the Israeli ambassador to Australia to assure him that we are taking the issue incredibly seriously and will ensure that those individuals do not return to public health in New South Wales. At the end of the day, we all have an obligation to stand up against vile antisemitic racism. There is no place for it in New South Wales in 2025.

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (12:00):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Industry and Trade. Will the Minister please update the House on the importance of New South Wales maintaining strong global trade relationships?

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (12:00):** I thank the member for Heathcote for her question and her continued advocacy for her community and for industry and manufacturers across the State. The Government is on a mission to ensure that our global trade relationships are worthy of our State's flagship economy. When trade relationships are strong, our businesses grow, our workers thrive and our State flourishes. I was pleased and encouraged by the phone call yesterday between the Prime Minister and the President of the United States to discuss his proposed 25 per cent tariffs on aluminium and steel, and the fact that he is giving great consideration to exempting Australia from his tariffs.

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

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG:** While there have been conflicting reports today, I note that the President has stated that America has a trade surplus with Australia. We indeed are a land far away and buy a lot of their aeroplanes. New South Wales is a competitive, fair-trading economy, and the trade across all of our goods and services is founded upon the principle of mutual benefit. That is why I am pleased to advise the House that our Government has been in regular contact with our Federal colleagues about those matters for quite some time. The issue was discussed as far back as last year in preparation for a potential Trump administration. We are well prepared and will take a measured and mature approach when it comes to engaging in trading relationships.

I have written to and spoken with my Federal counterpart, Senator the Hon. Don Farrell, about the proposed tariffs and the subsequent threat of dumping measures on our industry. I have said that New South Wales stands ready to assist and lend support to ensure that our State's steel exporters, like BlueScope in the Illawarra, and our aluminium exporters, like Tomago in the Hunter, will continue to thrive. We have been working, and will continue to work, very closely with our Federal colleagues because the Labor Government knows the value of the manufacturing industry to our State. I only wish those opposite knew it too. When they were last in government, manufacturing in New South Wales grew in only two of the 10 years from 2011. That was their high watermark. In contrast, I am pleased to report to the House that under the Minns Labor Government manufacturing has grown for two years in a row—the first time that has been achieved since 2003. [*Extension of time*]

Members have to ask why that is. Why have we been so successful? It is because our international partners are now confident in the State's economy, its manufacturing and its exporters. But we are only just getting started. Our trade focus has been about diversifying our export base by exporting new products to new markets. The Federal Government has a great record when it comes to tariffs, stabilising our relationship with China—our largest trading partner—and reducing tariffs on so many products, from wheat to wine. That means growth for the New South Wales economy. We are not stopping there. South-East Asia is right on our doorstep and is entering a

golden age. That \$5 trillion economic bloc will be the fourth largest economy by 2040. That is why the New South Wales Government wants to make sure we are at the forefront of the economic transformation.

Last week the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and I had the pleasure of welcoming a diplomatic corps from the region to Wollongong as part of our Association of Southeast Asian Nations market update series. We showcased the economic potential of the Illawarra—including Port Kembla, BlueScope and the University of Wollongong—to a very receptive crowd. It was also deliberate that my first trade mission as Minister was to South-East Asia. It included 23 meetings and 13 events with 480 government leaders, existing partners and prospective partners, because trade is about engagement and good relationships. We continue to do that work. With all the things this State exports, one thing we will not export is the culture of cronyism and the "jobs for the boys" honey pot of the last Government. I assure members that we will not appoint the former member for Monaro as a representative for New South Wales in any capacity. We will focus on jobs, economic growth and prosperity for the people of New South Wales.

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

### GENDER-AFFIRMING HEALTH CARE

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (12:06):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Following the Queensland Liberal-Nationals Government's shameful suspension of gender-affirming care for minors, and as transphobic rhetoric escalates in the media and on the streets, what is the Government doing to ensure full access to gender-affirming health care in New South Wales?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:06):** I thank the member for Newtown for her advocacy on behalf of those particularly vulnerable young people. It is important that they receive the best possible care, and NSW Health is determined to make sure that the care young people receive is tailored, best practice, evidence based, multidisciplinary and age appropriate. In January, as the member alluded to, the Queensland Government announced a pause on prescribing certain medications through the public system for new patients under the age of 18, pending the outcome of an independent review. New South Wales has stricter consent requirements than Queensland for care in that area. I am sure the member understands and is aware of that.

I reassure families that there has been and will be no interruption to services in New South Wales. Minister Butler, the Federal health Minister, recently announced that the National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC] will develop new national guidelines for gender-affirming care. We welcome the development of national guidelines by the NHMRC. We will engage in that process, as appropriate, as the largest deliverer of healthcare services in the nation. I make it clear that we remain committed to providing health care for young people that addresses those issues—that is tailored, best practice, multidisciplinary, age appropriate and, importantly, evidence based.

Care for young people with gender dysphoria in New South Wales is informed by the latest national and international clinical guidance and extensive consultation with over 70 public and private clinicians, families and carers of trans and gender-diverse young people, NGOs, GPs and primary health networks. The New South Wales approach recognises that each young person's needs are different depending on their age, developmental stage and individual experiences. It is important that those young people continue to receive care that is necessary, age appropriate, evidence based, multidisciplinary and, importantly, tailored to their needs.

We are committed to continuing to do that in New South Wales. I thank the member for her advocacy and her interest in this area of health care. I will continue to keep the member and the community informed as we work through the development of new national guidelines announced by the Commonwealth under the NHMRC.

### ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (12:09):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Disability Inclusion. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's plans to deliver more accessible homes?

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (12:10):** I thank the member for Liverpool for her continuing care and compassion and her commitment to helping those most in need. The Minns Labor Government knows that housing affordability and availability is the single biggest pressure facing the people of New South Wales. Our homes are essential to making us safe and secure; they anchor us within our communities. But, as the cost of living bites, we know that the lack of affordable housing is having a huge impact on people's lives and their choices about where they live.

Since coming to government last year, we have been pulling out all stops to make housing available for those who need it. That is why we have introduced the biggest housing reforms in a generation, squarely focused

on housing availability, affordability, choice and diversity. As the Minister for Disability Inclusion, I know how important it is for us to make sure that these reforms deliver what all people need, including people with disability and other accessibility needs. That is why we are looking at every single lever we can pull to make sure we are able to deliver more accessible homes as quickly as possible. The former Government's only disability housing strategy was to hope that all people with disability were eligible for social housing, but then it refused to even invest in more social housing.

**Ms Liesl Tesch:** Let alone accessible.

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON:** Indeed. They sold it off instead. That is why I am proud to be part of a government that has made the largest ever investment in accessible housing in New South Wales history. We have dedicated \$5.1 billion to build 8,400 social housing homes, all of which will comply with the liveable housing design standards under the National Construction Code. The standards include important and really practical requirements for people with accessibility needs, such as a step-free path from the street into the home, showers that are flush with the surrounding floor, and doors and corridors that are wide enough for people to be able to move around freely when in a wheelchair. The member for Gosford, and Parliamentary Secretary for Disability Inclusion knows how important those aspects of accessible housing are to people with disability in this State.

This is the largest direct investment in accessible housing in this State's history, and it will make a huge contribution to the availability of accessible housing in New South Wales. Of course, not everyone with accessibility needs is eligible for social housing; we know that. That is why the Government Architect NSW has been working closely with the best minds in the property development and construction industry on how we can make it easier and quicker to get accessible housing into the market. Through that process, we are developing the NSW Housing Pattern Book of pre-approved architectural designs that are backed by a fast-track planning pathway to support speedier construction. [*Extension of time*]

We are making sure that every home built using the pattern book will meet the minimum standards for accessibility and adaptability. In fact, many of the pattern book designs will also meet the higher gold standard under the liveable housing design guidelines, including space for a bedroom on the entry level, and kitchen and laundry spaces that are easy to move around in. The pattern book will include low-rise housing such as terraces and semi-detached buildings, along with mid-rise apartments with three to six floors. Those are the types of apartments that cities and communities across New South Wales need. They allow people to stay in their communities through all stages of life, maintaining connections with family and friends and other support networks. The pattern book will also allow for flexibility to adapt to changing needs, while offering sustainable designs that are more cost effective in the long run for owners and occupiers.

The pattern book is a win for the disability community and it will help make our State more inclusive. It means we can get more housing—high-quality homes that people want in places where they want to live—moving faster through approval processes. I thank my ministerial colleagues, particularly Minister Jackson, Minister Scully and Minister Chanthivong, as well as Parliamentary Secretary Liesl Tesch, for always thinking about how we can improve the lives of people with disability and support inclusion in New South Wales. Every person has a role to play in disability inclusion, and everyone in the Minns Labor Government is playing their part. I am proud of the work we are doing, and I am proud of the work we have done, but this is just the beginning. Every day my colleagues and I continue to examine every opportunity to boost the supply of accessible housing as we work to build a better New South Wales.

#### *Documents*

### UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with Standing Order 117, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 12 February 2025.

### AUDITOR-GENERAL

#### Reports

**The CLERK:** In accordance with Government Sector Audit Act 1983, I announce receipt of the Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled *Regulation of the Land Titles Registry*, dated 12 February 2025 and received that day.

#### *Business of the House*

### BUSINESS LAPSED

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House that in accordance with Standing Order 105 general business notices of motions (general notices) Nos 2446 to 2476 will lapse tomorrow.

*Bills***STRATA SCHEMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (12:17):** I return to my contribution to debate on the Strata Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. Another key reform of the bill is ensuring that owners' corporations meet their obligation to repair and maintain common property. The bill extends the time for lot owners to claim damages for failure to maintain property from two to six years. It stops owners' corporations from deferring repairs where safety, access and use of property is affected, and strengthens enforcement by empowering NSW Fair Trading to issue compliance notices and investigate breaches. That is super important for strata owners. Having those common property areas safe and accessible and making sure that repairs are not deferred, and safety is ensured, is important to everybody in their own homes. The bill also encourages sustainability by requiring owners' corporations to consider energy and water consumption in common areas at each annual general meeting. By removing barriers to sustainability, it paves the way for more energy-efficient and environmentally friendly strata schemes.

In conclusion, the Strata Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 represents a significant step forward in strengthening accountability, improving governance and ensuring that residents, particularly those in financial hardship or with disability, are better supported. This bill is another milestone in the Government's efforts to build a fairer, more transparent strata sector. We are committed to continuing these reforms and addressing both existing challenges and emerging needs for the strata community. Once again, I thank the Building Commission for its proactive work on behalf of future strata owners. I thank the Minister and his team for the work they are doing to support strata owners across New South Wales.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (12:19):** I speak in support of the Strata Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I thank the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading for leading on this important bill. The member for Macquarie Fields has done a great job. New South Wales has more than 86,000 strata schemes housing more than 1.2 million residents. As part of our housing agenda, the Government is committed to enhancing trust in the strata sector to ensure home owners have confidence in the buildings they own and live in. The bill implements 37 recommendations from the 2021 *Report on the statutory review of the Strata Schemes Development Act 2015 and Strata Schemes Management Act 2015*. This is the second tranche of recommendations that the Government has implemented from the report, and it will bring significant changes to the strata sector in New South Wales.

Minister Chanthivong and I share responsibility for this legislation, so I will make a brief contribution on the parts of the bill that fall within my portfolio responsibilities. That relates specifically to embedded network disclosure. Embedded networks are private arrangements for provision of utility services like electricity to multiple occupiers of a strata building or other complex. Infrastructure to deliver those services is often installed during construction of the building to create a private network that is "off the grid". Services are then arranged by the owners' corporation or a community association and are onsold to owners within the building.

Embedded networks for utilities in strata schemes can be beneficial, but they also come with risks to transparency, competition and price. This bill seeks to make changes to conveyancing laws to improve disclosures of embedded networks as part of the sale of a lot. The bill introduces protections for current and prospective strata owners by removing the exemption for electricity supplied through an embedded network, meaning contract term limits now apply to utilities provided by those networks; and introducing new disclosure requirements as part of the sale of a lot for "exclusive supply networks". They include embedded electricity networks and exclusive arrangements for services, like gas and internet, that could restrict an owner's choice of suppliers.

For established strata or community properties, the vendor is deemed to warrant that, unless disclosed in the contract, the property is not affected by an exclusive supply network. Buyers can test the vendor's warranty during the contract period through the strata information certificate issued by the owners' corporation, which the vendor must give to the buyer before settlement. If the certificate reveals the existence of an embedded network that the vendor did not disclose, the purchaser can rescind the contract for breach of the vendor warranty at any time before settlement. For strata or community title properties sold off the plan, developers need to state in the disclosure statement attached to the contract whether the property is in a scheme that will include an exclusive supply network. If, during the development process, the position changes from what was disclosed, developers will need to notify buyers of the change. Materially impacted buyers may be able to rescind the contract or, in

some cases, claim compensation from the developer—capped at 2 per cent of the purchase price—if they can show they would not have agreed to buy the property had they known the true position.

Other members have spoken in detail about the other components of the bill and, as I said, I am speaking about the parts particular to my portfolio. The fact that there have been a number of speakers from both sides of the Chamber who have spoken on this bill shows how important this reform is and the impact it has on everyday people. We are talking about massive numbers. It is another example of this Government's approach to making sure we address issues around housing while at the same time ensuring we look at commonsense approaches that give the consumer, the customer, the person who is making the biggest investment of their life, a little more control and understanding. While most people try to do the right thing, we need to make sure we make it as clear and simple as possible, and it becomes something all people can benefit from.

This bill represents another major tranche of strata reforms that the Government has promised to deliver to rebuild trust and confidence in the New South Wales strata sector. The bill shows that the Government is committed to implementing recommendations of the review as well as addressing issues impacting residents in strata that have emerged since the tabling of the report. The Government plans to bring further reforms to Parliament to implement the remaining legislative recommendations of the review and will do so in a timely manner. I congratulate and thank Minister Chanthivong, who has been the lead on this. I congratulate and thank his office, my office, and all of the people who have put this together. I thank all members who have spoken on the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (12:25):** I speak on the Strata Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I thank the two Ministers who have worked with each other and their departments on this fairly detailed bill, which includes many important changes to increase the owners' corporation protections, uplift developer and strata management professionalism, ensure owners properly maintain their buildings, and strengthen the governance of strata committees. The bill talks in more detail about the strengthening of developer accountability by requiring the initial maintenance schedule and initial levy estimates to the administrative fund and capital works to be independently certified and ensuring that the developers do not fail to meet those new obligations.

Secondly, it supports sustainable infrastructure and accessibility infrastructure updates by prohibiting by-laws that prevent the installation of sustainable infrastructure solely due to appearance. Thirdly, is the uplift of strata professional services to improve owners' confidence in the strata. Fourthly, it improves the governance of strata committees by imposing additional duties on the strata committee members and prescribing training for members for committees—which I will talk about in more detail shortly. Another element requires owners' corporations to maintain and repair common property by enabling NSW Fair Trading to enter into enforceable undertakings with an owners' corporation. It also protects owners' corporations against unfair contracts and approves protections for owners and prospective owners around embedded networks contracts by removing the exemption of embedded electricity supply contracts. The bill also assists owners in financial hardship—which I will also talk about in more detail shortly—and contains other amendments.

Obviously, the Minister, who is now in the Chamber, has also undertaken massive community consultation in response to inquiries on strata. Strata is a huge and important area, with a growing population living under strata management. Whilst recognising all of the great advantages that this bill brings, there will be a need for further investigations and reforms. Unfortunately, one of the areas that is still outstanding and that we need to deal with, especially in the current list of cost-of-living crisis, is the ability of bankrupting owners for non-payment. That has been slightly addressed in the bill. While I understand the importance of strata fees for undertaking vital works—and I know the member for Sydney is fairly passionate about this—I have seen minutes of strata annual general meetings state enforcement can be started as low as \$500, which I have been learning recently is probably less than a month's strata fees, and that can then lead to bankruptcy charges. I do not know if it is written into the legislation, but I know that some commonly accept that you cannot really start bankruptcy at under \$5,000 or \$10,000.

I saw a legal note that said \$5,000 or above. If it is \$10,000 for bankruptcy, that could potentially be only one or two years outstanding fees. Whilst they need to be paid, it seems draconian to go to bankruptcy. A person may not be totally bankrupt at that stage. They are forced to sell their property et cetera. The ability to recover comes straight from their unit to start with. Council rates et cetera are covered in those instances. It is something that needs to be looked at and managed. Instead of simply referring a person to seek guidance and support, more needs to be done to protect people.

The other element I bring forward is that of elevating the standard of the people elected to the body. Yes, we are now introducing a mandatory training program, which is really good. But often little fiefdoms are created in these strata bodies. One of the challenges is that we have a lot of absentee owners. Obviously they have rented out their property. They may not fully appreciate what is happening on the ground at their block of units and therefore they do not participate in the annual general meeting. I was looking at the annual general meeting

minutes of a few smaller properties, with 20 to 25 units, and only four people turned up—sometimes even without proxies—which still constitutes a quorum. The challenge is that a small group of people may just browbeat other people into giving up, because they are a bit stronger and may carry on. People give out their proxies or just give up on the process.

Training will go some way to addressing the issue. Still, we need to relink at how we help resolve disputes within the management of the strata corporation that is there, without it being too expensive. I have noticed—and I take on board what the Minister may say—that once they are elected, a motion cannot be moved for them to be ceded, if something is going wrong. Even in the club world, a certain number of members can move a motion to have a spill, but we cannot do that in strata. That may be something to look at. They are the key aspects. Once again, the changes in the rules about disability, accessibility for units and reducing it to 50 per cent are great. We heard the member for Gosford talk about putting handrails in common areas, even at 50 per cent.

I have seen so many issues to do with common areas. Last night I was shown a block of units where people had been asking simply for the clothes line to be repaired and it had not happened. At one property, someone had backed into and broken a wall. Only about 20 bricks need to be fixed. It has remained like that for years, just because there is someone on the strata body who says no. For another strata scheme I was looking at, when the minutes of the meeting are sent out, they may include the motion that is agreed to but not the annual reports and financial reports et cetera for that scheme.

The final aspect I raise with the Minister is that under the COVID provisions we moved to online meetings, but a lot of people do not want to attend an online meeting. At the moment the pendulum has swung too far in one direction. Rather than everyone being required to attend a meeting virtually, the default should still be a meeting onsite or in the strata manager's office, with the option to attend online. There are people who, for whatever reason, do not want to attend online meetings. Some people love online meetings, but there is also a whole group of people who want meetings to be in person. You do not get things done without being there in person to see the other person's reactions. I would suggest that in the future we may reconsider that element. If a person in the corporate body says that they want an in-person meeting, facilities should be set up such that they can go to the strata manager's office and have everyone else beamed in. I commend the legislation and thank the Ministers for their hard work in bringing the bill before the Parliament.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (12:34):** In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Strata Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, particularly the shadow Minister and member for Willoughby, and also members representing the electorates of Campbelltown, Sydney, Parramatta, Ryde, Liverpool, Newtown, Heathcote, Coogee, Drummoyne, East Hills, Mount Druitt, Charlestown, Riverstone, North Sydney, Granville, Gosford, Bankstown and Blacktown. I thank members for their support of this very important bill. The bill introduces the most significant reforms to strata living and strata laws since 2015, which will be of benefit to people living in strata schemes. The bill is part of the Government's extensive reform agenda for the strata sector. It will improve the lives of residents in strata and community land schemes and provide confidence to invest in strata buildings as the Government moves to increase housing supply.

I will now respond briefly to points made by members. I note the comments of the shadow Minister and member for Willoughby about the implementation of the remaining recommendations. In all fairness, it is a bit laughable to suggest that the Government has sat on its hands when it comes to modernising strata laws. In less than two years this Government has progressed several important reforms to restore confidence and trust in strata living. We implemented 31 recommendations from the statutory review in December 2023, following the passage of the Strata Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 in November 2023. The Government also passed the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Act 2024 in September 2024 in response to issues raised about strata managing agent conflicts of interests.

The Government then introduced this bill in November 2024, implementing a further 37 recommendations from the review and further reforms identified by stakeholders since that review. The remaining 36 legislative recommendations are being progressed by the Government. Those include recommendations in relation to subcommittees, building managers, penalty provisions, meeting procedures and minor renovations. I acknowledge the comments of the member for Sydney regarding the costs associated with strata schemes meeting obligations under building legislation, which is outside the scope of the bill. However, ensuring that building work is done properly, in line with the National Construction Code, will reduce strata body costs over the longer term and protect the value of the buildings. The Government will continue to work with industry and strata representatives to ensure that New South Wales building laws strike the right balance between cost and quality.

I also acknowledge the position of the member for Sydney about Fair Trading's new powers to investigate and enforce the owners' corporation duty to maintain and repair common property. As part of implementing the



reforms in the bill, Fair Trading will work with stakeholders to set up processes and procedures as to when those investigative and enforcement powers will be exercised, to ensure that they are used effectively, appropriately and where needed the most. Fair Trading will publish those processes and procedures to provide confidence and clarity around their use. The powers are a regulatory response of last resort, such as where the safety of residents is at risk.

I acknowledge the comments of the member for Sydney and the member for Newtown regarding strata committee training. The Government also recognises that strata committee members are volunteers; they are not strata professionals. The requirement for training should not create a barrier to serving on a committee. That is why the Government will work with the strata sector to design the right training for strata committees, with the aim of keeping it as low in cost as possible. The details of the training will be prescribed in the regulation. I acknowledge the position of the member for Sydney about owners experiencing financial hardship in payment of levies. I note the member has foreshadowed some amendments to the bill, which I will speak to at the appropriate time.

The Government has been open to pursuing further reforms, if needed, to help owners in financial hardship and prevent unnecessary debt recovery action by the schemes.

I acknowledge the position of the member for Sydney about access to an owner's contact details. NSW Fair Trading receives minimal complaints about information being disclosed in records. Additionally, stakeholders expressed concerns about the administrative burden that may arise from redacting certain information. However, the Government will consult with stakeholders to look into whether contact details of owners should be redacted from such records. This could include exploring how records systems and processes can be optimised. I also acknowledge comments by the member for Sydney and the member for Newtown about the conduct of building managers. The bill inserts a new duty on building managers to act in the best interests of the owners corporation. This would make explicit the expectation that the overriding principle in carrying out their duties is to ensure that they serve the owners corporation. Further duties on building managers will be set out in the regulation, following consultation with stakeholders.

New section 70A states that building manager's must not, without reasonable excuse, fail to act in the best interests of the owners corporation. Penalties apply if a building manager does not act in the best interests of the owners corporation. A building manager may have a reasonable excuse for not complying with this duty where, for example, they are directed by the owners corporation to act in a certain way. A reasonable excuse would be considered on an individual basis by Fair Trading during compliance action. The Government will further consider terms of appointment of building managers and grounds for termination of building managers in the next phase of reforms. This is to ensure there are no unintended consequences from any reforms to the terms of appointment of building managers. We are committed to strengthening the accountability of building managers and ensuring we get these reforms right.

The member for Sydney also spoke about dispute resolution in mixed use buildings, which is known in the legislation as "part-strata schemes". Reforms to improve governance, record keeping and dispute resolution in part-strata schemes were identified by the statutory review and will be progressed in a third phase of strata reforms, in consultation with the sector. I welcome the interest of the member for Ryde in strata laws. I welcome his support for the bill although I do think it is a bit rich to criticise the Government for not acting quickly enough when this is the third strata bill we have introduced in less than two years. I am pleased that the member for Ryde recognises the importance of modern strata laws because that is exactly why we are getting on with the job of updating our laws to ensure that strata living is attractive for our growing population. The Government will continue to improve the strata regulatory framework. This will translate into better outcomes for strata communities across New South Wales.

In response to the member for Ryde's query as to why the bill does not ban embedded networks, I point out that the bill implements the statutory review report's recommendations to protect consumers from being locked into long-term contracts for the supply of electricity through an embedded network and requires disclosure of embedded networks to prospective buyers. The report did not go as far as to recommend that embedded networks be prohibited. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] published its final report on the future of embedded networks in New South Wales in May last year. The Government is currently considering IPART's final report.

I do not agree with the member for Newtown's characterisation that the Government locked in strata insurance schemes in the Strata Managing Agents Amendment Bill that was passed by the Parliament last year. I acknowledge there is more work to be done to address the challenges in the strata industry, including the impact of commissions. Further work is already underway to determine the best way to address concerns about agents continuing to receive commissions while keeping costs as low as possible for strata residents. I also acknowledge

the member for Newtown's request for the Government to consider further reforms to cover renters who live in strata schemes. I reiterate that the Government continues its work to improve laws to enhance strata living.

I note the important reforms in the bill also apply to community land scheme laws. I again thank the key stakeholders who have worked so closely with the Government on this bill. I listed them in detail during the second reading speech. This bill would not be possible without their input. I also want to take this opportunity to thank NSW Fair Trading for their hard work to bring this bill to fruition. I especially want to thank Katerina Pavlidis, Jill Morris, Melissa Pinto, Leanne Hughes, Sabah Fahad, Timothy Lohman, Ragini Sood, Elizabeth Weisske, Leslie Barraclough, Amy Stiles, Alana Hoyek and Melanie Sun. Lastly, I thank my own staff for their dedication to this important work. Thank you to Alicia Sylvester, Brooke O'Rourke and departmental liaison officers [DLOs] Praveena Shyamala and Khamena Zaya. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Alex Greenwich.**

#### **Consideration in Detail**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** Before we commence consideration in detail, I remind members that proceedings will be interrupted at 1.00 p.m.

By leave, I shall propose the bill in one group of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 3 be agreed to.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:45):** By leave: I move my amendments Nos 1 and 9 on sheet c2025-004F in globo:

**No. 1 Duty of strata committee members to complete training**

Page 5, Schedule 1[8], proposed section 37. Insert after line 18—

- (4) The regulations may provide for the issuing of notices to inform a member of the strata committee of an owners corporation who has failed to complete the required training that—
  - (a) the member is required to complete the training, and
  - (b) if the member does not complete the training within the period prescribed by the regulations the member will cease to be a member of the committee.

**No. 9 Duty of association committee members to complete training**

Page 24, Schedule 2[7], proposed section 41. Insert after line 22—

- (4) The regulations may provide for the issuing of notices to inform a member of the association committee of an association who has failed to complete the required training that—
  - (a) the member is required to complete the training, and
  - (b) if the member does not complete the training within the period prescribed by the regulations the member will cease to be a member of the committee.

Apartments are run by committees who make important decisions that keep buildings operating and maintained. They make decisions on service providers, waste management, cleaning, repairs and upgrades. They get quotes for services and arrange tenders for building works. They deal in large sums of owners' funds and their decisions affect the buildings' bottom line. I welcome the move to introduce mandatory training for committee members. Buildings function better when committees understand the laws that govern strata, including their rights, obligations, powers, limitations of the owner corporations and strata committee. I understand that the regulations will support the establishment of training and can specify time frames within which a member of a committee needs to undertake the training. The regulations will also need to deal with training fees.

Committees are made up of volunteers who have many other obligations, including work, family, caring, community, and sport, for example. It is not an enjoyable job and it is often thankless. If they struggle to find time to do the training, it is important that they are not kicked off automatically. My amendments will create a regulation-making power for the issuing of notices to committee members who have not completed the training to ensure they are given reasonable warnings before they would cease to be on the committee.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (12:47):** The Government supports the member for Sydney's amendments Nos 1 and 9. As we know, strata committees comprise volunteers. Details of the training will be discussed with the Owners Corporation Network [OCN] and other stakeholders, and will be set out in the

regulation. The application of land scheme laws is covered by amendment No. 9. The Government supports amendments Nos 1 and 9.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** The question is that the amendments Nos 1 and 9 on sheet c2025-004F of the member for Sydney be agreed to.

**Amendments agreed to.**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:47):** By leave: I move my amendments Nos 2, 3, 10 and 11 on sheet c2025-004F in globo:

**No. 2 Agency agreements for strata managing agents**

Page 5, Schedule 1. Insert after line 37—

**[12A] Section 49 Appointment of strata managing agents**

Insert after section 49(3)—

- (3A) The Secretary may approve—
  - (a) the form of agency agreements for the appointment of strata managing agents, and
  - (b) the terms, conditions and other provisions that agency agreements for the appointment of strata managing agents must or must not contain.
- (3B) The Secretary may approve 1 or more standard form of agency agreements for the appointment of strata managing agents.

**No. 3 Building manager agreements**

Page 6, Schedule 1. Insert after line 19—

**[17A] Section 67 Appointment of building managers**

Insert after section 67(2)—

- (3) The Secretary may approve—
    - (a) the form of building manager agreements, and
    - (b) the terms, conditions and other provisions that building manager agreements must or must not contain.
  - (4) The Secretary may approve 1 or more standard form of building manager agreements.
- regulations the member will cease to be a member of the committee.

**No. 10 Agency agreements for managing agents**

Page 25, Schedule 2. Insert after line 3—

**[11A] Section 53 Appointment of managing agents**

Insert after section 53(2)—

- (2A) The Secretary may approve—
  - (a) the form of agency agreements for the appointment of managing agents, and
  - (b) the terms, conditions and other provisions that agency agreements for the appointment of managing agents must or must not contain.
- (2B) The Secretary may approve 1 or more standard form of agency agreements for the appointment of managing agents.

**No. 11 Facilities manager agreements**

Page 25, Schedule 2. Insert after line 27—

**[16A] Section 71 Appointment of facilities managers**

Insert after section 71(2)—

- (3) The Secretary may approve—
  - (a) the form of facilities manager agreements, and
  - (b) the terms, conditions and other provisions that facilities manager agreements must or must not contain.
- (4) The Secretary may approve 1 or more standard form of facilities manager agreements.

Most strata managers and building managers use industry-created contracts which favour managers, not owners. Contract negotiations can be difficult for owners to navigate. They may not understand the true impacts and effects

of provisions and may not get good outcomes negotiating. They would benefit from starting with contracts that are fair and in the best interests. My amendments empower the secretary to issue model contracts for strata managers and building managers. These will form the basis of negotiations and improve fairness.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (12:48):** The Government supports the member for Sydney's amendments Nos 2, 3, 10 and 11. As we know, our strata owners are not professional, so having a standard contract will be in the best interests to ensure the efficient running of the committees.

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (12:48):** I am very conscious of the time and, as with the earlier amendments, I indicate the support of the Opposition.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** The question is that amendments Nos 2, 3, 10 and 11 on sheet c2025-004F of the member for Sydney be agreed to.

#### **Amendments agreed to.**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:49):** By leave: I move my amendments Nos 4 and 12 on sheet c2025-004F in globo:

#### **No. 4 Payment plans**

Page 7, Schedule 1[24], lines 23. Omit all words on the line. Insert instead—

Omit section 85(5). Insert instead—

- (5) An owners corporation and an owner may agree to enter into a payment plan for the payment of overdue contributions.
- (5AA) A payment plan is limited to a period of 12 months but a further plan may be agreed to.
- (5AB) An owners corporation must not, by resolution, refuse to enter into payment plans for the payment of overdue contributions.
- (5AC) Despite subsection (5AB) an owners corporation may refuse to enter into payment plans for the payment of overdue contributions in particular cases.

#### **No. 12 Payment plans**

Page 26, Schedule 2[21], line 23. Omit all words on the line. Insert instead—

Omit section 90(5). Insert instead—

- (5) An association and a member of the association may agree to enter into a payment plan for the payment of overdue contributions.
- (5AA) A payment plan is limited to a period of 12 months but a further plan may be agreed to.
- (5AB) An association must not, by resolution, refuse to enter into payment plans for the payment of overdue contributions.
- (5AC) Despite subsection (5AB) an association may refuse to enter into payment plans for the payment of overdue contributions in particular cases.

As stated during my contribution to debate on the bill, unpaid levies are a leading cause of forced bankruptcies in New South Wales. Paying levies can be a struggle for any owner, let alone someone on a low income. Everyone is facing higher prices in every aspect of life, including strata levies, while incomes have not caught up. Some owners are especially vulnerable to hardship caused by levies, including pensioners, carers, women experiencing domestic violence, people with poor health and families with low incomes.

While owners' corporations need to be able to raise funds to maintain common property, secure insurance, pay for utilities and engage service providers to manage buildings safely that meet obligations, owners who are struggling should have access to support and options to pay their levies. Most will need extra time and a fair and reasonable plan to get back on track. Bankruptcy proceedings can often include orders for such plans so it would be better for a payment plan to be adopted up-front before someone is forced into bankruptcy. Strata debts under forced bankruptcy are largely made up of interests and fees, not even the initial levy. An early payment plan will avoid the accumulation of additional charges and reduce future hardship. However, owners' corporations can still refuse to even consider payment plans through a resolution at a general meeting, leaving owners vulnerable to high and escalating debt, bankruptcy and loss of a home.

Apartment living is touted as the solution to the housing crisis but if there are no protections against hardship from the cost of owning an apartment, apartment living could become the pathway to a new housing

affordability crisis. My amendments will introduce protection by creating positive obligation on all owners' corporations to consider payment plans. Under the amendments, owners' corporations would no longer be able to resolve to exclude payment plans at a general meeting, which will ensure payment plans are available to all vulnerable owners.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (12:51):** The Government supports amendments Nos 4 and 12. Increasing access to payment plans will support owners in financial hardship and thereby reduce the need to take debt recovery action. That will benefit owners as well as owners' corporations and create an obligation on owners' corporations to consider payment plans and not rule them out via a resolution at a general meeting. I note that strata laws amended by amendment No. 12 will also apply to community land schemes.

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (12:51):** The Opposition also supports the amendments. I acknowledge the advocacy and engagement of Sarah Wilson from the Financial Rights Legal Centre and Lody Stewart from Financial Counselling Australia with whom I met last week to discuss these issues. I thank them for their engagement.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** The question is that amendments Nos 4 and 12 on sheet c2025-004F of the member for Sydney be agreed to.

#### **Amendments agreed to.**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:52):** By leave: I move my amendments Nos 5 and 13 on sheet c2025-004F in globo:

#### **No. 5 Payment plans**

Page 7, Schedule 1[25], lines 25–29. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

Insert before section 85(6)—

- (5A) A request by an owner to enter into a payment plan (the *request*) must not be unreasonably refused by the owners corporation.
- (5B) The regulations may prescribe what constitutes an unreasonable refusal in relation to payment plans.

#### **No. 13 Payment plans**

Page 26, Schedule 2[22], lines 25–29. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

Insert before section 90(6). Insert instead—

- (5A) A request by a member of the association to enter into a payment plan (the *request*) must not be unreasonably refused by the association.
- (5B) The regulations may prescribe what constitutes an unreasonable refusal in relation to payment plans.

Payment plans are vital to helping vulnerable owners fulfil their obligations to pay levies, while avoiding hardship, bankruptcy and loss of their home. Strata managers and lawyers often pursue owners who are experiencing debt using aggressive tactics. Information from Financial Counselling Australia, the Financial Rights Legal Centre and the Marrickville Legal Centre reveals predatory approaches, including massive legal costs added to debts with no options provided to help owners meet their obligations. Financial rights organisations are rightly worried that some owners' corporations will get around new requirements to consider payment plans by merely offering a plan that an owner in debt will not be able to comply with, such as a large sum of money in a short period.

The bill before the House allows an owners' corporation to reasonably refuse to enter into a payment plan, with regulations in place that determine what constitutes a reasonable refusal. Allowing owners' corporations to reasonably refuse a payment plan puts the onus on the indebted owner to go to the tribunal to prove that a plan offered by the owners' corporation was not reasonable or a plan proposed by the owner was reasonable, which is an intimidating process for vulnerable owners, such as pensioners or women experiencing domestic violence. My amendments will require owners' corporations to not unreasonably refuse a payment plan. The scheme will have to prove that an owner's request was unreasonable, which provides protection for the vulnerable owner that the reasonable option will not be refused. I commend the amendments.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (12:53):** The Government does not support amendments Nos 5 and 13 because the bill delivers the intent of those amendments in another way. The bill provides that an owners' corporation can reasonably refuse a payment plan because reasonable refusals are meant to protect the financial

ability of the strata scheme and ensure fairness to individual lot owners. Reasonable refusal reasons will be set out in the regulation following consultation with stakeholders. They will be clearer and simpler than the alternative unreasonable refusal reasons that may include that the owner has not provided evidence of financial hardship, complied with previous payment plans or that a plan will cause undue financial burden on other owners if urgent or necessary repairs are required.

The bill also provides that the regulations may prescribe requirements for payment plans including that written refusal be given to the owner. Owners will be able to challenge an unreasonable refusal of a payment plan at the tribunal. The tribunal can order the owners' corporation to enter into a payment plan if the owners' corporation has not given a reasonable refusal before going to the tribunal. Overall, the bill's provisions balance the financial interest of strata schemes and the interests of individual owners in financial hardship to ensure the financial stability of the scheme. For those reasons, the Government does not support the amendments.

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (12:55):** For similar reasons, which, in the interests of time, I will not go into, the Opposition shares the Government's view and does not support amendments Nos 5 and 13.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** The question is that amendments Nos 5 and 13 on sheet c2025-004F of the member for Sydney be agreed to.

**Amendments negatived.**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:55):** By leave: I move my amendments Nos 6, 7, 14 and 15 on sheet c2025-004F in globo:

**No. 6 Payment plans**

Page 8, Schedule 1[27], line 8. Insert after "subsection."—

Insert instead—

- (7) The owners corporation must not charge interest on unpaid contributions that are the subject of a payment plan under consideration by the owners corporation.

**No. 7 Payment plans**

Page 8, Schedule 1. Insert after line 13—

**[28A] Section 86 Recovery of unpaid contributions and interest**

Insert before section 86(1)—

- (1A) An owners corporation must not take action to recover an amount under this section from an owner unless—
- (a) the owners corporation has offered the owner the option of entering into a reasonable payment plan for the payment of overdue contributions, and
  - (b) the owner declined, or failed to respond to, the offer to enter into a reasonable payment plan.

**No. 14 Payment plans**

Page 27, Schedule 2[24], line 8. Insert after "subsection."—

Insert instead—

- (8) The association must not charge interest on unpaid contributions that are the subject of a payment plan under consideration by the association.

**No. 15 Payment plans**

Page 27, Schedule 2. Insert after line 13—

**[25A] Section 91 Recovery of unpaid contributions and interest**

Insert before section 91(1)—

- (1A) An association must not take action to recover an amount under this section from a member of the association unless—
- (a) the association has offered the member the option of entering into a reasonable payment plan for the payment of overdue contributions, and
  - (b) the member declined, or failed to respond to, the offer to enter into a reasonable payment plan.

Financial Counselling Australia, the Financial Rights Legal Centre and the Marrickville Legal Centre have informed me that the high debts incurred by owners in strata schemes are largely made of interest and added fees, often higher than the original debt. They report that strata managers and strata lawyers delay decisions on payment plans or offering unreasonable payment plans, while fees are quickly loaded on. It is a deliberate tactic to increase

an owner's debt and pressure them to find money from somewhere else immediately. Without an explicit pause on fees while an owner and a scheme are negotiating a payment plan, strata managers and lawyers will continue the current practice of maximum accrual of fees and charges before they decide to refuse the plan. That is what is happening now and we cannot allow the practice to continue. The amendments will pause the accrual of costs while a payment plan is being negotiated. The amendments make it clear that the schemes cannot keep adding cost to debt, which adds to hardship, while they are considering a payment plan, and will encourage fairer negotiation.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (12:56):** The Government does not support amendments Nos 6 and 14 because the bill provides that an owners' corporation must not take action to recover an amount from an owner if the amount is dealt with under a payment plan and that payment plan is being complied with. The proposed provision could potentially be used by owners who are not in genuine financial hardship to delay debt recovery action. Also, it is not clear what is meant by "under consideration". However, the Government will consider further reforms to stop aggressive collection of arrears in consultation with stakeholders. For those reasons, the Government does not support amendment No. 14 related to community land scheme laws.

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (12:57):** Again, in the interests of time, I will not get into the substance of it, but the Opposition does not support the amendments.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** The question is that amendments Nos 6, 7, 14 and 15 on sheet c2025-004F of the member for Sydney be agreed to.

#### **Amendments negatived.**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:57):** By leave: I move my amendments Nos 8 and 16 on sheet c2025-004F in globo:

#### **No. 8 Payment plans**

Page 8, Schedule 1. Insert after line 13—

#### **[28B] Section 86 Recovery of unpaid contributions and interest**

Insert after section 86(2A)—

- (2AA) An owners corporation may only take action to recover the reasonable expenses of the owners corporation incurred in recovering unpaid contributions and any interest payable on unpaid contributions—
- (a) if the owners corporation has offered the owner the option of entering into a payment plan for the payment of the unpaid contributions, and
  - (b) pursuant to an order of the Tribunal or a court under this section.

#### **No. 16 Payment plans**

Page 27, Schedule 2. Insert after line 13—

#### **[25B] Section 91 Recovery of unpaid contributions and interest**

Insert after section 91(3)—

- (3A) An association may only take action to recover the reasonable expenses of the association incurred in recovering unpaid contributions and any interest payable on unpaid contributions—
- (a) if the association has offered the member of the association the option of entering into a payment plan for the payment of the unpaid contributions, and
  - (b) pursuant to an order of the Tribunal or a court under this section.

These amendments will exclude any debt recovery action for costs associated with unpaid levies without a court or tribunal order. Strata managers and lawyers are racking up significant costs through aggressive legal pursuits of owners in debt. The fees get added to the owner's debt, along with interest, and then the owner is pursued through debt recovery. Some owners' corporations have by-laws for debt recovery of associated costs, which the courts and tribunals have found to be harsh, oppressive and unconscionable. The amendments will protect against predatory practices by prohibiting any recovery of costs associated with a debt, such as legal costs, without a court or tribunal order. The court or tribunal will only be able to approve expenses for debt recovery that are reasonable. That will encourage strata managers and lawyers to pursue only reasonable costs and will rule out by-laws that allow debt recovery for costs without a court or tribunal order.

The Government will need to work to ensure that payment plans are offered to owners in debt that are fair and reasonable and that owners are given adequate time to assess their options and to negotiate. More will be needed to protect vulnerable owners from hardship when they face challenges in paying rent.

I thank Financial Counselling Australia, the Financial Rights Legal Centre and Marrickville Legal Centre for bringing this important concern to the attention of my office. I will work with them to further monitor the success of the amendments and propose further reform. I commend the amendments to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** With the concurrence of the House, we will conclude the consideration in detail stage.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (12:59):** The Government supports amendments Nos 8 and 16. We do want payment plans to be more accessible to owners in arrears to reduce instances of owners' corporations issuing debt recovery when it is not necessary. The Government supports the amendments.

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (12:59):** I wish to confirm the Opposition supports these amendments as well.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:59):** I thank the Government and the Opposition for their cooperation throughout the amendment process and strengthening the bill, particularly for strata owners facing financial hardship. I say a massive thank you my policy advisor Tammie Nardone for working around the clock to get these amendments done on the second day of Parliament. I also thank the Minister's staff, Alicia Sylvester and the team from Fair Trading for their great work.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** The question is that amendments Nos 8 and 16 on sheet c2025-004F of the member for Sydney be agreed to.

**Amendments agreed to.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 3 as amended be agreed to.

**Clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 3 as amended agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Committees*

## **JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE NSW RECONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY**

### **Reports**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** The question is that the House take note of the report.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (13:02):** As Chair: I commend the report of the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority entitled *Review of the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022*. The committee was established under section 93 of the Act to review the legislation and determine whether the Act's policy objectives remain valid, and its provisions are appropriate for achieving those objectives. Under section 93, the committee was required to report within two years after the Act received assent, and subsequently tabled its report on 28 November 2024.

The NSW Reconstruction Authority was established by the Act to lead the State's disaster preparedness and recovery following recommendations from the New South Wales Government's independent inquiry into the response to the catastrophic floods in 2022. Many stakeholders expressed support for the establishment of a permanent agency like the authority to manage the State's disaster preparedness and reconstruction. I am pleased to report that the committee found that the policy objectives of the Act remain valid, particularly given the increasing risk of disasters and natural hazards facing New South Wales.

The report also made 10 recommendations and five other findings. While stakeholders noted challenges in the authority's early operations, the committee acknowledges that the authority is still in its early stages, and many of its preparedness functions have not been fully tested by major disasters of a scale like that experienced in the summer bushfires of 2019-2020 or the 2022 floods. Therefore, the committee recommended the Act be amended



to require another review of the Act five years after its assent, which will be three years after the work the committee recently concluded, and that the Government consider introducing a legislative requirement to conduct test exercises of the State's recovery arrangements as necessary.

The report also spoke to the committee's broad and ongoing function under section 93 [3] [b] of the Act to review the authority's operations in relation to disasters where it exercises functions. The committee noted that the Act includes a broad definition of "disaster" and that the time frame in which the committee must conduct this second review is unclear. As a result, the report recommends amending section 93 to clarify the nature and scope of the committee's responsibilities and the time frame for this review, which the committee intends to embark on in 2027. Throughout the inquiry, participants raised concerns about the broad powers that are given to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, and the authority in parts 5 to 7 of the Act.

However, we heard that these powers have only been exercised twice since the authority's establishment and were modelled off almost identical powers in the Queensland Act, which has been in place for more than a decade. While many stakeholders supported the authority's establishment, some also expressed concerns about areas of the Act that are unclear. The list of concerns included the scope of the Act's functions, a lack of definitions, and the role and responsibilities of other agencies under the Act. Stakeholders also questioned whether the Act was too focused on reconstruction rather than disaster preparedness and recovery. My personal belief is that the Reconstruction Authority has not yet had much of an opportunity to test its work around preparedness and enter into that frame.

The committee heard concerns about the authority's powers to make planning decisions under the Act, particularly around how those powers fit within the existing planning framework. The committee has recommended that the authority consider issuing guidelines to clarify the scope of its planning powers under the Act and how it will consider existing planning controls, environmental standards and Aboriginal cultural heritage protections under the State's current planning framework. The committee also examined potential overlaps between the authority's broad functions and those of other emergency services and government agencies. It found that the authority's collaboration with other agencies has been ongoing and effective, and recommended that the authority continue to work closely with those agencies to avoid duplication, particularly in its disaster preparedness and mitigation work.

Local government stakeholders also sought greater clarity around their roles and responsibilities under the legislative framework. Given their central role in emergency and disaster management at the local level, the committee's report recommended that the authority, together with the Office of Local Government, consider issuing guidance on the roles and responsibilities of local government. Some stakeholders were worried that the authority's reconstruction role might overshadow its preparedness role. While the Act and its terms place equal priority on both roles, the committee noted that recent successive disasters have likely required the authority to focus on recovery efforts.

Finally, a number of inquiry participants highlighted various matters and principles not explicitly recognised in the Act. The committee has called on the Government to ensure that any future review considers whether the Act should include explicit references to principles such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and culturally appropriate emergency management. The committee also recommended that the Government consider whether the Act or its regulations should explicitly include matters relating to the betterment of infrastructure, data sharing, and consultation and engagement with community service providers.

In closing, I extend my thanks to my fellow committee members for their dedication and work throughout the inquiry, and to the secretariat for their professional support. Most of all, I would again like to thank the submission-makers and witnesses who engaged in this comprehensive review of such an important legislative framework. The committee greatly appreciates the time and effort they contributed to this inquiry. I commend the report to the House.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (13:08):** I commend the report of the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority entitled *Review of the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022*. I thank the committee members, led by the member for Cessnock. It was quite a big and new area to look at, with a new Act and a whole new model of operating. I also thank the staff of the NSW Reconstruction Authority, some of whom transferred from the Office of Emergency Management and Resilience NSW. With three organisation in the course of four or five years it can be quite disruptive working in the area of emergency management and the Reconstruction Authority.

The findings of the committee are all relevant to what has happened now.

From listening to the contribution of the chair, the member for Cessnock, it is clear that there has not been enough time to bed down the work of the Reconstruction Authority, and it has been beset and besieged by

disasters. Literally, it has been responding to disasters. There are four key areas in the objects of the Act, and a big one is preparedness. Work is underway on that, starting in particular with the disaster adaptation plans in a few places around the State. That speaks to preparedness, which is a big and new area of work. Other things are happening on the ground. Some Federal Government money has come to the Northern Rivers and other areas for work on preparedness as well.

The chair's foreword says that the Reconstruction Authority arose out of recommendations of the independent flood inquiry conducted by O'Kane and Fuller. To provide some historical correctness, they certainly recommended it because they could see that it was needed. We thank them for that because it gave what I call the independent view that an authority was needed in New South Wales. I recall a conversation I had with Premier Perrottet on 1 April 2022 when he agreed that such a body would be set up. A good thing is that it was done in a multipartisan way. Everybody in this place agreed. We all worked together to make sure that we got the best Act we could in a short time because we knew that it was needed.

There will be more disasters, and we need to prepare better. We need to build back better and do more work on betterment. "Betterment" has become a rather hackneyed word, but it is an important word. We just have to make sure that it happens. Someone once said, "We won't be able to build the road back better", and I jokingly said, "Are we are going to build it back with the same potholes?" Clearly, we are not going to. We have to build it back better, and that is happening. I am seeing that work. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (13:12):** It is a great pleasure to provide some of the insights I received from sitting on the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority. I particularly thank the chair for the way that he conducted the inquiry and ensured that the voices of all the stakeholders who came forward were heard. I also thank the secretariat, who played a vital role in ensuring that we were able to exercise the functions of the committee and get to some really interesting findings that, hopefully, will enable us to create a better Reconstruction Authority.

The *Review of the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022* notes that, given the authority was only established in late 2022 as a recommendation from the 2022 NSW Flood Inquiry, there has been limited opportunity for the Reconstruction Authority to demonstrate its capabilities, particularly when it comes to preparedness. While there have been a number of disasters since, there has not been a catastrophic disaster that has really tested the authority's functions. For my area of Riverstone, which sits on part of the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley floodplain, this is of interest, particularly when it comes to preparedness, adaption and mitigation. A number of stakeholders raised concerns that the objective of the Reconstruction Authority is for disaster prevention, preparedness and adaption, and for disaster recovery and reconstruction. However, the concern was whether there has been an equal focus on both of those areas. That is particularly relevant to people living in an area that is subject to regular flooding.

In Riverstone we had four floods in two years. Since the creation of the suburb years ago, it was known that the area needed to be adapted, so the role of prevention and preparedness is at least as vital as recovery and reconstruction. It was interesting to note that other stakeholders had concerns about that. Some stakeholders also noted that heatwaves and drought are not included under the definition of "disaster" and that perhaps that should be considered. That is especially so when it comes to drought and the flipside side of that, which is flood mitigation and adaption work. Further to that is the concept of building back better.

Building back better means that if a bridge built at a low level is washed away in a flooding event, then the height of the new bridge will be raised in anticipation of the next disaster that may take place. That provides increased resilience for the community in natural disasters. In the greater scheme of things, it also reduces future costs because the bridge will not be affected the next time around or the time after that. It also helps with evacuations in natural disasters, helps with injuries and fatalities, and, overall, improves the utility and connectivity of assets when natural disasters occur. Points were also made about the need for community-led and trauma-informed decision-making when it comes to the Reconstruction Authority. It is a great report, and I recommend all members take the time to read it.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (13:16):** I thank the chair, committee members and the Reconstruction Authority for the work put into this very important issue. It was an honour for me to be part of the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority because on the South Coast we have, unfortunately, reached the highest number of declared natural disasters since the Currowan fire in 2019. I think we are up to number 15, so we are getting very good at coordinating responses to disasters.

The Currowan fire in 2019-20 is the reason I am in this place today. There was devastation and a lack of service coordination. Clean-up coordination, counselling services, welfare services and housing services were all ad hoc. The confusion and angst in the community was immense. In fact, it has left a permanent scar on the residents of the South Coast. The Reconstruction Authority was established as part of the flood inquiry after the

Lismore floods, which occurred a couple of years after, so it is still in its relatively early stages. While we have had 14 more declared natural disasters on the South Coast and many elsewhere throughout the State, the Reconstruction Authority is getting better every time. However, we have not had anything on the scale of the Lismore floods or the Currowan fire to really put the Reconstruction Authority to the test.

Within three months of the Black Summer fires the Shoalhaven experienced flooding and landslides. Again, there was no one agency to take responsibility for the clean-up and reconstruction. That meant that Shoalhaven City Council was left to try to coordinate fire recovery, flood recovery and many landslips throughout the local government area. That was not just a massive job but also a financial burden on the council. I am really pleased that the inception of the Reconstruction Authority means that now when we have natural disasters within the community there is one agency to take responsibility and control of them.

All the services are in there straightaway: Housing NSW, Service NSW, welfare agencies and mental health professionals.

We have helped to relieve the financial burden on local councils by providing up-front payments. It is hard enough when they have one natural disaster, but the financial burden is insurmountable when they have 14 in a row. I am really pleased to see that we are putting in tripartite agreements to expedite that funding, which has been a major role of the Reconstruction Authority. By establishing a permanent agency dedicated to statewide disaster preparedness and recovery, the committee found that the policy objectives of the NSW Reconstruction Authority remain valid and that it is becoming a well-coordinated and responsive agency. I am looking forward to working with the Reconstruction Authority on preparedness, and for the betterment of rebuilding into the future.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (13:20):** I contribute to debate on the report entitled *Review of the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022*. I am one of the Ministers who shares responsibility for the Reconstruction Authority [RA] with my excellent colleague Minister Scully, the member for Wollongong: He is the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, and I am the Minister for Emergency Services. The committee was established under the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022. The member for South Coast, the member for Camden and the member for Penrith, who are in the Chamber but were not members at the time, may not know that it was one of the last pieces of legislation passed in 2022. Its purpose was to replace Resilience NSW with the Reconstruction Authority.

When this Government came into power in March 2023, the Reconstruction Authority was in its early stages, and we have been building it as we have been going along. The report tabled by the committee on 28 November last year made 10 operational recommendations to continue to strengthen the RA's current practice. We do an incredible amount of work with the Reconstruction Authority. The member for Cootamundra and I had some conversations a couple of days ago when a massive storm hit Harden at 6.00 a.m. She might have sent me a message at 7.00 a.m. Obviously the SES was amazing and supported the community, but there was a lot of damage.

I give members an example of what the Reconstruction Authority is doing. Once we have gone through the processes of the emergency response, we have to move on to recovery. Part of that is the ability of local government to put together reports and apply for support funding in the form of a natural disaster declaration, which is a combination of funding provided by the State and the Federal governments. Those are pretty complicated to get through, and the Reconstruction Authority has been working closely with councils across a range of local government areas to make sure that people are supported during natural disasters and freak weather conditions. I am really pleased to see that. In fact, the community of my friend the member for Cessnock made a natural disaster declaration because of a storm a couple of weeks ago.

But there is much more to the Reconstruction Authority than being able to fill in paperwork. It includes work in all parts of the Northern Rivers, including in Lismore, particularly around the Resilient Homes and Resilient Lands programs, which make sure that those communities not only survive but absolutely thrive. That is an important philosophy. I acknowledge our CEO, Mal Lanyon, and his great team for the work they do. Amongst everything else, Minister Scully and I are really proud of the State Disaster Mitigation Plan—the SDMP—which will make a big difference. I know members are on the edge of their seats to hear what the SDMP is all about. I can see their excitement. I can see the anticipation of the member for Murray, and even Hansard cannot write it down quickly enough. The State Disaster Mitigation Plan is the first time that any government across Australia has developed a plan to look at what we can do to mitigate the impact of natural disasters. [*Time expired.*]

**Report noted.**

## COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### Reports

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** The question is that the House take note of the report.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (13:25):** As Chair: We tabled our report reviewing the work of the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People and the Office of the Children's Guardian for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 reporting periods on 28 November 2024. This committee oversees the Office of the Children's Guardian and the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People. Both of these bodies are incredibly important and perform distinct roles. A central finding in this review is that the current oversight mechanisms for the Office of the Children's Guardian may be inadequate.

This office has considerable authority and influence. It oversees critical functions, such as the Working with Children Check, the Reportable Conduct Scheme, statutory out-of-home care and the recently established Child Safe Scheme. The guardian also possesses significant investigative powers and plays an incredibly important role in child protection in this State. Given the breadth and depth of this mandate, it is essential that this committee has appropriate authority for scrutiny. During this inquiry it became clear that the committee's oversight of the Children's Guardian is tied to specific functions, unlike its broader and more comprehensive oversight of the advocate.

We observed that other parliamentary oversight committees do not have similar inconsistencies. It is the view of this committee that this differential treatment lacks clear rationale. Therefore, the committee has recommended the Government must, as a matter of urgency, introduce legislation to ensure that this committee's power to scrutinise the work of the Office of the Children's Guardian is equivalent to the level of oversight we maintain for the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People. We also recognise the need for a multifaceted approach, and the report also recommended additional mechanisms to ensure comprehensive oversight of the Children's Guardian.

This includes vesting the committee with the power to veto proposed appointments of future Children's Guardians. Again, this brings the committee in line with other similar oversight committees. We have further recommended that the Government consider establishing an inspector of the children's guardian or to, alternatively, consider subjecting the guardian to a level of ministerial control or direction. The committee acknowledges that any ministerial control should have appropriate exceptions to protect the guardian's independence in certain critical functions. We recognise that any changes to the oversight of the guardian will need an appropriate level of consultation with the Office of the Children's Guardian and any other affected stakeholders, including an assessment of the risks and benefits.

In addition to matters of oversight, we have also made recommendations that are aimed at clarifying the statutory definitions and framework that underpin the work of the guardian. A number of recommendations focus on improving information sharing and communication between States and Territories, particularly in the context of the Reportable Conduct Scheme, the Working with Children Check and the Child Safe Scheme. Turning to the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People, the committee's report identifies opportunities for improvements across several key areas. We recommended that the advocate improve transparency around its funding sources and expenditure in future annual reports. This will allow greater public understanding of how resources are allocated to support children and young people.

Additionally, we have called for the advocate to include more detailed data on diversity in its reporting, including data on cultural diversity, representation from regional, rural and remote areas and other marginalised groups. This will help highlight issues affecting diverse children and young people across New South Wales and ensure that their unique needs are being addressed. To further enhance reporting, the advocate should also look to include data that tracks the status of recommendations made to other agencies from its new tracking mechanism. In closing, I thank my fellow committee members, some of whom are currently in the Chamber, for their dedication to the committee's work and their commitment to robust parliamentary oversight. I also thank the committee secretariat for its invaluable support and expertise.

Finally, and most importantly, I acknowledge the staff from the Office of the Children's Guardian and the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People. I thank them for their important work protecting and empowering the children and young people of New South Wales, particularly those who are vulnerable and most in need of our support. I commend the report to the House.

### Report noted.

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

*Bills***INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AMENDMENT BILL 2025****First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Sophie Cotsis, read a first time and printed.**

**Second Reading Speech**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (14:31):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The overriding purpose of the Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2025 is to make amendments to the Industrial Relations Act 1996 and other related legislation to support the efficient and effective operation of the recently re-established Industrial Court. The bill also seeks to make a number of consequential amendments to various pieces of legislation that are necessary following the passage of the Industrial Relations Amendment Act 2023. That Act, amongst a range of other much-needed industrial relations reforms in this State, re-established the Industrial Court as part of the Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales.

The Industrial Relations Amendment Act 2023 ensured that the Industrial Relations Commission was transformed into a modern body that operates both as a tribunal for arbitral purposes and as a separate Industrial Court for judicial purposes. Significantly, the Industrial Court was re-established as a superior court of record with equivalent status to the Supreme Court and the Land and Environment Court, and it commenced operation on 1 July 2024. The judicial functions that were transferred to the Supreme Court by the former Coalition Government in 2016 have now been reinstated to the Industrial Court.

These include small claims, contravention of dispute orders, proceedings for declaration of right and the cancellation of registered organisations. In addition, the reconstituted Industrial Court now has jurisdiction over the prosecution of offences under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. In its first six months of operation, the Industrial Court received 176 lodgements, of which 145 related to criminal proceedings while the remainder related to civil proceedings. All of the criminal matters were related to alleged breaches of the Work Health and Safety Act, while the civil matters dealt with a range of issues including applications for new awards, disciplinary appeals, unfair dismissals and industrial disputes.

I now turn to the content of the bill. Schedule 1.1 to the bill deals with proposed consequential amendments to the Crimes (Appeal and Review) Act 2001 relating to the re-establishment of the Industrial Court. Currently, section 52 (1) of the Crimes (Appeal and Review) Act conveys a right of appeal to the Supreme Court upon a person convicted of or sentenced for an offence by the Local Court where the appeal is on a question of law alone. Section 53 (1) of that Act provides for an appeal to the Supreme Court, with leave, to a person so convicted or sentenced where the question is one of fact or mixed law and fact. In each instance, environmental offences are excluded from the operation of the provision, as a broad right of appeal to the Land and Environment Court exists.

The bill will make an amendment to ensure that offences under both the Industrial Relations Act and the Work Health and Safety Act are also excluded from the operation of both sections 52 (1) and 53 (1) of the Crimes (Appeal and Review) Act. This will simplify the appeal pathways by granting the Industrial Court appellate jurisdiction over matters that have been heard before the Local Court through section 197 of the Industrial Relations Act. However, a narrower provision for direct appeal to the Supreme Court under section 53 (2) of the Crimes (Appeal and Review) Act would be added to ensure consistency with appeal pathways from the Land and Environment Court and to preserve the Supreme Court's oversight.

The bill will also provide for the Attorney General or the Director of Public Prosecutions to make an appeal to the Court of Criminal Appeal against the acquittal of a person by the Industrial Court of an offence under the Industrial Relations Act or the Work Health and Safety Act, or other proceedings in which the Crown was a party. Currently, under section 107 of the Crimes (Appeal and Review) Act, following the acquittal of an accused person in the Supreme Court of New South Wales or the Land and Environment Court sitting in its summary jurisdiction, the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Attorney General has the right to appeal to the Court of Criminal Appeal on a question of law alone. This provides a means by which an error of law that brought about an acquittal of a serious crime can be reviewed.

The proposed amendments are appropriate as the Industrial Court is similarly a superior court with a summary jurisdiction and deals with serious offences under both the Industrial Relations Act and the Work Health and Safety Act. Schedule 1.2 deals with amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. Effective case management powers are important to ensure that work health and safety matters are dealt with efficiently. The bill seeks to amend the Criminal Procedure Act, chapter 4, part 5, division 2A to grant the Industrial Court powers

consistent with the case management approach taken previously to these types of prosecutions in the District Court. These amendments would greatly assist in the efficient management of work health and safety prosecutions under sections 229B (1) (b) or (3A) of the Work Health and Safety Act.

Schedule 1.3 to the bill proposes to amend the Health Services Act 1997. Prior to the former Coalition Government's decision to abolish the Industrial Court in 2016, a judicial member of the Industrial Relations Commission had a role under the Health Services Act to determine the remuneration and other conditions for visiting medical officers, better known as VMOs. In its report, which was presented to me last year, the Industrial Relations Taskforce recommended that, if required, VMO determinations should once again be arbitrated by a member of the Industrial Court.

While the Minister for Health drafted an amendment to the Health Services Regulation late last year to achieve that outcome—which I note was also advocated for by the member for Wagga Wagga—this is only an interim solution. It is more appropriate for the provisions to be placed in the Health Services Act itself, rather than the subordinate legislation. Additionally, as section 92 of the Health Services Act is currently drafted, the arbitrator is required to give effect to the former Government's wages policy. It has an explicit reference to section 146C of the Industrial Relations Act, which was repealed in late 2023.

The bill proposes to replace the current provisions by broadly restoring section 92 to how it was drafted prior to the introduction of the former Government's wages policy, along with the addition of criteria from section 146 (2) of the Industrial Relations Act, which includes the arbitrator having regard to the fiscal position and outlook of the Government and the likely effect of the making of a determination, as well as the objects of the Act, apart from those that deal specifically with employment relationships. Those are sections 3 (c), (d) and (e). The bill will also provide for savings and transitional provisions that will ensure that if an arbitrator has been appointed prior to the commencement of the bill and the proceedings are still underway once the bill has passed through Parliament, then the arbitrator would have to consider the provisions set out in section 92 (2) of the amending bill.

To be abundantly clear, schedule 1.4 to the bill will omit the recently amended clause 34 of the health regulation. Those provisions will be no longer necessary as they will be dealt with at section 90 of the new Health Services Act. Schedule 1.5 to the bill deals with proposed amendments to the Industrial Relations Act 1996. Firstly, the bill makes a simple amendment to section 183, which clarifies that the regulations under the Act may provide for the refund or waiver of fees and charges imposed by the Industrial Relations Commission. The bill also clarifies that the procedure for appeals from the Local Court to the Industrial Court will mirror appeals to the District Court, instead of the Supreme Court, in terms of parts 3 and 6 of the Crimes (Appeal and Review) Act 2001.

The requirements that apply to appeals from the Local Court to the District Court under the Crimes (Appeal and Review) Act differ to those that apply from the Local Court to the Supreme Court. The former are broader, being mostly by way of right, whereas appeals to the Supreme Court require leave unless solely on a question of law. The changes will provide clarity to a matter that is currently unclear under the Industrial Relations Act and deliver certainty to litigants and the Industrial Court around the rules that apply to appeals. The bill will also allow appeals from the Local Court to be heard by a single judge of the Industrial Court rather than a full bench of the Industrial Court. Having a single judge hear these appeals will be more efficient and reflect the practice in other equivalent jurisdictions.

Schedule 1.6 is in response to a query from the Legislative Council's regulation committee. The bill makes a minor law revision regarding the application of when fees paid to the Industrial Relations Commission may be due from certain industrial organisations or associations which are registered under chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act. Schedule 1.7 to the bill proposes to amend the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989 and is a consequential amendment on the repeal of section 146C of the Industrial Relations Act in late 2023. Section 4 of the Parliamentary Remuneration Act deals with the types of determinations the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal may make and what it needs to consider when making them.

Currently the Act states that the tribunal should give effect to the former Government's wages policy and has an explicit reference to section 146C of the Industrial Relations Act. The bill provides an amendment to remove the section 146C reference and replace it with terms that state that the tribunal must have regard to the fiscal position and outlook of the Government when making certain remuneration decisions, and the likely effect of making the determination on the position and outlook. This is in line with amendments made to section 146 (2) (c) of the Industrial Relations Act in late 2023, the Statutory and Other Offices Remuneration Regulation 2024 and the proposals in this bill relating to the Health Services Act.

Schedule 1.8 deals with amendments to the Police Act 1990 and makes consequential amendments on the re-establishment of the Industrial Court. Section 179 of the Police Act deals with the application of the Industrial

Relations Act. The bill makes a minor amendment to that section and simply updates references to the "President of the Commission" rather than the "Chief Commissioner". Schedule 1.9 deals with amendments to the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. Currently section 112 of the Work Health and Safety Act enables an eligible person to apply to the District Court for an order seeking relief in respect of a person engaging in or inducing discriminatory or coercive conduct. These are civil proceedings. The relief available is wideranging and includes reinstatement of a worker to his or her position.

The bill before the House provides a simple amendment to transfer this jurisdiction to the Industrial Court. This is appropriate given that the Industrial Court has assumed jurisdiction for summary prosecutions under the Work Health and Safety Act and that the nature of relief available under section 112 is similar to the Industrial Relations Commission's unfair dismissal jurisdiction. Importantly, the bill also provides for various savings and transitional provisions relating to the Crimes (Appeal and Review) Act, the Criminal Procedure Act, the Industrial Relations Act, and the Work Health and Safety Act, along with the previously outlined provisions relating to VMO proceedings.

In closing, the bill before the House will help to support the efficient and effective operation of the recently re-established Industrial Court, and includes changes relating to appeal processes and case management provisions. It will also deal with a number of necessary consequential amendments as a result of the passage of major industrial relations reforms in late 2023. I acknowledge the President, Vice-President and Deputy President of the Industrial Relations Commission and thank them for their work over the past six months, as well as the users of the new court. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

#### **SOUND NSW ADVISORY BOARD BILL 2025**

##### **First Reading**

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

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later hour.

#### **CREATIVE STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT BILL 2025**

##### **First Reading**

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

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later hour.

#### **CRIMES (ADMINISTRATION OF SENTENCES) AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

##### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 19 November 2024.**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (14:48):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2024, and state at the outset that the Opposition supports the bill. As it has reiterated many times in this place, the Opposition is very supportive of stronger measures designed to support and improve Corrective Services NSW to allow our fantastic Corrective Services officers to do their jobs to the best of their abilities. The bill amends the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 in response to recommendations of the Special Commission of Inquiry into offending by former Corrections Officer Wayne Astill at Dillwynia Correctional Centre.

As I have said in this Chamber before, the information that was brought out during the inquiry into Wayne Astill was incredibly confronting for all of those unlucky enough to have to read it. It is not what we want to see inside of our corrections facilities in New South Wales. I am pleased that the Government is acting on that inquiry, the report and the Ombudsman's recommendations on this area of behaviour.

The bill proposes a number of amendments. Those amendments, which address a number of the concerns raised in various reviews and reports into Corrective Services, will strengthen the integrity, oversight and transparency within Corrective Services NSW. I will speak in detail about the amendments shortly, but one of the most important ones is the change to section 236Q of the Act. As part of the Special Commission of Inquiry into offending by former Corrections Officer Wayne Astill at Dillwynia Correctional Centre, recommendation 4 established that:

Section 236Q of the CAS Act should be amended so that to prove the offence against a correctional employee who has engaged in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with an *inmate*, there is no need to further prove that risk of the kind referred to in s. 236Q(1)(a) or s. 236Q(1)(b) exists. The offence should remain in its current form in respect of a correctional employee who has engaged in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with a person who is subject to a community-based order.

I welcome the Government's acceptance of that recommendation, which has been adopted through subsequent proposed amendments to section 236Q of the CAS Act. The offences are subsequently split into three sections: a correctional employee is guilty of an offence if engaging in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with an inmate; a correctional employee who is in a pre-existing relationship, as a couple, with an inmate is guilty of an offence if engaging in sexual conduct or continuing to engage in an intimate relationship that causes risk to the security and order of a correctional centre or compromises administration of a sentence; and a correctional employee is guilty of an offence if engaging in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with a person subject to a community-based order.

A consequential amendment to the current definition of "sexual conduct" clarifies that it includes sexual intercourse or other physical conduct of a sexual nature, distinguishing it from an "intimate relationship". Additionally, an amendment to the definition of "intimate relationship" removes any reference to "sexual conduct" and further reinforces the distinction between the two terms. If a correctional employee and an inmate have a pre-existing intimate relationship, continuing the relationship will not constitute an offence, provided it does not involve sexual conduct; does not pose a risk to the safety, security, good order or discipline of a correctional facility; and does not compromise the proper administration of a sentence. Further, the bill amends the provision which provides a correctional employee is not guilty of an offence if they were not aware, while engaged in either sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with an inmate, that the inmate was subject to a community-based order.

The bill takes another step to increase transparency in Corrective Services in the proposed amendments to section 3 of the CAS Act. Previously, services or activities approved by the Minister for Corrections as community service work were not publicised. Under the bill, the proposed amendments to section 3 change the interpretation and definition of "community service work" to read:

**community service work** means a service or activity, which may include participation in personal development, educational or other programs, that is—

- (a) approved by the Minister by order and published in the Gazette, and
- (b) published on a website administered by Corrective Services NSW.

That change will ensure further clarification and transparency around the kind of work and activities undertaken under the banner of "community service work".

Additional amendments are made to the provisions relating to warrants of commitments issued under the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. The bill amends the Act to provide that, if the warrant of commitment does not specify the correctional centre an offender should be committed to, the Commissioner of Corrective Services can direct that the inmate be committed and conveyed to any correctional centre. That reflects best practice and clarifies that a warrant of commitment is valid, regardless of whether it identifies the correctional centre. I welcome this amendment operating retrospectively. As the Minister expressed in his second reading speech, the validity of current custody arrangements for all inmates committed by a warrant that did not specify a correctional centre remains.

Finally, the bill proposes several amendments that will establish increased operational clarity for Corrective Services NSW. It is important to note that the amendments do not grant new powers or functions to Corrective Services NSW; they only seek to provide that provisions in the regulation are consistent with the regulation-making powers in the Act. The reforms introduced through these various amendments will ensure continued efficiency, improve governance and strengthen transparency in Corrective Services NSW. The bill will work to restore public confidence in Corrective Services following the Astill inquiry by adopting the recommendations put forward by the special commissioner.

I acknowledge the work being done by the Minister, his staff and my staff in this regard. It is important that all reforms made public and recommended through the Astill inquiry be adopted because it will, as I said before, ensure that Corrective Services staff, the majority of whom do an incredibly good job looking after inmates in our correctional centres across New South Wales, should not be tarnished by the bad behaviour of a few. The rotten apples need to be tossed out of the barrel or, obviously, as in Wayne Astill's case, charged appropriately, because they are not in keeping with the majority of Corrective Services NSW staff. We need to ensure that legislation is continually updated to provide the best services at our correctional centres, which can be difficult, dangerous and trying places at which to work.

I extend my gratitude to the Minister and his dedicated team—Alicia Sylvester and Constance Piperides are in the Chamber today—for the great work they have done in answering my questions. It was a pleasure to



work with them. I also thank Jack Robinson in my office for his tireless work. Being in opposition can be tough, as Mr Assistant Speaker would know. Actually, Mr Assistant Speaker would not know but, hopefully, he will one day.

**Mr Steve Whan:** We'll give you plenty of time to get used to it.

**Mr Greg Warren:** You'll settle into it.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** I note the interjections from the members opposite. I like both of them a lot, but they should not get too comfortable. They will not get to look at Wentworth's picture for too much longer. But this is an important and serious issue. The Astill inquiry has uncovered a multitude of areas where Corrective Services can be improved to provide the majority of its workers with a safe working environment and ensure that prisoners will not be exposed to the sort of risk that people like Wayne Astill posed to them. The Opposition supports the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (14:58):** I am delighted to contribute to debate on the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2024. The bill continues the Government's program of work to increase the integrity, transparency and clarity of Corrective Services NSW operations. It amends the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 [CAS Act] to respond to the only recommendation that the Special Commission of Inquiry into offending by former Corrections Officer Wayne Astill at Dillwynia Correctional Centre made for legislative amendment to the CAS Act, recommendation 4, by strengthening the offence at section 236Q.

That offence prohibits correctional employees from engaging in sexual conduct or intimate relationships in particular circumstances. It also provides greater certainty as to the regulations that can be made under the CAS Act to ensure that existing regulations are supported by express regulation-making powers, rather than relying on broader provisions, and to increase transparency and understanding in the community about what type of work can be community work for the purpose of serving a sentence. It also improves the clarity and operation of the Act by making minor amendments.

I now turn to the misconduct offence, which is outlined in section 236Q of the CAS Act and was introduced in November 2018 in response to community concern about sexual and other inappropriate relationships between employees of Corrective Services NSW and inmates at several New South Wales correctional complexes. I make the point, further to that made by the member for Terrigal, that the overwhelming majority of our correctional officers are wonderful, hardworking people who have a very difficult job. I hope that when they see this legislation—and, of course, they have all tuned in to watch—

**Mr Adam Crouch:** Just to watch you, Greg.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** No, *Sesame Street* is on. I put on record that the bill is not a reflection of a broad negative view about the wonderful correctional officers throughout the service, who have a very hard job. It is merely a legislative response to an inquiry that made recommendations. It is not based on an overarching cultural problem throughout the system. I can honestly say that, and I commend the Minister and his team for all their thorough work, including stakeholder relationships, in bringing this legislation to the floor of the House today.

As noted by the Astill inquiry, currently section 236Q requires proof of two things: first, that a correctional employee engaged in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with an inmate or a person subject to a community-based order; and, second, that the conduct or relationship posed a risk to the safety, security or good order and discipline of a correctional centre, or compromised the proper administration of a sentence. The Astill inquiry noted that the policy rationale for the second requirement was unclear. Recommendation 4 provides that section 236Q should be amended so that in cases where a correctional employee engages in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with an inmate in custody, there is no need to further prove that that created a risk or potential risk. The recommendation also stated that the offence should remain in its current form in respect of a correctional employee who has engaged in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with a person who is subject to a community-based order.

In response to the recommendation, the bill amends section 236Q to split the existing single offence into three separate offences, each punishable by the same maximum penalty of 20 penalty units, two years imprisonment or both. The first offence prohibits a correctional employee from engaging in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with an inmate. As recommended by the Astill inquiry, there is no need to prove that the conduct caused a risk or potential risk. The second offence applies where a correctional employee has a pre-existing relationship as a couple with an inmate, recognising that, in rare cases, there may be a marital, de facto or other long-term relationship between a correctional employee and inmate that existed before the inmate entered custody. As with the first offence, where a correctional employee engages in sexual conduct with an inmate with

whom they have a pre-existing relationship as a couple, that will constitute an offence regardless of any particular risks.

However, where a correctional employee continues an "intimate relationship" with the inmate, that will constitute an offence if the relationship also causes risks to safety, security or good order and discipline at a correctional centre, or compromises the proper administration of the sentence. The correctional employee may continue to engage in an intimate relationship with the inmate, such as exchanging written communications of an intimate nature. The requirement to satisfy the additional threshold test recognises that whether such conduct poses a risk will depend on the particular circumstances of the case. Whilst the intimate relationship may be maintained, under no circumstances is sexual conduct permitted under the legislation. The bill consequentially amends the definition of "intimate relationship" to omit any reference to sexual conduct and amends the definition of "sexual conduct" to refer to sexual intercourse or other physical conduct of a sexual nature. That draws a clear distinction between the two types of behaviour.

The third offence applies where a correctional employee engages in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with a person subject to a community-based order. Consistent with recommendation 4 of the Astill inquiry, such conduct will constitute an offence where it also compromises the proper administration of a community-based order. That is the case regardless of whether there is a pre-existing relationship as a couple between the correctional employee and the person subject to the order. An exception to the third offence will apply where the correctional employee did not know that the person was subject to a community-based order. That is an existing exception, although it will no longer apply in respect of inmates in custody, as a correctional employee would inevitably know about an inmate's status.

Regulation-making powers provide flexibility in the administration, operation and implementation of legislation by allowing certain matters to be made into law through a streamlined process. However, as the making of a regulation is not subject to the same level of parliamentary scrutiny as amendments to other legislation, it is important for regulation-making powers to be as precise as possible in order to provide clarity as to the matters that are permitted to be prescribed by regulation. The bill makes numerous amendments to the regulation-making powers under the CAS Act in order to provide greater certainty as to the matters that can be prescribed by the regulations, and to ensure that, where appropriate, existing regulations are supported by specific regulation-making powers rather than relying on broader regulation-making provisions. The amendments are machinery-type technical amendments. While the amendments to the regulation-making powers are too numerous to outline in detail— [*Extension of time*]

I thank the House. One key amendment will ensure that the regulations can provide for matters that are the subject of regulation-making powers under section 79 of the CAS Act to be determined, directed, approved or otherwise dealt with by a person or body who is specified in the regulations. Section 79 allows the regulations to make provision for a wide range of matters, including the management, control, administration, supervision and inspection of correctional centres; visits to inmates; and the circumstances in which a correctional officer may use firearms. Many existing provisions in the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014—the CAS regulation—that are made under section 79 of the CAS Act are dependent on an action by a prescribed person or body for their operation or interpretation. For example, rather than stating the hours that persons may be permitted to visit a correctional centre, clause 75 of the CAS regulation currently states that the periods during which a person may visit a correctional centre are the periods determined by the commissioner.

Other amendments are intended to ensure that existing regulations are supported by specific regulation-making powers rather than relying on broader provisions. For example, section 79 (1) (t) of the CAS Act allows the regulations to provide for the circumstances in which a correctional officer may use firearms, and in reliance on this provision, the CAS Regulation provides for matters such as the authority of correctional officers to carry firearms, the issuing of firearms, training courses and safety procedures. The bill replaces section 79 (1) (t) with a provision that expressly allows the regulations to provide for each of these matters and includes many similar amendments that provide greater specificity and guidance as to the matters that may be prescribed by regulation.

In conclusion, I again thank everyone involved in the inquiry. This legislative change clearly is a response to that inquiry. Yet again, we have seen the Government and the Minister—and I again thank the Minister's wonderful team who work very hard—providing members with information to ensure that we make a good assessment by relying on their hard work. I acknowledge and thank members opposite for their support of the bill. The bill provides our corrections officers and our correctional department, workers and staff with more protections whilst also providing the judiciary with more clarity. Clearly, this legislation has come before the House because the reforms needed to be enshrined in law so that the judiciary can perform its role as effectively as possible. I again acknowledge the workers throughout Corrective Services NSW. This legislation is not a reflection on

them. The bill is a legislative requirement and does not relate to the wonderful and hard work that corrections officers do every day. We know that their work is so important, yet at times very challenging.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (15:11):** I support the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2024. An expectant mother needed credit to call her husband whilst in a correctional centre. She sought help from the chief correctional officer in the high needs area of the prison. That officer allowed her to make two calls. On the second call, he demanded compensation. When she declined, he forced her to pay in the only way she could. He knew that she was pregnant. This is not a recounting of a Netflix episode of *Orange Is the New Black*. This is a retelling of a profoundly tragic witness account. It is the story of what happened to an Aboriginal woman on remand in the Dillwynia Correctional Centre. When this woman was sentenced, she received non-custodial orders.

I thank the Minister for Corrections and the staff of his department and office for their preparation of this bill. I acknowledge the contributions from the Public Service Association, Legal Aid NSW, Domestic Violence NSW, the Law Society of New South Wales and the New South Wales Bar Association which ensured this bill is effective and fit for purpose. I also thank the victim-survivors who bravely shared their experiences. Their courage has been integral in achieving these important reforms. The bill will amend parts of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999—or the CAS Act, as I will continue to refer to it from now on. The CAS Act is the overarching legislation for procedures within correctional centres in New South Wales. It provides the legal framework to govern operations within Corrective Services NSW and provides for the fair administration of sentences for New South Wales prisoners.

This bill amends the CAS Act to address recommendations for legislative reform handed down in the 2024 *Special Commission of Inquiry into offending by former Corrections Officer Wayne Astill at Dillwynia Correctional Centre*, or, as it is referred to, the Astill report, as I will refer to it from now on. The Government established the Astill inquiry in July 2023 to investigate the offending of former corrections officer Wayne Astill and the institutional response to his offending. Led by the Hon. Justice Peter McClellan, AM, KC, the inquiry found multiple failings in management and culture at the Dillwynia Women's Correctional Centre. Wayne Astill was a corrections officer at the Dillwynia correctional centre, which is a women's prison in Western Sydney. Astill was found guilty of 34 charges against at least 14 inmates, including aggravated sexual assault without consent, aggravated indecent assault, aggravated acts of indecency and misconduct in public office. Wayne Astill was sentenced to 23 years imprisonment for his crimes.

The sexual and indecent assaults of female inmates by Wayne Astill were deplorable criminal acts. Many of the inmates were already victim-survivors prior to their incarceration at the correctional centre. The Astill report notes that these inmates who became victims "had significant histories of abuse and trauma, further exacerbated by the crimes Astill committed". There is no doubt that a sexual relationship between a Corrective Services employee and an inmate carries an inherent power imbalance. Wayne Astill misused his position as a corrections officer to groom, and then assault, female inmates in the prison in which he worked. He used grooming techniques such as providing contraband and assisting inmates to access essential services in jail, before eventually assaulting them. The Astill report notes that Wayne Astill's behaviour was so insidious that the female inmates did not even realise they were being groomed. They received the "favours", only to later be forced into sexual acts.

In the Astill report, Her Honour Judge O'Rourke, SC, noted that Astill exploited his public office for his own sexual gratification. Incarcerated people are dependent on custodial staff in every respect for their quality of life, from maintaining relationships with their family to obtaining basic items, including clothes, medicine, toiletries and stationery. Astill was able to exploit his victims by influencing their access to those simple amenities. The CAS bill makes clear that this behaviour is unacceptable and criminal, and leaves no room for doubt that intimate relationships between Corrective Services NSW staff and inmates are prohibited. The Government accepted all 31 recommendations of the Astill report, and is committed to undertaking reforms to lift standards, deliver safer workplaces for staff and to better protect inmates.

The Astill report found that it would be incorrect to assume that deficiencies identified at the Dillwynia Correctional Centre were not present at other correctional facilities across New South Wales. As a result, this bill seeks to correct institutional deficiencies in the New South Wales corrections system to restore public trust and public confidence. I now address the key amendments within the bill. The CAS bill amends the CAS Act primarily by amending section 236Q to introduce new misconduct offences for relationships between staff and inmates. New section 236Q makes it a criminal offence for a Corrective Services employee to engage in a relationship with an inmate. An "inmate" is defined in the CAS Act as a person sentenced to a term of full-time imprisonment, and includes a person subject to compulsory drug treatment orders under part 4A, or a community-based order.

As the legislation currently stands, under section 236Q it is an offence for a correctional employee to engage in sexual conduct or in an intimate relationship with an inmate if that conduct causes "a risk or potential risk to the safety or security" or "to good order and discipline" of a correctional centre, or "compromises the proper

administration of a sentence or a community-based order". Recommendation 4 of the Astill inquiry provides that section 236Q be amended to remove the additional "risk" threshold test—namely, the requirement to prove risk to the safety, security or good order and discipline of a correctional facility. In response, this bill divides section 236Q into three separate misconduct offences.

The first offence, in new section 236Q (1), applies where a correctional employee engages in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with an inmate. New section 236Q (1) has removed the additional risk threshold test to avoid any unnecessary barriers to prosecutions. The second offence, in new subsection (1A), applies in cases where there is a pre-existing relationship as a couple between the correctional employee and the inmate. This offence provides for rare circumstances where a marital, de facto or long-term relationship existed between the offender and the correctional employee before the offender entered custody and continues to exist while the offender is serving their sentence. The new section 236Q (1A) criminalises sexual conduct between a correctional employee and an inmate in a pre-existing relationship.

The third offence, in new section 236Q (1B), applies where a correctional employee engages in sexual conduct or an intimate relationship with a person subject to a community-based order. As per recommendation 4, there will continue to be a requirement to prove that the behaviour compromised the proper administration of the sentence. Contravention of section 236Q carries a maximum penalty of 20 penalty units or imprisonment for two years, or both. The section 236Q amendments are clear: Sexual relationships between an employee and an inmate are prohibited and illegal. [*Extension of time*]

I turn to another amendment in the bill, which seeks to provide greater clarity to acceptable community service work. Inmates and offenders subject to a community-based order may be required to undertake community service. Community service work is defined in section 3 of the Act as "any service or activity approved by the Minister, and includes participation in personal development, educational or other programs". Whilst currently activities constituting community service work are defined at the Minister's discretion, there is no requirement to publish the programs. That ambiguity challenges the integrity of the operations of Corrective Services NSW. To provide greater transparency the bill amends section 3 to require the relevant service to be approved by order of the Minister and published in the *Government Gazette* and a website administered by Corrective Services NSW.

Custodial and community-based sentences are fundamental to our justice system. They enforce standards of acceptable conduct through the five core functions: justice, punishment, deterrence, incapacitation and rehabilitation. In 2024 there were 12,917 adults in custody in New South Wales. The Australian Productivity Commission reports that 46 per cent of prisoners will go on to reoffend within two years of release. Unacceptable conditions in prison can only make the problem worse. We know that our prisons are populated by some of the most vulnerable in our community: people who experience higher rates of homelessness, domestic violence, unemployment, mental health issues and addiction.

We also know that our First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse communities are over-represented in our prisons. It is our duty to ensure our Corrective Services system is fit for purpose to provide justice to victims, punish and deter criminal offending, and help offenders learn from their wrongdoing. To reduce the risk of recidivism, we must eliminate the risk of inmates being retraumatised. All of the women who were impacted by Wayne Astill's offending were entitled to serve their time in custody without becoming victims of crime themselves. As Her Honour Judge O'Rourke remarked during Astill's sentencing:

The public generally, and the inmates specifically under his care, are entitled to have confidence in those placed in such positions, who are capable and responsible of wielding great power over how they are to live their daily lives and the conditions in which they lived, that they will be appropriately and lawfully looked after.

Wayne Astill exploited his power over vulnerable women in his care. Unfortunately he has not been the only one. In 2024 more than 700 complaints were sent to ICAC detailing allegations of bad behaviour inside New South Wales prisons. Some startling complaints detailed incidents of a scorebook rating the sexual prowess of females, the forcing of a mentally ill inmate to bark like a dog for his lunch, and a cage fight between an officer and an inmate. Those incidents indicate a systemic problem within our corrections system, a problem that we can correct, from today. We are acting to restore it to a system that is built on integrity, transparency, safety and respect for both staff and inmates.

For a society to properly function, it must have an effective correctional system, one that reinforces standards of acceptable conduct, punishes those who act outside those standards and provides an opportunity for inmates to learn, reflect and better their conduct. The results of the Astill report made it plainly apparent that the Corrective Services system in New South Wales was not achieving that purpose. This Government inherited a system that was failing the people entrusted to its care. We have taken on the recommendations to improve and we are addressing those with this bill to restore trust and confidence in the New South Wales Corrective Services system. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:25):** I contribute to debate on the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2024. The bill seeks to amend the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 to consolidate changes and procedures for the operation of correctional centres in response to recommendation 4 of the 2023 final report on the Special Commission of Inquiry into Offending by Former Corrections Officer Wayne Astill at Dillwynia Correctional Centre. Specifically, it will change the offences for employees of Corrective Services NSW that engage in intimate relationships with inmates and will remove the requirement to prove further risks associated with an intimate relationship between staff and inmates.

Whilst acknowledging the limitations of prisons and other correctional facilities in their ability to keep communities safe, The Greens support the bill and acknowledge the importance of the inquiry in highlighting the many issues relating to women's safety and maltreatment in New South Wales prisons. We have long called for reform to improve the safety and conditions of women held in prisons, so we welcome action that improves oversight and transparency, for Parliament and the public, over the rules and regulations that govern correctional facilities. The bill acts on the recommendations of the Astill inquiry, which the New South Wales Government established to investigate the circumstances surrounding the sexual offending of a New South Wales prison guard at a women's prison in north-western Sydney. While I do not believe there is a direct conflict of interest, to avoid the potential for a perceived conflict of interest, I disclose that my partner was acting as a legal representative for one of the people that was involved in the inquiry.

In addition to the crimes committed by the prison guard in question, the final report describes how the centre "failed the inmates' need for a stable, secure and safe environment". It describes an environment where inmates were treated "without respect by many correctional officers" and where foul language was used by staff towards prisoners and their colleagues. Unfortunately that is only one example of the gross misconduct and maltreatment experienced by women in New South Wales prisons. We know that that type of behaviour is not a one-off occurrence. It happens because there is a culture of disrespect, bullying, assault and harassment, which creates an environment where that kind of behaviour can occur.

It is deeply concerning that, despite the knowledge of mistreatment in women's prisons, the number of incarcerated women only continues to grow in New South Wales. That is a shame that all of us in this place bear. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, between 2009 and 2019 the number of women in prison in Australia grew by 64 per cent. We know from further research by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Australian Law Reform Commission that more than half of the women entering prison have at least one dependent child, and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 20 times more likely to be incarcerated. Ultimately this bill does not speak to the heart of the issue, which is the criminalisation of women and girls, particularly First Nations women and girls, who face a system of entrenched structural racism, poverty and inequity that compounds existing cycles of abuse, discrimination, violence and intergenerational trauma.

If we are serious about taking action to address gender-based violence and keeping women safe we need to be honest about the fact that prisons do not make women and their communities safer. Policing, incarceration and the separation of children from their guardians, parents and family members do not make communities safer. I understand that my Greens colleague in the upper House Sue Higginson is considering moving amendments to the bill to protect First Nations languages and, indeed, other languages to ensure people can fully understand correspondence provided to them by the correctional centres in which they are incarcerated. Currently, the bill allows regulations to require such correspondence be in English. I urge Government members consider any amendments along these lines in good faith. It is absolutely critical to ensure people are able to understand the communications being delivered to them.

I acknowledge the longstanding and ongoing work of various community organisations and advocates to address the criminalisation of women and girls in New South Wales and across the country. I thank the teams at Change the Record, Community Legal Centres NSW, Just Reinvest, the Sydney Community Foundation Keeping Women Out of Prison Coalition, the Community Restorative Centre, Women's Justice Network, Deadly Connections, Debbie Kilroy and Sisters Inside, Justice Action and the Indigenous Social Justice Association. I thank and acknowledge also the many First Nations-led groups, collectives, Elders and activists who work tirelessly to stand up for justice for those incarcerated in a systemically racist system.

The Greens know that prisons do not make communities safer. For decades, communities have been calling for community-based support that keeps women and children out of prison and supports those leaving prison to connect back with community. They have been calling for wraparound support that connects individuals and communities with access to health, drug and alcohol, and disability services; access to stable housing; support to prevent and respond to domestic and family violence; and support for children and young people to access education. The Greens will continue to stand with First Nations women, their communities and other abolitionist activists campaigning against the criminalisation and incarceration of women and girls in New South Wales and across the country. We know that community-based care and support keeps people safe—not over-policing or

prisons. The Greens welcome this bill. We will continue to advocate for the safety of women in prisons and for many much-needed changes to the so-called justice system in this State. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (15:32):** I support the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2024. The bill was introduced to ensure integrity, transparency and public confidence in the operations of Corrective Services NSW. It directly responds to critical recommendations made by the Special Commission of Inquiry into offending by former Corrections Officer Wayne Astill at Dillwynia Correctional Centre, conducted under the esteemed leadership of the Hon. Justice Peter McClellan, AM. Initiated by the Government in July 2023, the inquiry unearthed serious failures in management and institutional culture at the Dillwynia Correctional Centre. These findings highlighted systemic issues across correctional facilities in New South Wales that demand urgent and far-reaching reform. The bill is central to the Government's response and addresses recommendations to improve governance, to protect inmates and to uphold professional standards in Corrective Services.

The bill serves three main purposes. Firstly, it enhances offence provisions prohibiting inappropriate relationships between correctional staff and inmates, reflecting a zero-tolerance stance. Secondly, it makes miscellaneous amendments to clarify legislative provisions and ensure seamless alignment with the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014. Thirdly, the bill provides the tools necessary to address historical shortcomings and safeguard the integrity of our correctional facilities. The Astill inquiry, concluded in March 2024, exposed severe lapses in oversight and accountability. It was revealed that improper relationships between corrections officers and inmates at Dillwynia Correctional Centre undermined the safety, discipline and proper administration of sentences. Importantly, the inquiry rejected the notion that these issues were isolated, urging systemic reforms across the State's correctional facilities.

Justice McClellan made 31 recommendations, all of which the Government has accepted in full or in principle. Those recommendations demand improved governance, tighter misconduct policies and better protections for inmates. The Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2024 operationalises several key recommendations, particularly recommendation 4, which redefines and strengthens misconduct offences under section 236Q of the Act. Under current legislation, it is an offence for correctional employees to engage in sexual conduct or intimate relationships with inmates or those under community-based orders if such conduct poses risks to safety, security or sentence administration.

The bill splits section 236Q into three distinct offences to better address misconduct nuances. The bill removes the need to prove risks to safety or sentence administration in cases involving correctional employees and inmates, aligning with recommendation 4. The bill clarifies definitions of sexual conduct and intimate relationships to ensure the law unequivocally addresses prohibited behaviour. This framework provides the clarity and robustness required to deter misconduct and facilitate prosecutions when violations occur. Legislative amendments alone cannot achieve the systemic change we seek. Since receiving the inquiry's findings, the Government has launched a comprehensive response, including a \$30 million investment for priority reforms such as the installation of hundreds of CCTV cameras with extended footage storage capacity and improvements to misconduct management processes.

There is a new advocacy service for female inmates to ensure they can voice concerns safely and the Government is also improving workplace training with a women's strategy that mandates specialised training for staff in female correctional centres. The Government has also operationalised a misconduct reporting line, which is a free, confidential mechanism for reporting sexual misconduct. The Government has elevated accountability. On 1 October 2024 Corrective Services NSW became a standalone agency, directly accountable to the Minister for Corrections and the Government. These measures demonstrate the Government's commitment to restoring integrity and public trust in our correctional system. The amendments introduced provide clarity and transparency.

The bill also addresses ambiguities that hinder operational clarity. It mandates community service work constituting community service be formally approved, published in the *Government Gazette* and made publicly accessible online. The bill clarifies custody arrangements when warrants do not specify correctional centres, ensuring the Commissioner of Corrective Services NSW retains the authority to assign inmate locations. Additionally, the bill incorporates regulation-making powers to enhance governance around inmate correspondence, visitation and property management. These provisions strike a balance between operational flexibility and the need for transparency in areas with significant privacy implications.

The Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2024 reflects this Government's determination to tackle historical failings and restore confidence in the New South Wales correctional system. It underscores our commitment to transparent governance, safer workplaces and the protection of inmate dignity. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (15:39):** I make a contribution in support of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2024. The New South Wales Government is committed to undertaking the necessary reforms to enhance the integrity, accountability and transparency of the correctional system. In July 2023 the Government initiated a special commission of inquiry into the offending of former corrections officer Wayne Astill and the institutional response to his offending, known as the Astill inquiry. Astill was employed as a correctional officer at Dillwynia Correctional Centre, an all-female prison in Western Sydney, between 1999 and 2019. In 2022 a jury convicted Astill of 27 criminal offences, including aggravated sexual assault, aggravated indecent assault, aggravated act of indecency and misconduct in public office.

The report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Offending by Former Corrections Officer Wayne Astill at Dillwynia Correctional Centre was released on 6 March 2024. The Astill inquiry, led by the Hon. Justice Peter McClellan, AM, KC, found multiple failings in the management and culture at Dillwynia and across the correctional system. Those failures allowed serious offences to occur. The Astill inquiry made 31 recommendations relating to organisational governance, strengthening management and operations, improving measures to reduce contraband, and building the capability of the workforce to ensure it is sufficiently skilled to deliver its mandated custodial duties.

The Government has accepted or accepted in principle all 31 recommendations. That reflects our commitment to undertaking the necessary changes to rebuild trust in the correctional system. The bill implements recommendation 4 of the Astill inquiry, which is the only recommendation requiring amendments to the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999. The changes will strengthen the offence prohibiting Corrective Services officers from entering into an intimate or sexual relationship with an inmate. The Government has also committed \$30 million over four years to address a number of the other priority issues raised in the report. These include improving the safety of inmates by installing additional CCTV cameras, retaining CCTV footage for 90 days in all correctional centres statewide, and establishing an external women's advocacy service to ensure the voice of female inmates is heard and advocated for.

Other measures include providing additional staff to contribute to an improved misconduct management process and training for staff working in female correctional centres. Importantly, implementation of a number of recommendations has already commenced, including the recording of staff misconduct outcomes on personnel files and the establishment of the Sexual Misconduct Reporting Line for inmates. Corrective Services has also been elevated to a standalone agency with the commissioner directly accountable to the Minister. That change will set up Corrective Services NSW to implement reforms arising from the inquiry efficiently and effectively. Crucially, it will lift standards, deliver better workplaces for staff, protect inmates and provide better oversight for misconduct investigations.

Implementation plans for the remaining recommendations are underway. Some of the recommendations are complex and will take time to implement, but we are absolutely committed to delivering meaningful change. All of the actions being taken highlight just how seriously the Government is taking the response to the Astill inquiry. The Government is committed to delivering a more accountable and transparent corrections system that keeps people in New South Wales safe. The Government response to the Astill inquiry will continue to progress outside the scope of the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (15:44):** In reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate. I thank the member for Terrigal, and shadow Minister for Corrections; the member for Newtown; the member for Campbelltown; the member for Prospect; the member for Mount Druitt; and the member for Camden. The Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2024 is part of a suite of reforms that the New South Wales Government is progressing to improve transparency and integrity in Corrective Services NSW. The bill implements recommendation 4 from the report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Offending by Former Corrections Officer Wayne Astill at Dillwynia Correctional Centre by strengthening the offence prohibiting inappropriate relationships between correctional staff and inmates.

The bill also makes numerous machinery-type amendments to clarify existing powers and functions necessary in the management of the correctional system and ensures provisions in the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation are supported by clear and precise regulation-making powers. I welcome support for the bill across Parliament. I thank the member for Terrigal, and shadow Minister for Corrections, for his support of the bill. I acknowledge the member's passion for reform of our Corrective Services system. I echo the sentiments raised by the member and throughout debate that the majority of the 10,000 staff of Corrective Services act appropriately in the workplace and perform a challenging job to a high standard. I am glad that the member for Terrigal acknowledged the shocking and deplorable nature of Astill's offending. I am also glad that the member

acknowledged the importance of the amendments introduced through the bill to prohibit all forms of sexual conduct between correctional employees and inmates, in line with recommendation 4 of the Astill inquiry.

As the House is aware, the New South Wales Government accepted all 31 recommendations of the special commission of inquiry into the offending of former corrections officer Wayne Astill either in full or in principle. A total of \$30 million in funding has been committed over four years to implement priority initiatives. We are getting on with the most urgent action while working through the longer term reforms. The Government's response to the Astill inquiry will continue to progress outside the scope of the bill. I thank The Greens for their support of the bill, and I acknowledge that the member for Newtown has foreshadowed amendments to be introduced in the upper House, which the Government intends to support.

I note that concern has been expressed in *Legislation Review Digest No. 24/58* that the bill defers a number of significant matters to regulations. The bill does not seek to expand the type of matters that can be provided for in regulations. Rather, the bill ensures that there are clearer, more express regulation-making powers for existing provisions in the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation. The bill actually moves some provisions from the regulation to the Act—for example, provisions relating to the opening of correspondence. That is based on the view that it is in the interests of transparency and clarity for provisions that authorise actions with such significant privacy implications to be located in the principal Act, rather than in subordinate legislation.

The bill plays a vital role in the Government's wider suite of reforms to the Corrective Services system as it implements the recommendations of the Astill inquiry. The amendments indicate that this Government is absolutely committed to restoring trust, accountability, transparency and confidence in Corrective Services NSW. I again thank the stakeholders that have contributed to the development of the bill. In particular, I thank the Public Service Association, Legal Aid NSW, the NSW Bar Association, the Law Society of NSW and Domestic Violence NSW for their considered input. I also thank staff from both the Department of Communities and Justice and Corrective Services NSW that have supported the development of the bill, including consultation with stakeholders. I thank Sally Taylor, Jonathan Lee, Kate Peltonen, David Spackman, Sallie McLean and all other staff involved for their work and commitment to ensure that the laws that govern Corrective Services NSW best support integrity, transparency and accountability in the operations of the system. 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

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (FOGO RECYCLING) BILL 2024

### Second Reading Speech

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (15:50):** On behalf of Mr Jihad Dib: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment (FOGO Recycling) Bill 2024. The bill proposes amendments to the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 to mandate the source-separated collection of food and garden organics waste [FOGO] from households and food waste from businesses. The bill also mandates the reporting of food donations by large supermarkets. This bill is essential to ensuring that New South Wales, and Greater Sydney in particular, is able to reduce the amount of material going to landfill. These measures are urgent, and the time to act is now. We recognise that in order to solve significant waste management challenges for the people of New South Wales, significant reform is needed. This bill is one aspect of much-needed reform.

We recognise that while this bill is essential, it also represents a fundamental change to the way businesses and councils operate. We are introducing this legislation now to give councils and businesses time to prepare. The source-separated collection of FOGO has been discussed for many years, and this Government is committed to implementing it. By legislating the FOGO mandates, we provide certainty to local government and the waste sector that they should invest in new infrastructure in New South Wales. There are also important environmental benefits of this bill. Through the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041, key targets have been set to halve the volume of organics going to landfill by 2030 and to achieve net zero emissions from this waste stream.



Minimising the amount of organic waste going to landfill provides a huge opportunity to reduce environmental harm and protect the health of our communities. This is because every tonne of organic waste that we can divert from landfill avoids 1.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions entering our air. At the current rate of waste generation, Greater Sydney is projected to run out of landfill capacity by 2030 or earlier. If we do not act, this shortfall will likely exacerbate the cost-of-living pressures on the average household as the cost of disposing waste rises. If Greater Sydney runs out of landfill space, the cost households pay for domestic waste management services is expected to increase substantially. Households are already under significant cost-of-living pressures, and these are basic services that are essential for protecting public health and the environment.

This Government is determined to reduce residual waste entering landfill. Each year in New South Wales, households and businesses generate around 1.7 million tonnes of FOGO waste, most of which is collected in red-lid rubbish bins and landfilled. This is despite the great potential for FOGO waste to be recovered for beneficial use as compost for industries like agriculture. On average, food waste makes up more than one-third of the material in New South Wales household red bins. In landfill, organic waste decomposes to emit methane, a greenhouse gas which is more potent than carbon dioxide. Landfilling organic waste also attracts the waste levy, which increases costs for households and businesses to dispose of a material that is otherwise recoverable. An analysis of the proposed household mandates found that their application to all households in New South Wales may result in the diversion of almost 950,000 tonnes of FOGO waste each year from landfill.

We have also heard from councils through our consultation process. The bill includes exemption powers, and we recognise that some areas may need more time. We recognise the significant challenges councils currently face, and we want to work with and support them in implementing FOGO. Along with increasing the recycling of organic material, which this bill will achieve, we are committed to ensuring there is support for councils to achieve a clean waste stream. We need to make sure that the food and garden waste we collect is not contaminated by people throwing away food and beverage packaging with their FOGO waste. There is significant education work needed to reduce contamination and promote a clean waste stream. Collecting food and garden organic waste separately takes effort, and we do not want that effort undermined by inadvertent contamination that impacts the product.

The bill takes a balanced approach to regulation by gradually implementing the mandates, with businesses starting from 1 July 2026 in stages based on the bin volume, and households starting from 2030. This recognises the different capacities to adapt. The NSW Environment Protection Authority has consulted on the proposals with local government, other government agencies and the waste industry, and it led a formal public consultation process from July to October 2024. I thank everyone who provided feedback on these important reforms. I also acknowledge the work of the previous Government, which conducted extensive investigations into the viability and delivery of FOGO collection. Now is the time to address the significant waste challenges we face, and this Government is committed to solving the waste crisis.

I now turn to the detail of the bill and will first speak to the business mandates. New section 170F outlines that businesses and institutions deemed to be relevant premises under new section 170B are required to provide sufficient food waste bins for the collection of food waste onsite. Businesses will be required to ensure that food waste bins are collected weekly and that food waste is not mixed with other waste during transportation. The maximum penalty for not complying with the business mandates is \$500,000, with an additional \$50,000 penalty each day for continuing offences. On-the-spot fines of up to \$5,000 can also be issued, with higher fines for second offences. The penalties reflect the importance of compliance and ensure that the fine cannot be treated as just a cost of doing business. New clause 79 in schedule 5 to the Act outlines that the mandates will be phased in based on the weekly residual waste bin capacity of a relevant premises. The first stage for businesses will commence food collection on 1 July 2026, followed by 1 July 2028, with the final stage on 1 July 2030. These businesses are likely to include supermarkets, large hospitality venues and some retailers.

I now speak to the household mandates. The bill includes amendments to require local councils to separately collect and transport food and garden organics waste from households from 1 July 2030 for all residential dwellings. Wherever possible, the bill has sought to use standard definitions from the Standard Instrument–Principal Local Environmental Plan. For the purposes of the chapter, a household under new section 170A includes a place of residence that is provided with a residual waste service. This definition ensures that councils are not unduly burdened with providing a food waste collection service where they do not already provide one. For example, this may be in particularly remote or inaccessible areas of the State.

Councils may elect to provide food organic and garden organic collection through separate bins, or FOGO collection combined in one bin, depending on the council's preference. Councils must provide an organics collection bin or bins of sufficient size to hold the average amount of food organics waste and garden organics waste generated onsite by a household of that type. Councils must collect FO or FOGO weekly and must ensure the organic waste stays separated from other non-organic waste during transportation. Where garden organics are

collected in separate bins to food organics, the council is responsible for determining the frequency of collection of the garden organics.

The intent of the weekly frequency of food organics collection is to ensure that households are not discouraged from using FOGO by the decomposition of material before collection.

In circumstances where a household is not provided with a collection by a local council but is provided with a collection by a person other than a local council, such as a commercial waste service provider, the business mandates in new section 170F will apply. This is to ensure that where a private waste contract has been negotiated, the building will still have an obligation to have a food organics collection service. Residential accommodation that is covered by the business mandates is not required to comply with the mandate until 1 July 2030. This is to ensure that all residential accommodation types are treated in the same way. The main exception is seniors housing providers, such as nursing homes, which use commercial waste service providers and would be covered from 1 July 2026 if the bin capacity thresholds apply. There are penalties for noncompliance with the household mandates, with councils liable for penalties of up to \$500,000, with an additional \$50,000 penalty each day the offence continues. On-the-spot fines of up to \$5,000 can also be issued, with higher fines for second offences.

I now speak to the large supermarket donation mandates. The bill makes amendments to mandate that large supermarkets with a retail floor area of over 1,000 square metres must record their food donations monthly from 1 July 2026. New section 170F specifies the categories of food items that large supermarkets must report on. The EPA may request the food donation records of large supermarkets and may publish those records. The intent of the mandate is to encourage the donation of usable food, avoid food waste and bring greater transparency to food donations. I will now speak to exemptions. Under new section 170D, the chapter does not apply to Lord Howe Island or any part of the Western Division that is not within the area of a local council. An important aspect of the bill is new section 170J, which enlivens the ability of the EPA to grant exemptions from any of the requirements.

The Government recognises that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work. We will not be draconian—those sectors that need help to transition will get it. We also recognise that in some areas a food waste collection or a combined FOGO collection is not practical. As part of the exemption process, we will consider the threshold where the population of an area does not support FOGO viability. The intention of the exemption power is to recognise that in some areas, especially regional and remote areas, FOGO collection may not be a viable and cost-effective option. Exemptions could also be utilised where the required FOGO processing capacity may not be able to be delivered in time to match the demand as the mandates commence. The Government recognises that in some situations councils' or businesses' access to a FOGO collection service may be limited or cost prohibitive. In these situations, exemptions may be available.

The exemption power may also be used to allow the necessary exemption of certain multi-unit dwellings, or MUDs. MUDs may have unique challenges in their infrastructure design, such as the use of bin chutes or the lack of available bin room space. They can also face contamination challenges due to some people inadvertently putting the wrong item in their FOGO bin. Because multiple people contribute to the waste stream, it only takes one household not using the bins properly to contaminate the stream, even if the majority are using it correctly. The power to grant exemptions recognises that, while some MUDs may be able to adopt FOGO collection by 1 July 2030, there will be others that need more time to get there. Ultimately, the Government wants to support businesses, councils and households to divert FOGO from landfill.

The bill contains regulation-making powers where the Minister may make a local council exempt from the chapter through regulation. The intent of the exemption powers is that the exemption may be either ongoing or temporary. An ongoing exemption may be one where a local council is deemed to be exempt from the requirement by regulation. This may be due to the remoteness or the lack of supporting infrastructure. An example of a reactive exemption may be where a person applies for an exemption from the requirement due to requiring more time to comply. The bill allows for entire local government areas to be exempt from the household mandate and to exclude localities from the business mandate.

The exemption powers are designed to be flexible, and the Government is committed to consulting further as we develop guidance around circumstances where exemptions from the mandates may be appropriate and explain how exemptions could be developed. The intent of this legislation is to achieve an outcome. There are offences contained within the legislation. However, the Government wants to work with businesses and councils to achieve the intent of the mandates. For the purposes of compliance activity, the appropriate regulatory authority, or ARA, for the business mandates will be a shared responsibility between local councils and the EPA. Broadly speaking, the EPA will oversee institutions operated by the State or a public authority, such as public schools, public hospitals, TAFEs, jails and council-run childcare centres, while councils will oversee businesses and some institutions. For the household mandates and supermarket reporting mandates, the EPA will be the ARA.

New section 170G allows for local council authorised officers appointed under the Food Act 2003 to exercise functions for the purposes of the business mandates under new section 170F without needing to be appointed under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997. These measures offer greater efficiency and flexibility for local councils in how they implement checking of the business mandates. Councils that have separate compliance teams, one for food safety and hygiene and one for environment protection, could utilise the expertise of their food safety inspectors for inspection and enforcement of the business mandates. These measures are ultimately designed to increase recycling, divert FOGO waste from ending up in landfill, reduce residual waste and avoid methane emissions. If New South Wales is to avoid a landfill capacity shortage then strong action must be taken to divert waste. FOGO waste can be a valuable material and, therefore, it is in our interests to ensure that it remains in the circular economy.

The proposals in the bill have been years in the making and follow recommendations from a range of strategies and extensive consultation. The Government recognises that the sector, and specifically councils, will need support to adapt to the mandates. To help households and businesses prepare for the requirements, we commit to undertake a statewide community education program to reduce food waste, use the right bins and avoid contamination. We are also looking at ways to provide support to councils to offer practical onsite education, as well as support to help households improve their disposal practices and transition to the new organic waste collection requirements. The time for action is now, and this Government recognises the problems we are facing and has a plan to manage the waste crisis. This is an important step in that plan. I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (16:07):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment (FOGO Recycling) Bill 2024. In considering the bill, I also put on record my deep appreciation for the work of the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] and acknowledge its strong record of vigilance in protecting our environment. It was great to see some recent notable fines and judgements being handed down. So great work to Steve and the team—keep going. Turning to the substance of the bill, more and more jurisdictions are doing this, not only in Australia but around the world. The change will take a bit of time, like recycling did, but it must happen.

It must happen because each year in New South Wales, households and businesses generate around 1.7 million tonnes of food organics and garden organics [FOGO] waste, and most of that material is collected in red-lid rubbish bins and landfilled. Greater Sydney is facing a waste management crisis, with projections indicating that landfill capacity will be exhausted by 2030 if urgent action is not taken. The shortage threatens to escalate waste management costs for households and businesses as waste may need to be transported to regional areas or even interstate for disposal.

This problem will also impact the development of critical infrastructure, including housing projects that are essential for the State's growing population. Indeed, the former Coalition Government's ambitious target of 80 per cent recycling in New South Wales by 2030 is fundamental and connected to this work.

Additionally, this is an environmental challenge at the same time as it is a cost-of-living issue, with the landfilling of organic waste attracting the waste levy, which increases the cost to households and businesses to dispose of a material that is otherwise recoverable and recyclable. The options available include more landfill, more innovation in how waste is treated and more education to simply use less. However, historically we have seen that the experiment of extracting organics from the red bin has not delivered the returns required so, logically, we need to take the next step. Which brings us to FOGO.

FOGO is a pretty simple concept but, for some, it will require a leap of faith. Basically, if you have a green waste bin you can put your food waste in it. Some councils will do this differently, and there will be variation, but ultimately it is pretty straightforward. The Parliamentary Secretary has expertly covered the bill in detail but, for the avoidance of doubt, the bill seeks to amend the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 to provide for mandates for the source-separation collection of food organics and garden organics, which is FOGO waste from households and businesses. We also learned a new acronym today, which is MUDS—multiple use dwellings.

I take this opportunity to thank my Nationals colleagues and regional colleagues in the Liberal Party for their advocacy and for shining a light on the fact that not all councils and not all areas of New South Wales will be able to implement this and, therefore, the provision for exemptions is important. A key aspect of the bill is proposed in the new section 170J that allows the NSW Environment Protection Authority [EPA] to grant exemptions to councils and areas for many of the requirements. Clearly, a one-size-fits-all approach will not work, and a commonsense approach must be followed.

The Opposition would like to put on record the importance of FOGO being looked at holistically by the Government. For example, the EPA should be empowered and given a direct line into the relevant area in the

planning department, once this legislation is passed, to ensure that appropriate planning permissions for downstream processing facilities are accelerated. We have learnt from previous attempts that there is an important need for waste infrastructure processing facilities that are—and this is critical—placed in the right locations. We cannot have councils and industry being asked to deliver this service and yet being hamstrung in the development of new facilities to process and generate a good downstream market.

I thank Local Government NSW and industry for their feedback on this legislation and their engagement with the Opposition. They have raised valid points and concerns. Principally, these include capacity to deliver the service and the added impost on already stretched councils. I note my colleague the member for Wakehurst will share his view on this matter, which is particularly unique given his insights as a former mayor. Opposition members place on record our serious concerns about the potential for cost-shifting to the local government sector in the implementation of this scheme. We know that many councils already deliver the service. However, for those that are not yet at the level of sophistication to deliver the service, the Government needs to provide the appropriate financial and educational support. We appreciate that it is difficult for the Government to identify a line item right now for support. However, it is important that it does so sooner rather than later to deal with the anxiety that this will create for some councils.

There can be no doubt that the Government is under serious pressure to find solutions to a very real waste crisis issue facing the State. The Opposition does not stand in the way of sensible policy, and Opposition members encourage the Government to ambitiously look at all waste streams and how they can be better managed. In closing, I understand the member for Wakehurst will move amendments, in particular one for an implementation advisory council. The Opposition will support that amendment. However, as I am sure the Government will outline, there are other amendments that will undermine the scheme and, for those reasons, we cannot support them. We do, however, commend the bill to the House.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (16:13):** I am pleased to speak in support of the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment (FOGO Recycling) Bill 2024. New South Wales creates around one-third of Australia's total waste. Each year, households and businesses generate around 1.7 million tonnes of FOGO waste, and most of this material is collected in red-lid rubbish bins and landfilled. However, FOGO waste is a very valuable product that should be recovered for beneficial use as compost for industries like agriculture. Food waste is estimated to make up more than one-third of the material in New South Wales household red bins. Collecting food and garden organic waste separately takes effort, and we do not want that effort undermined by inadvertent contamination that impacts the end product.

The Government recognises that the sector, and specifically councils, will need support to adapt to the mandates. So far, support from the New South Wales Government has allowed a significant number of councils to transition by providing a separate food and garden organics—or FOGO—waste collection service to their communities. We have seen a number of incredibly successful transitions to FOGO. One that I am particularly proud of is Randwick City Council in the area where I live. Randwick City Council's implementation of the FOGO program started in 2020, and it has significantly improved local waste management. Since its inception, the community has diverted over 50,000 tonnes of organic waste from landfill, transforming it into valuable compost. This achievement reflects a 97 per cent increase in green waste diversion, underscoring the community's commitment to sustainable practices.

The success of the FOGO program is further highlighted by a 28 per cent reduction in household waste bin content and a 75 per cent increase in organic recycling, with contamination rates as low as 1.5 per cent. These outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of the FOGO initiative in promoting environmental sustainability within the Randwick City Council area. We also have examples like Lithgow City Council, which successfully launched its FOGO service in March 2024, achieving strong community adoption and an impressive contamination rate below 1 per cent. The Lithgow community is embracing the new service and reducing waste to landfill with their new green bins.

Then we have the example of Muswellbrook Shire Council's success with the FOGO education program by the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] that has proven to be a model for other councils. Through exceptional community engagement, the rollout of FOGO in Muswellbrook resulted in a 97 per cent resident satisfaction rate. Another example is Edward River Council, which has reduced landfill waste by 70 per cent since introducing FOGO alongside a new recycling service. In 2024 Waverly Council started its first FOGO trial, and I am excited to see how the other side of my electorate goes with this. I encourage people in that part of my electorate to get involved in the trial. As someone who lives in the Randwick council area and uses FOGO, I say that they should get on board. It is amazing. It will change their life.

When FOGO is done well, residents are excited to see their food scraps and garden materials being converted into quality compost for local farmers to grow food. Since 2014 the New South Wales Government has invested \$41 million into infrastructure, resulting in increased processing capacity, with an additional

730,000 tonnes per annum of organic waste being processed. Along with increasing the recycling of organic material, which this bill will achieve, we are committed to ensuring there is support for councils to achieve a clean waste stream.

To help households and businesses prepare for the requirements, we have committed to undertaking a statewide community education program to reduce food waste, use the right bin and avoid contamination. The EPA is also looking at ways to support councils to provide practical onsite education and to help households improve their disposal practices and transition to the new organic waste collection requirements. Businesses are the second biggest contributors to food waste, behind households, and they are an essential part of the solution. Supporting businesses to adopt circular economy solutions for their waste is essential to diverting food waste from landfill, reducing costs to businesses to dispose of waste and reducing their carbon footprint.

Organic waste generates 3.1 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in New South Wales landfills every year.

The EPA is continuing to deliver programs to support businesses to reduce their waste, increase recycling and adopt circular economy solutions through programs like Bin Trim, the largest business recycling program of its type in Australia. Between 2014 and 2022 the program engaged with more than 38,000 businesses and diverted over 260,000 tonnes of waste from landfill. Every month, over 100,000 people are going hungry in New South Wales, and a quarter of those are children.

This Government is committed to preventing good quality food suitable for human consumption from being disposed of in landfill. We have provided funding for food rescue and relief organisations to keep more quality food out of landfill and increase their capacity to manage increasing amounts of rescued food to provide to the community. We know that every dollar invested in food rescue provides a \$23 return on investment. The household and business mandates will help ensure that any food that is thrown out because it is not suitable for human consumption will be composted and turned into valuable material that supports agriculture. The donation recording requirements will also encourage donation of usable food to people who need it, rather than it ending up in landfill.

The legislation will give much-needed certainty to local government, businesses and institutions as they respond to the impending change. That legislative certainty will help drive investment in critical collection and processing infrastructure. The Government will continue to support councils and industry to meet the challenges of transitioning to a safe circular economy. The bill will continue the critical work needed to meet the target of halving the organic waste sent to landfill by 2030. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (16:21):** The intent of the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment (FOGO Recycling) Bill 2024 is commendable. We definitely need strong market signalling to encourage investment. I bring to the Parliament's attention alternative solutions for dealing with food waste in our great State. It is not just for fertiliser in agriculture. The Government is attempting to introduce legislative changes on a premise that I support. However, the Government needs to be very aware that increasing red and green tape is making services and products cost more for the community. It is adding to our cost-of-living crisis and creating barriers to living a good life.

I stand strongly against the over-regulation of our society. However, I believe a strong market signal is definitely required here. Let us protect our environment, reduce our landfill and make sure that we are not passing costs on to councils or residents. Importantly, I have come across a solution that keeps waste out of landfill, creates economic wealth and ends up in a high-value resource. In fact, it is the perfect example of a true circular economy. As other members have mentioned, commercial food waste contributes to the growing environmental problem for Sydney, New South Wales and the world. Approximately 30 per cent of all food produced ends up as waste. That statistic is published by multiple sources, including the Australian Government's Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

Food Recycle, an Australian company based in regional New South Wales, has the solution. It has developed a scientific, evidence-based and proven solution to the food waste problem. In simple terms, Food Recycle takes commercial food waste, runs it through a patented process, and converts it into a complete animal feed, contributing to a truly circular economy solution. Food Recycle's solution can divert one million tonnes from landfill, considerably helping Sydney's waste crisis. Importantly, there is no suggestion of levies, no impost on councils, and the process diverts household and business food waste to create a valuable and safe animal food product. It is a private solution, but the Government has the ability to do the same thing.

A series of rigorous trials conducted by the CSIRO, Western Sydney University and the University of New England has demonstrated the viability of Food Recycle's process with very favourable results. While there have been other solutions to combat food waste, such as composting, anaerobic digestion or black soldier fly larvae protein meals, those all struggle to be economically viable without the need for government subsidies.

Food Recycle's technology differs in that regard as it produces high-value commercial grade animal feed for much less than the cost of current commercial feed produced from raw materials.

This patented technology is a world-leading solution, it is homegrown, and it has the potential to position Australia as a pioneer in food recycling and carbon emissions reduction. The company is currently in negotiations with many countries. It is also in negotiation with significant investing arms to bring New South Wales into the forefront of waste technology. This is no blowfly-by-night idea; it is not pie in the sky either. This is a practical, truly sustainable solution that enables us to reduce input costs down the chain. It has academic, business and government department support, yet the Minister for the Environment has denied Food Recycle's requests for meetings. Why? Is it purely political? Why can't the regions provide high-quality, Australia-specific solutions?

Is any member of the Labor Government aware of this technology? Why would Government members not want to meet with Food Recycle? Businesses in New South Wales need a boost, and so does our economy. I say again: Here is an Australian startup offering a great commercial solution to our ever-increasing landfill crisis. The member for Coogee said that Randwick City Council has diverted 50,000 tonnes in four years. That is great. However, Food Recycle asserts that a fully established facility could process up to 3,000 tonnes of food waste per day, and produce up to 1,500 tonnes of animal feed per day, while removing any inadvertent plastic waste. This is an impending major problem and we need to address it now. All new technologies that provide a solution must be considered. I call on the Minister to meet with Food Recycle to hear of its solution for a truly circular economy.

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (16:26):** I am pleased to contribute to debate in support of the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment (FOGO Recycling) Bill 2024. I have been an outspoken advocate for food organics and garden organics [FOGO] recycling in my community for at least the past 20 years. Our environmental laws need continual improvements to ensure they are fit for purpose, reduce environmental harm and, importantly, protect the health of our communities. The New South Wales Government recognises that food and garden organic waste is a significant contributor to our State's growing waste generation problem.

In the *NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041*, key targets have been set to halve the volume of organics going to landfill by 2030 and achieve net zero emissions from that waste stream. This bill is an important milestone in the journey towards achieving those important objectives. The bill implements FOGO mandates that will require certain businesses, including supermarkets, institutions and hospitality businesses, to have a source-separated food organics collection from 1 July 2026. To prevent unnecessary food waste, the mandates will also require large supermarkets to report on surplus food donations to food charities from 1 July 2026. From 1 July 2030, local councils will be required to provide a source-separated food and garden organics collection service to households within their local government areas.

To develop those mandates, the NSW Environment Protection Authority has consulted extensively with local councils, regional waste groups, organics processors and the broader waste industry, institutions generating food waste, and communities across the State. The mandates will serve an important purpose in revolutionising our waste management approach. I draw on the example of my local council. In 2010 the fabulous Penrith City Council bit the bullet and said that it wanted to go down this road and introduce a FOGO service in the local area. It was the first metropolitan council not only in New South Wales but in Australia to introduce a FOGO service in an urban area.

In 2019 it was rolled out further to rural areas and later to the higher density properties in Penrith. It has been an overwhelming success. Our community has embraced it. As organic material is diverted from landfill and with our resource recovery rate at well over 70 per cent, the material recovered can be made into valuable compost products. That material is then returned to Penrith and is used in local parks, gardens, hundreds of sports fields and farmland to assist with growth and water retention during drought-prone periods. Penrith has composted more than 500,000 tonnes of FOGO. Those are the most contemporary figures I have available; it could well be in excess of that. That material has been diverted from landfill.

It also makes economic sense. In 2023-24 alone, Penrith City Council saved \$4,836,717. Hence, the domestic waste charge has remained low for residents. In the past five years Penrith City Council has averaged savings of \$5 million year on year, which has directly benefited our community enormously through reduced waste charges. It is evident that we are running out of landfill space, particularly in Greater Sydney. We simply do not have the space to keep sending material that can be easily recycled to landfill, and this Government has a vision for the State where landfills are reserved only for material that is truly not recoverable. Minimising the amount of organic waste going to landfill provides a huge opportunity to reduce environmental harm and protect the health of our communities. That is because for every tonne of organic waste that we can divert from landfill we avoid 1.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions entering our air.

There are also tremendous circular economy opportunities to be gained from these mandates. As I said in my Penrith City Council example, FOGO waste, when collected separately at the kerbside, can be processed into

high-quality commercial compost. Composting is a relatively low-cost method of managing organics and creates useful products with a range of applications. The compost can be used in a variety of settings for local communities, including urban amenity applications and agriculture, which has already been mentioned. These are the largest and second largest end-use markets in New South Wales. Growth in demand also continues to increase. This is an exciting opportunity where the FOGO mandates will increase the supply of organic material, which can, in turn, be used to create a valuable recycled end-product while simultaneously reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Compost made from kerbside food and garden organics has significant environmental benefits, as the nutrient-rich matter cools and nourishes the soil, improves water retention, increases yield and reduces maintenance needs. Applying compost to land can also assist in reversing urban and rural land degradation and it sequesters carbon from the atmosphere. Introducing this bill will also give much-needed certainty to local government, businesses and institutions to respond to this impending change. That legislative certainty will help drive investment in critical collection and processing infrastructure. I imagine a plethora of businesses will start up as a result of these moves. This will be important to ensuring that this material can be put back into productive re-use and contribute to circular economy outcomes.

The bill will greatly assist the Environment Protection Authority to continue the critical work needed to meet targets set under the New South Wales Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy. Most importantly, it will reduce the amount of productive material going to landfill and increase the generation of organic by-products to replenish soils and support the agriculture sector. This bill strengthens the effectiveness of our environmental laws and provides an important legislative framework to help transition our State towards a circular economy. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (16:34):** I will do my best to be brief. I support the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment (FOGO Recycling) Bill 2024. We are rapidly approaching a landfill capacity cliff. Local government has been flagging this to State governments for decades. This is clearly a problem that needs to be solved urgently, and I want to see as much food waste diverted from landfill as possible from both businesses and households. I want to see our State be ambitious and decisive in significantly scaling up FOGO separation and processing, establishing a new normal like we have done with recycling, because it makes sense to do so on many fronts. That is what this bill does.

However, not listening to the sector that will have to implement this massive transition does not make sense. I understand that the Government has consulted to a degree, but when my local Northern Beaches Council, regional organisations of councils from across Sydney and the peak body, Local Government NSW, together raise significant concerns about the bill, I cannot ignore them. Collectively and individually, that feedback comes from deep operational knowledge of waste management at the coalface. I managed the street cleaning and waste operations at City of Sydney once upon a time, as well as at the Olympic stadium at Homebush. I am probably the only MP who has been on the back of a garbage truck and/or swept up the mess at events such as New Year's Eve celebrations, where the waste is metres wide, metres high and hundreds of metres long.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** There was Premier Nathan Rees.

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN:** Really?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** He was a garbage truck man.

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN:** But not in the current Parliament. Now that I have qualified my claim, I need to emphasise that everyone involved in this discussion supports the intent of the bill, which is great. However, from discussions with local government organisations and the Minister's office over recent days, it is clear there are some fundamental differences of opinion when it comes to the bill. Can I plead for a few more future round tables that involve Local Government NSW, the Environment Protection Authority, a couple of councils and the Minister's office to ensure that we avoid some of these last-minute changes and frustrations?

First, in relation to the punitive approach in the bill, with penalties of up to \$500,000 for councils, local government representatives do not think this is the right approach, and I agree with them. Secondly, some features of the bill have the potential to encroach unreasonably upon operational matters that should be at the discretion of councils. That includes the rigid, absolute ban on mixing waste streams and mandating weekly collection. Although weekly collection is the right thing to do in the majority of cases, mandating it is maybe not. I accept that there are avenues for exemptions, and the Minister has provided reassurances about a flexible approach. However, my strong preference is that these measures are not contained in the bill. I foreshadow that I will move some amendments addressing these concerns, but I accept that they do not have the support of the Government.

We have reached agreement on one amendment to create a FOGO Implementation Advisory Panel to provide certainty and structure for consultation before the Minister introduces regulations in relation to FOGO,

and I thank the Government for that. I take this opportunity to note that effective implementation of the FOGO mandate will require other complementary and supporting policy measures. First, that includes a strategic waste infrastructure plan. Sydney remains the only Australian capital city without a waste infrastructure plan, despite decades of council advocacy. Minister Sharpe has announced that one will be developed, and we thank her for that. But it has yet to be delivered. The plan needs to address implementation issues including zoning, timing and location. Rural and regional New South Wales requires similar planning.

Secondly, it requires a review of planning controls for new residential developments to ensure that new apartment buildings are designed and constructed with waste collection facilities to enable councils to provide organic waste collection in addition to existing waste, recycling and bulky waste collection and disposal services. Thirdly, clear standards and actions are needed for PFAS and other emerging contaminants in compost. That is essential to maintain trust in the system and ensure there are markets for recovered materials. Fourthly, it requires the development of markets for recovered resources by the Environment Protection Authority as required by the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001 to drive down processing fees paid by councils.

I also speak to the financial impact of this mandate. In advance of the legislative FOGO mandate, the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils commissioned the development of a model to quantify the financial cost of its implementation. According to that model, all scenarios cost an additional \$98 to \$118 per household per annum, or 31-37 per cent above business as usual.

The most feasible scenarios—the same collection regime regardless of dwelling type—cost \$116 per household, per annum. The ongoing average cost over and above current business as usual for larger NSROC councils is between \$7.9 million and \$11 million per annum. New South Wales Government FOGO grants are a drop in the ocean and will cover 9 per cent to 14 per cent of the first year's costs only, and are no longer able to be used to support FOGO or FO trials by councils. The cost of implementing the FOGO mandate will be directly carried by communities, despite the significant contribution they already make via the domestic waste management charge and waste levy.

**Mr Richie Williamson:** A gift.

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN:** It's a gift. I want to finish on a positive note. As I said, we support the bill. I thank the Minister for bringing it to the Parliament. I thank all her staff, particularly Tamsin Lloyd, who I have been engaging with and annoying consistently over the past few days and weeks. I know it has been difficult, but I appreciate that support. There is a lot that goes into this, and I know that. I am sure the member for Blue Mountains and Parliamentary Secretary has had a lot to do with this too. It is great to see her here. I thank the Environment Protection Authority and staff, the council staff who have met with me, Local Government NSW, NSROC and former Minister James Griffin, the member for Manly, for starting the process all those years ago. Thank God we are finally getting this done. Well done to everyone.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (16:40):** I am so excited to speak in support of the Protection of the Environment Amendment Legislation (FOGO Recycling) Bill 2024. For those at home, FOGO stands for food organic and garden organic. The amount of waste being generated in New South Wales is increasing, meaning that growing volumes of residual waste are being disposed of in our State's landfills each year. At the same time, recycling rates in New South Wales are stagnating, meaning that valuable resources are being landfilled rather than recycled and re-used. The Minns Labor Government is committed to transitioning New South Wales to a more circular economy, where our resources are more sustainably managed and not thrown away. This Government has already started the work to move New South Wales towards a circular economy.

Today's bill reaffirms this Government's commitment to supporting New South Wales's transition. The bill recognises that FOGO is a valuable resource that can be used for means other than simply occupying space in landfill. Despite New South Wales's strong progress towards a circular economy, too much organic waste continues to be landfilled. Each year, households in New South Wales generate 1.2 million tonnes of food and garden waste. Most of that waste ends up being thrown away into our landfills, where it is left to rot and emit harmful greenhouse gas emissions. Large supermarkets, hospitality businesses and institutions also account for another 500,000 tonnes of food waste going to those landfills each year.

The New South Wales Government has set ambitious targets for its transition to a circular economy, including to halve the amount of food waste that we send to landfill each year and to achieve net zero emissions from organic waste in our landfills by 2030. The bill will fast-track the State's progress towards those targets by establishing new requirements for the collection of source-separated food and garden organic waste from households and businesses. The new mandatory collection requirements will set a new standard for how recyclable waste is managed in New South Wales so that we recycle more of the waste we generate rather than dumping it into our environment.



The Government is also progressing targeted actions to ensure that the materials we recycle are high quality and safe for use. Currently, harmful chemicals found in plastics and microplastics, like PFAS, can easily make their way into organic recycling streams when people throw away food and beverage packaging into kerbside green bins. That means that the waste and resource recovery industry is tasked with managing that contamination, which costs them time and money. But if contamination is not properly managed, those harmful chemicals can make their way into our recycled products and food, posing a threat to human health and the environment. The Government is working to address the issue by progressing targeted actions that look higher up the supply chain at how contamination can be managed through better design and manufacturing. Those actions are looking to reduce contamination risks by reducing harmful chemicals in food packaging and improving its labelling so that people know not to throw it in organics collection bins.

The Government is also funding a range of organics programs run by the NSW Environment Protection Authority to help reduce the amount of organic waste in landfill. The Environment Protection Authority leads the Food Rescue Rebates program, which partners with food rescue and relief organisations to expand their capacity to safely manage the increasing amount of rescued food in New South Wales. The EPA also leads Business Food Waste Partnership grants, which provide up to \$200,000 in funding to peak bodies, councils, educators and other organisations to help them reduce and source-separate food waste.

This Government is committed to a truly circular economy and will continue to make the bold decisions to get us there. The bill will provide a strong signal to industry and clarity to councils and businesses alike. By mandating FOGO collection, the bill will ensure that New South Wales can reduce our contribution to landfill and the waste stream. I thank Minister Penny Sharpe for her work and progressive attitude in looking at this important issue that we must get up and running. I thank all her staff—in particular, Tamsin Lloyd—and the department staff for all the work they do. Let's get on with the job.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (16:46):** I support the Protection of the Environment Amendment Legislation (FOGO Recycling) Bill 2024 and welcome much-needed action to address the looming waste crisis facing Sydney, the State and much of the world. The modern consumerist approach to waste makes no sense. Our lives are filled with products that are single-use, overly packaged and designed with built-in obsolescence. We regularly replace items that are fully functional just to update them or because they are too hard or too expensive to repair. Rampant consumerism and marketing drive a perception of need that keeps the cycle going. The problem is across everything that we consume: clothing, accessories, electronics, furniture, building, transportation, toys and stationery, to name only a few. It is destroying our environment and our future.

Food is part of this problem. Around 1.7 million tonnes of food waste are produced in New South Wales each year, and food waste represents over one-third of waste generated by households and food businesses sent to landfill. Food is wasted across the entire supply chain. Food waste is a serious problem because it impacts on landfill capacity. Food breaks down in landfill and produces the powerful greenhouse gas, methane, which is helping to fuel climate change. Nutrients released from the food leach out and contaminate soil and waterways. Food waste represents lost resources in terms of those wasted during production and transportation, including water, fertiliser, packaging, oil and refrigeration—resources that could help feed people experiencing food insecurity. There is also lost value from wasted food scraps, which have composting potential to restore land fertility.

The bill will address lost composting potential by mandating separated collection of food scraps and waste from supermarkets, institutions and hospitality businesses from 1 July 2026 and from households from 1 July 2030, in line with existing targets. The bill will provide certainty for industry, encouraging investment in food waste and scrap recycling infrastructure and services in a way that would not occur without legislation. The Government estimates that FOGO will help us divert almost 950,000 tonnes of waste from landfill every year. But we will not reach that potential if we do not address contamination. Contamination of food waste remains a big risk. Yellow bin recycling has been a part of household waste for over a decade. With plastic bags, foam, crockery and other products that jam machines and see tonnes of recycling diverted to landfill, contamination still occurs every day.

FOGO bins have a high risk of contamination from a range of non-compostable items, including fruit stickers, packaging, plastic bags, rubber bands and mesh bags. I note that the bill includes a power to exempt strata from FOGO because apartments share bins, and it takes only one person among many to pollute a bin used by everyone in a building. Apartment living is the way of the future and we will not achieve targets if apartment residents are not part of the solution. Apartments are not the only risk. Many residents of freestanding homes do not know how to correctly manage their waste. Bins that were used correctly but placed on highly pedestrianised streets often end up contaminated by people walking past and dumping their takeaway drink containers, junk food packaging and cigarette butts in the wrong bin.

We need community-wide education so that everyone understands what can and cannot go in a FOGO bin—and into recycling bins. We cannot leave it to councils who are limited in their reach. We cannot rely on one-off campaigns, either: education must be ongoing and should start in schools. Campaign materials need to be clear for people from a range of backgrounds, including people with English as a second language. Councils will need to have a number of matters resolved before the laws come into effect, including clarity on who the responsible person is where there are combined or shared waste services, and how councils can charge for new functions. I call on the Government to commit to working in collaboration with the local government sector on the regulations and on implementation.

I note that the member for Wakehurst proposes to move amendments to ensure cooperation, and I will support them. If FOGO is to be incorporated into our waste systems, our planning laws must reflect the change and ensure that new homes can incorporate this new stream of waste. I chaired the 2022 inquiry into food production and supply which looked at how we can improve our food systems by improving food security and equitable access to foods and reducing food waste. We recommended that the Government implement an overarching food system plan and create a food system council to oversee the plan and coordinate responses to problems in the food systems. The report also has been adopted by the current environment and planning committee of this Parliament. I ask the Minister in reply to confirm when the Government will respond to the issue I recently raised with the Premier.

The inquiry found that an alarming amount of edible food is wasted in New South Wales while some people struggle to access enough nutritious food. The bill includes obligations on large supermarkets to keep records of food donations to charities from 1 July 2026 to encourage them to divert food, which would normally end up in the waste stream, to people who need it. This should be a first step towards mandates—rescuing surplus food and redirecting it to people who need it. That will deliver significant social and environmental benefits while helping to reduce waste. Sydney will run out of landfill by 2030 and the environmental and economic costs of finding new space to dump rubbish will be huge. I welcome the bill's contribution to slowing the rate of waste ending up in landfill, but so much more is needed for a circular economy. I look forward to more action from the Government to cut waste, particularly plastic waste. I commend the bill to the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** I acknowledge the presence in the Speaker's gallery of the Mayor of Campbelltown, Mr Darcy Lound. I welcome him and suggest he has come at a very interesting time of the afternoon. I also welcome our visitors in the public gallery.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (16:52):** My contribution to debate on the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment (FOGO Recycling) Bill 2024 will be brief. At the outset I thank the Minister; my colleague the member for Blue Mountains, and Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment; and everyone who has been involved in this important legislation. Legislation that commonly comes before the House does not really get the required consideration, but that does not reduce the importance of the laws that will change as a consequence of that legislation. The intent of this bill is to reduce waste going to landfill by introducing amendments to the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, otherwise known as the POEO Act, to mandate the collection of source-separated food organic and garden organic [FOGO] waste from households and businesses, including various institutions and facilities. The bill also will mandate the reporting of large supermarket food donations to take pressure off landfill.

The Mayor of Campbelltown, who is present in the Chamber, Lindy, the council's CEO, and Kate, a director, and I are very aware that managing waste from local government areas is a continuing and costly challenge that currently is not adequately supported by legislation, but this bill is a positive step in that direction. I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of my colleagues from regional New South Wales and note that waste management and recycling is an issue in the areas they represent. I also acknowledge the member for Albury, who would know about that as well. I draw on experience from Greater Sydney because I represent a local area in Greater Sydney and I know that we are running out of ways in which to safely manage residual red bin waste. I also know that Greater Sydney is predicted to run out of landfill capacity by 2030 or earlier, which is likely to exacerbate cost-of-living pressures for households and delay the delivery of critical infrastructure across the State. I emphasise that by 2030 the capacity of landfills servicing households in Greater Sydney will fall short by an estimated 1.1 million tonnes each year.

When I consider other areas of New South Wales, I believe that one of the State's greatest challenges followed the horrific bushfires that occurred in 2019 and 2020. At that stage, as the shadow Minister for Local Government, I visited affected local communities in New South Wales and met the Mayor of Moruya. Basically the local council had allocated all of its ratepayers' money to build a new waste facility, but after those devastating fires that facility was full of waste. My colleague, and friend, the member for South Coast will confirm that flooding occurred soon after those fires, which further devastated those communities and created more waste. The facility that the local council would normally use for day-to-day operations and weekly bin collections was filled

with waste from those natural disasters. I acknowledge that those communities are still recovering, both socially and economically.

I cite that example to show that we not only have an enormous shortfall in Greater Sydney but it is right across New South Wales. Waste management is a challenge that confronts every community. It is a particularly prominent problem when we consider the reduced availability of land east of the Great Dividing Range compared to areas west of the range. However, that does not reduce the challenges that we all face. An analysis of the proposed household mandates found that application of the mandates to all households in New South Wales may result in the diversion of almost 950,000 tonnes of FOGO waste each year from landfill.

The bill will amend the POEO Act to mandate the collection of source-separated food waste by various businesses. The mandate will apply to large supermarkets, various institutions and facilities, and hospitality businesses that prepare or provide food and beverages, or that provide seating for consumption of food or drink obtained at the premises. The mandate for businesses will be implemented by a phased approach depending on the residual waste bin capacity of those businesses. Those with a larger capacity will need to comply from 1 July 2026. The bill also includes amendments to require local councils to separately collect and transport source-separated FOGO waste from households from 1 July 2030 for all residential dwellings. Many councils in my electorate already do that, but for some other councils this requirement will assist in achieving consistency. I commend the local government sector for adopting a front-foot approach by separating green waste from household waste.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**Mr Richie Williamson:** It was not me.

**Mr Paul Toole:** It was not me either.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** I think the members have named themselves.

**Mr Richie Williamson:** My apologies.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** It is no surprise from that unruly mob on the other side, of course.

To conclude, it is a major issue and this a good piece of legislation. I commend the Ministers and my Parliamentary Secretary colleagues. It is a positive step in the right direction but we know that there is always more work to do. That is the benefit of having a progressive Government that continues to review legislation, make amendments where required—whether it be on environmental preservation or environmental waste recycling or to the State's economy, health system or education system. I am proud to be a member of this Government. I am proud of our Ministers, who work progressively for legislative reform for a better New South Wales. I thank the House.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (16:59):** There is not doubt that the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment (FOGO Recycling) Bill 2024 addresses an issue that needs to be examined right across New South Wales: the enormous amount of food organics and garden organics [FOGO] waste that ends up in our red bins. However, we need to clarify how the bill will impact metropolitan, regional and rural councils. For me, it is not necessarily about the content of the bill but about raising awareness with the Minister and the department about the regulations that will be required to address that impact.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** It being 5.00 p.m., debate is interrupted for the public interest debate. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

#### *Public Interest Debate*

### **PSYCHIATRY WORKFORCE**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (17:01):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Condemns the Premier and the Minister for Mental Health for presiding over mass resignations of public sector psychiatrists, threatening the health and wellbeing of mental health patients.
- (2) Notes modelling showing that the Government's use of locums is far more expensive than the pay rise sought by psychiatrists.
- (3) Calls on the Minister to sit down with psychiatrists and reach an agreement to end the crisis in our public health system.

I speak about the public psychiatrist crisis and a system that is failing under the Minns Labor Government. Mental health is real. Mental health care is not something that should be considered lightly or taken for granted. Nor should those employed in the public health system, who support the community of New South Wales, be disrespected. Mental healthcare funding in New South Wales has been devastated by a funding cut of \$57.6 million since March 2023, which has left a broken mental healthcare system that lacks significant funding. It is our duty

as New South Wales parliamentary representatives to support the mental healthcare system so that future generations are equipped with the skills needed to effectively manage their physical and mental health, as well as self-regulate their access to resources.

Funding is barely keeping up with inflation as it is. What happens when our youth are not provided with tools and assistance to manage their mental health issues? What happens when patients found guilty of heinous crimes are released back into society without proper attention to their mental health care and recovery? On 21 January this year hundreds of New South Wales psychiatrists resigned following a pay dispute with the Minns Labor Government that had festered for over a year. Our psychiatrists are currently paid 30 per cent less than their interstate counterparts in Victoria and Queensland. Psychiatrists in New South Wales are seeking a 25 per cent pay rise. As a result, some of those psychiatrists who have resigned from the public health system have now signed on as casual contractors or locums, potentially benefiting from a pay increase worth tens of thousands of dollars at the taxpayers' expense.

Apparently, the Minns Labor Government prefers to increase reliance on expensive locum doctors than to save New South Wales taxpayers \$35 million a year by giving psychiatrists a 25 per cent pay rise even though modelling shows a potential cost-neutral outcome. In question time yesterday the Premier said, "We cannot afford it". Then, when referring to the independent review by the Industrial Relations Commission [IRC], he said, "If in the end the judge rules in favour of the increase, we will of course accept the decision." I am confused. In the same breath the Premier says that there is no money in the budget to cover the pay increase that psychiatrists seek but that he is prepared to honour the ruling of the IRC, which could include a pay increase in line with what the psychiatrists are seeking.

More costly than the proposed 25 per cent pay rise are the salaries of doctors who are being transitioned in to fill the missing specialist psychiatrist positions until an outcome is reached through a five-day arbitration hearing. On top of the strain being placed on the overall healthcare system, it is deeply concerning that doctors are stepping outside their scope of experience. Psychiatrists undertake 12 years of training to develop specialised skills and, until an agreement is reached, mental healthcare patients will not receive the urgent care they require and more strain will be felt across the health professions. The inadequate treatment of behaviourally disturbed patients poses an unacceptable risk to our healthcare workers and other patients. How can the community expect to receive the best medical care available if this situation continues?

Since Labor was elected in March 2023, New South Wales has seen countless strikes and protests in relation to pay disputes, including by paramedics, nurses, firefighters, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union and now psychiatrists. How many more will we see before 2027? Quite frankly, the Minns Labor Government is making a farce of the mental healthcare system in New South Wales. It is time the Government stepped up and ended yet another self-inflicted industrial crisis. The Queensland Government is already leveraging the disaster by publicly advertising directly to New South Wales psychiatrists in newspapers such as *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph*, with ads that state:

NSW psychiatrists.

Queensland is calling.

Seeking better pay? We already pay more.

Queensland Health. Make a healthy career move.

As for our State's psychiatrists, Premier Minns must ask what really matters. Mental health is not to be toyed with. Those suffering from mental health issues are among some of the most vulnerable in our community. Early diagnosis and intervention are critical not only to a patient's wellbeing, but also to the wellbeing of their family, friends, colleagues, loved ones and the community in which they live. If the issue is not resolved soon, there will be further impacts that will undoubtedly cause massive problems for the people of New South Wales and our society. Already I am aware that patients presenting at the Nepean Hospital triage and assessment centre have had to wait four days before receiving treatment. How is that acceptable? The Minns Labor Government needs to sit down with psychiatrists and reach an agreement to end the crisis in our public health system before it is too late. Labor has fobbed off its responsibility to an independent review after 16 months of failed negotiations. Shame on Labor! Its disrespect for our staff specialists is nothing short of disgraceful.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (17:08):** I am delighted to lead for the Government in debate on the important issue of the New South Wales psychiatry workforce. I thank the member for Hawkesbury for bringing it to the House. I agree with the member for Hawkesbury on one point she made—we have found common ground. She is really confused. There is no doubt about that.

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** Have some respect.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The Clerk will stop the clock. Opposition members will cease interjecting. The member for Campbelltown has the call.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I appreciate your intervention. The pay dispute is currently in arbitration. It is before the Industrial Relations Commission, which is examining the matter on a fast-tracked timeline. It will determine what is a fair and reasonable pay increase. The member for Hawkesbury referenced the Premier's comments during question time yesterday. I will forever be delighted to speak on behalf of a Premier who is honest. He will not apologise for saying we cannot afford the pay rise. There is an element of irony because members opposite were in government for 12 years.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Terrigal and the member for Oatley will be called to order if they continue to interject. The member for Campbelltown will be heard in silence.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** The member for Hawkesbury said that no-one in the Government will sit down and talk. That is grossly untrue. The Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health the Hon. Rose Jackson, her team and the Premier have paid astute attention to this very serious issue, which was ignored every year that the Liberal-Nationals Coalition was in power. The former Government capped psychiatrists' wages. Coalition members do not like including facts in the story, but I will talk about the facts. Yesterday in question time, the Premier did what good Premiers—which he is—do. He told the truth. Why is there an enormous cost issue that we are trying to challenge our way through? Why do we unfortunately find ourselves before the commission?

I have met with a couple of local psychiatrists, and they are wonderful, amazing people. The conversation I had with them was about their care for their patients and them being able to provide clinical support for people in desperate need, many of whom cannot afford to go to the private sector. The Government is very committed to the cause. It is committed to achieving a resolution. Yesterday, the Premier said he will accept any rulings. But he was real when he said we do not have the money to pay for it. The reason we do not have the money to pay for the claim is that wages were capped under the former Coalition Government. From 2018-19, the average wage increase for psychiatry staff specialists was 2.5 per cent. From 2019-20, the average wage increase was 0.3 per cent. From 2020-21, there was a rise of 2.04 per cent. From 2021-22, there was a rise of 2.53 per cent.

Following the election of the Minns Labor Government in March 2023, there was a 4.5 per cent increase—almost double any increase provided by the former Government. For 2024-27, there is a 10.5 per cent increase on the table. That is currently in dispute. The reality is that this Government once again has to be honest with the people of New South Wales. Everyone is coming to us because of the previous conservative reign. People fled to the prosperous States of Queensland and Victoria, where Labor Governments were in power and workers were looked after. In 2025 the Minns Government is dealing with those 12 years of conservative reign. The former Government had no respect for our workers and no respect for our psychiatrists. Its budget blew out to more than \$180 billion in deficit while it capped the wages of everyone in the community who was caring for us. The reality is the Minns Labor Government, the Premier and all of my colleagues are committed to doing everything we can. We cannot do it overnight, but we will continue to fight for workers.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Before I call the member for Vacluse, I remind the member for Hawkesbury that she is on three calls to order. The member for Terrigal is on two calls to order and the member for Oatley is also on two calls to order. If the member for Ryde continues to interject, he will be called to order. Members will listen to the debate in silence.

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vacluse) (17:13):** The contribution of the member for Campbelltown was an appalling and embarrassing tirade. He did not once mention patients. We must always start with the patients. They are the vulnerable party in this dispute. They are the ones being impacted by the mass resignations that are happening on Labor's watch. They did not happen on our watch. The Government cannot make excuses. It should stop looking over its shoulder and blaming the Coalition. It is happening under this Government's watch. The mass resignation of staff specialist psychiatrists is tipping an already deteriorating system into a crisis of the Government's own making. The people paying for the Government's inaction are the vulnerable patients who are waiting days for mental health beds. Across New South Wales, mental health beds are closing. Emergency departments are under increasing pressure and stretched nurses and doctors are being asked to do more with less by the Labor Government. New South Wales deserves better.

Mental health services are essential services. The Minns Government has ignored the issue for 16 months and allowed it to evolve into the crisis we are facing today. The mass resignation of psychiatrists, which began in New South Wales on 21 January this year, did not come out of the blue. The Minister for Health and the Minister for Mental Health have known about this impending situation since October 2023, when the Australian Medical Association, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists and the doctors union wrote to both Ministers.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! Government members will come to order. They will remain silent and allow the member for Vacluse to continue her contribution.

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE:** They requested an urgent meeting and set out what they believed were the perilous circumstances surrounding the psychiatry workforce in New South Wales. Those alarm bells were sounded directly at this Government. The Minister for Mental Health received that letter in 2023. She has utterly failed to address the issue. While psychiatrists were resigning and mental health patients were left waiting in emergency departments, the Minister was sipping chardonnay and being ferried around the Hunter Valley at the taxpayers' expense.

**Ms Trish Doyle:** That's a low blow.

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE:** It is the truth, and it is disgraceful.

**Mr Mark Coure:** It was rosé.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** It was sauvignon blanc.

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE:** I find those interjections offensive. This is a serious issue. It should be keeping Government members up at night. They should be listening. They are certainly not listening to the psychiatrists.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The Clerk will stop the clock. Members on both sides of the Chamber will cease interjecting.

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE:** The Government says it does not have the money to pay staff specialist psychiatrists. It does not even make economic sense. At the moment, we have a surreal situation where a staff specialist psychiatrist who resigns today will tomorrow be employed as a visiting medical officer on a much higher salary. Psychiatrists engaged as locums by recruitment agencies are earning as much as \$3,050 a day. About a third of the psychiatrists who have resigned have rejoined as contractors. The Government is not telling us how much that will cost.

Today *The Guardian* reported that modelling shows the Government could save \$35 million a year and improve patient care by giving psychiatrists the pay rise. The public deserves transparency about just how much the Government has spent to date on a crisis of its making. It will be harder to measure the costs to patients and their families. Dollars matter, but the damage and pain to vulnerable patients who are bearing the brunt of the resignations is something the Government should be truly ashamed of. According to HealthStats NSW, in the 2023-24 financial year there were 130,040 emergency department presentations for mental health in New South Wales.

We know that rates of presentation for self-harm or suicidal thoughts were consistently higher among young females. Every hour waiting for the care that they need to receive only worsens their situation. We have young and homeless people who do not have the option to go to a private psychiatrist. They are the faces of the current crisis. It is not the fault of our psychiatrists, doctors or nurses. They are compassionate, caring and working very hard under the circumstances. It is certainly not the fault of patients. The test of any government is how it treats its most vulnerable. On that test, this Government has failed. Chris Minns must resolve this crisis and come clean on how much the failure of this Government has cost the taxpayers of New South Wales.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Members will be on their best behaviour and cease interjecting.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (17:20):** I move:

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

- (1) Notes the former Liberal-Nationals Government's wages cap saw a real wages decline for psychiatrists in the public health system.
- (2) Opposes the reintroduction of the wages cap on psychiatrists in the public health system.
- (3) Notes most psychiatrists have converted to visiting medical officer arrangements, not locum arrangements, and these arrangements costs less than a 25 per cent pay increase.
- (4) Notes the concerns about the resignations of psychiatrists and its potential impacts on the health system and mental health patients.
- (5) Supports the expedited arbitration process the New South Wales Government and psychiatrist worker representatives are undertaking in the Industrial Relations Commission.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Oatley is almost on his last call. He will cease interjecting.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** As we have heard today, the wage negotiation with New South Wales psychiatrists is a very complex issue. I start by reiterating members' comments that psychiatrists are a deeply valued and essential part of our healthcare system. We recognise the vital work they do for the community. We are all aware that psychiatrists are asking for a 25 per cent pay rise in a single year. Public sector wages were capped under the previous Coalition Government for over a decade, creating the wage disparity at the heart of the dispute. Since winning government, the Minns Labor team has sought to resolve the issue by meeting with representatives of the staff specialist psychiatrists on many occasions and offering a number of things, including a 4.5 per cent wage increase in 2023, which is a lot more than the 2.5 per cent wages cap.

We also proposed a 10.5 per cent pay increase over the next three years, which included super, and a pilot of productivity measures to further improve wages and conditions for psychiatrists. As has been noted before, we are of course committed to reaching a resolution. But we cannot fix the decade-long wages cap overnight. That is not feasible. The New South Wales Government is offering an extra 10.5 per cent over three years, on top of the existing 4.5 per cent increase. That represents 15 per cent, including super increases, in the first four years of a Labor government. That is a fair and reasonable offer, and it is the largest pay rise offered to the group in over a decade. I say again that it is the largest pay rise offered to that hardworking team in over a decade.

The New South Wales Government has tried for many months to negotiate a sustainable outcome with psychiatrists, but the threat of mass resignations as a negotiation tactic does not enable negotiations to continue. Despite that, the Ministry of Health has put extensive contingency plans in place to manage the potential impacts of psychiatry resignations. Those plans have, so far, limited the impact to less than 1 per cent of physical mental health bed capacity. That is important to keep in mind given the emotion around the issue. While there has been limited use of locums to deal with resignations, their use in this crisis is a short-term measure as we work towards the long-term solution that everyone wants. The 25 per cent award increase is permanent and unfeasible.

I finish by noting that the New South Wales Government acknowledges the hard work of psychiatrists in our healthcare system. I am sure that all members representing their communities have heard some of the most harrowing stories from healthcare practitioners in our electorates. We would stand and defend them and their work any day. We are committed to finding a resolution and to see arbitration through the Industrial Relations Commission as a fair and viable mechanism. I again thank psychiatrists for their work and will see them at the table.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (17:25):** I speak in support of the motion of the member for Hawkesbury because mental health is personal for me. Last year when my father died and I visited him in the Coroners Court, it was the first time I had seen him in decades because undiagnosed schizophrenia had fractured our family as children, leading to an unsafe environment for me and my sisters. Years later when he was diagnosed, the health system let him down when he went to a public hospital for psychiatric care and was sent home and told everything would be okay. He then went on to attempt to murder his mother and two neighbours, so, for me, hospital psychiatric care is personal.

Last year, shortly after he died, we saw the horrific stabbings in Bondi Junction. We all know that the assailant at that time had been diagnosed with schizophrenia. When we looked at the horror across our community and the fear that it could impact any of us at any moment—that people with schizophrenia or acute mental health disorders, when untreated and uncared for, can have that sort of impact on our society—we were concerned about the state of our mental health system. For the six people who died that day, for their families and the ones who care for them, for all those injured, and for people across the community, that was personal. The issue today is that the Government is not showing the care that the people of this State need for their mental health needs. Already, before the current psychiatric staff shortages, there were 30 to 40 per cent vacancies across hospitals for staff psychiatrist positions. For the children with suicidal ideation, for those experiencing eating disorders and for those dealing with new diagnoses, that is incredibly personal.

When people already cannot access the psychiatric care that they need in a hospital, when they cannot afford it in the private system, or they cannot access it because of waiting lists in the private system, we are letting down the people in our society who need care the most. When the Government says that it is dealing with it and when the Minister says it is being taken care of or dealt with, that is not addressing the challenge that real people are facing across our State. At the moment, we have an epidemic of mental health crises across New South Wales and across Australia. Every member in this Chamber knows it. But what we do not realise is that when we do not deal with it early on—when we do not diagnose, treat and care for people—not only do we not give people the right and opportunity to live fulfilling lives, we harm every person close to them and we risk harm to people they do not even know.

We have an obligation and responsibility to act. We know the facts. We know that there are huge vacancies. We know that our psychiatrists are quitting in droves because they feel they lack not only the pay that they need, but also a system and the working conditions that support them—things like overnight rosters that do not reflect

their own needs or capabilities, being on call excessively, and receiving phone calls to administer the types of treatment that do not reflect the challenges of meeting their patients' needs.

We know that, so how do we make it better? A big part of it is pay. The reason you see so much frustration on this side is because we know that the Government is not acting. It is giving lip-service to the dire circumstances that our mental health facilities across our hospitals are experiencing when we have a Minister who, frankly, is more interested in travelling to Japan, posting photos of popping bottles of champagne and travelling to wineries for her birthday. During the middle of a mental health crisis, we know that she is asleep at the wheel. We know that.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** That's outrageous. That's beneath you.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** I say to the member for Cessnock, we know that.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Cessnock will come to order.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** This Government needs to realise that these are real people's lives and real people's horror stories and traumas. Our psychiatrists are already choosing to work in the public system, often at a financial disadvantage, because they believe in the work that they are doing for their patients that need them the most. We should stop sending them interstate, into locum or visiting medical officer positions or into private psychiatry. The Government needs to invest in them and do the job that it was elected to do by actually resolving this crisis. The Government needs to do the work to make people safe, to keep them well and healthy, and to give them every opportunity in life. For all of us here, mental health has to be personal.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (17:31):** The focus of the New South Wales Government is to ensure uninterrupted high-quality patient care. The extensive contingency plans put in place to manage the potential impacts of any disruptions to psychiatric services have done this. We deeply value the work of our psychiatrists and recognise their critical role in our healthcare system. However, we also have a responsibility to maintain a stable and accessible mental health system for all of the people of New South Wales. While the Government hopes for a negotiated outcome, it cannot afford to be unprepared.

The New South Wales Government has been proactively developing and implementing a multifaceted contingency plan to mitigate any potential service disruptions. Our priority is to ensure that individuals experiencing mental health crises continue to receive the care they need when they need it. Our contingency planning is built on several key pillars. While we have utilised locums, we have mostly used visiting medical officer [VMO] arrangements. Locums are a more expensive option, but VMOs are not more expensive than a 25 per cent pay increase. The use of locums is a necessary short-term measure to maintain a mental health system while this issue is resolved. It allows us to bridge any gaps in service and maintain essential inpatient and outpatient services.

We have also established a comprehensive network of support systems. The Mental Health Emergency Operations Centre is a statewide multi-agency centre designed to support local health districts and specialty health networks with patient flow and capacity management. It acts as a central coordination point, enabling us to efficiently allocate resources and manage patient needs across the State. This ensures that patients are directed to the most appropriate care setting and hospitals are not overwhelmed. Alongside this is our statewide short-term escalation plan [STEP]. This plan identifies the impact on system-wide operations at various escalation levels and outlines the specific actions to be taken at each stage.

STEP provides a clear framework for responding to potential disruptions and ensures a coordinated and measured approach. It allows us to proactively anticipate challenges and implement appropriate responses swiftly and effectively. To further manage patient flow, we have implemented statewide load-adjustment strategies. These strategies distribute mental health patients across NSW Health emergency departments, preventing any single facility from becoming overburdened. This ensures that patients can access timely care and hospitals maintain the capacity to respond to emergencies. We are also leveraging the New South Wales psychiatry virtual hubs, which provide a brief assessment and escalation psychiatric service. These hubs offer remote consultations and increase access to care, particularly in rural and remote areas.

The New South Wales Government is focused on long-term solutions and system reform. The Agency for Clinical Innovation's Critical Intelligence Unit is leading a rapid redesign approach to identify and test innovative models of care. A key purpose of this redesign program is to attract and retain psychiatrists and mental health clinicians by supporting them through models of care that allow them to work to their top of scope. This includes



exploring new ways of delivering mental health services, improving working conditions and creating a more supportive working environment for clinicians.

The short-term objectives of this program are to generate evidence, to assess current and innovative mental health models of care, and to apply a rapid redesign approach to prototype prioritised models. The long-term objectives include identifying opportunities to scale promising models and contributing to system-wide strategies for mental health service reform. This proactive approach aims to create a more resilient and sustainable mental health system for the future. We remain committed to finding a resolution to the current pay dispute, but our primary focus is to ensure the continued provision of high-quality mental health care to the people of New South Wales. We want to be clear: If you need mental health support, it is available. Please do reach out for help.

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (17:36):** I speak in contribution to this public interest debate, and I thank the member for Hawkesbury for raising this issue today. This dispute is something that has distressed me to watch. First of all, let me reiterate the many comments made by members of both sides in support of our public psychiatrists. This particular group of psychiatrists is highly skilled. They work and care for some of the most vulnerable and sick patients in our public system. The services that they provide are something that we should all be proud of. We should be proud of the services and teams that they lead. I am proud of them. I am proud to know many of the individuals and to have spoken to them. I thank them for the work that they have done over many years.

I also reflect on their deep professional commitment to their work. After speaking to many of them, it is clear that decisions to leave the system or to change employment have been agonising and have not in any way been reached without much consideration. It saddens me that this issue has been bubbling away in the New South Wales health system for quite some time. In my view, this has not been addressed or given the priority it should have had, and that is what has led to the action taken by these psychiatrists. My concern is that this reflects a much deeper disdain for medical staff, and especially specialists, within our public system. I believe the current Government really needs to address this.

I accept that there is a process in place now, but the underlining issue for the psychiatrists is that they believe that they were losing professional expertise to other States, that our system was at real risk of losing critical services and that there needed to be a heartfelt, genuine and active approach to recruitment and retention. I understand that the debate has focused on the wage rise. I also understand the Government's issue at the moment is the real financial pressure that it is under and that it cannot commit to large wage rises for the health workforce. Nurses are also currently campaigning for wage rises. In this particular instance, I do not actually believe the core issue was about wage rises. The core issue was about making sure that there was a proactive response to staffing our medical system.

At heart, the issue was about having respect for our clinicians and, in particular, for our senior specialists. It is very easy to diss highly-paid doctors. It is very easy to whack the medical profession. But those doctors are highly skilled, with 12-plus years of training and many years of experience. They work at the coalface with some of our most vulnerable people. I am afraid the feedback I have received is that they do not believe they have been treated with due respect. I understand that a process is now going forward, but I believe this Government could have taken action much sooner and much more actively, treating the clinicians with a much better process. It is good to see that some sort of process is underway now, but the fact that it came to this is frankly very distressing. I express those concerns and I express my solidarity with the specialists in our public health system. They provide its core services, leadership and backbone.

The staff specialists do so much more than just clinical work; they do non-clinical work that locums will not do. Locums are not a solution, and so much of our health system is relying on locums because of the issues with pay rises. But locums do not provide leadership of teams, quality of care, or teaching and training for the next generation. Let us not walk away from the fact that we want well-rewarded, well-respected and well-regarded staff in our public health system, and particularly our specialist doctors. They need that respect and they need that support. I certainly support the motion.

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

**Leave not granted.**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (17:41):** In reply: I thank the members for Campbelltown, Vacluse, Blue Mountains, North Shore, South Coast and Wagga Wagga for their contributions to the debate. The opportunity almost came for the member for Oatley, but we will have to save that for another time. The member for Blue Mountains talked about the horrific mental health stories that she was aware of. Those stories are just going to increase as the issue continues to fester and bubble with no solution in sight, because the Labor Government has ignored the opportunity to do something about it for more than 15 months.

**Ms Trish Doyle:** You did nothing for 10 years.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I have a right to be heard in silence.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Blue Mountains will cease interjecting.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** The member for Vacluse succinctly spoke of patient neglect. Because she connects with staff specialists and those working in the public health system every week, she sees firsthand what they are dealing with. I thank her for her contribution. The member for South Coast talked about plugging the gaps, saying that the Government has a solution, while all of those psychiatrists fall by the wayside and leave those vacancies. She spoke of new ways of dealing with it. Is that about pushing the responsibility onto the current nurses and doctors, who are at massive risk when people present to emergency departments with mental health issues? At Nepean Hospital in the past week, it was four days before one individual could be treated. That is an absolute disgrace. Government members should be disgusted that it happened on their watch.

**Mr David Harris:** It was happening before that.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Madam Deputy Speaker, may I please be heard in silence?

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

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his contribution. He spoke with intent and with great understanding of the situation. I hear that he has been constantly connecting with psychiatrists, and he expressed their thoughts articulately. I thank him for that. He understands their grief. It is not about having an industrial dispute and going on strike. They feel so passionate about the situation they are in that they have actually resigned from their jobs. Those psychiatrists have bills to pay, mortgages to pay and children to educate in school. They have to put food on the table, and they are so distressed about the way this Labor Government has treated them that they have resigned.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hawkesbury has moved a motion, to which the member for Blue Mountains has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....43  
Noes .....38  
Majority.....5

#### AYES

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

#### NOES

Anderson, K	Kemp, M	Sloane, K
Ayyad, T	Lane, J	Smith, T
Clancy, J	Layzell, D	Speakman, M
Cooke, S	Leong, J	Taylor, M
Coure, M	McGirr, J	Thompson, T
Cross, M	Moylan, B	Toole, P
Crouch, A (teller)	Petinos, E	Tuckerman, W

## NOES

Dalton, H  
Davies, T  
Donato, P  
Henskens, A  
Hodges, M  
James, T

Preston, R  
Provest, G  
Roberts, A  
Saunders, D  
Shetty, K  
Singh, G

Tudehope, M  
Wallace, J  
Ward, G  
Williamson, R (teller)  
Wilson, F

## PAIRS

Daley, M  
Hoenig, R  
McDermott, H

Williams, R  
Di Pasqua, S  
Griffin, J

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**Division called for and Standing Order 185 applied.****The House divided.**

Ayes .....43  
Noes .....39  
Majority.....4

## AYES

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

Hagarty, N (teller)  
Harris, D  
Harrison, J  
Haylen, J  
Holland, M  
Hornery, S  
Kaliyanda, C  
Kamper, S  
Kirby, W  
Li, J  
McKeown, K  
Mehan, D  
Minns, C  
O'Neill, M

Park, R  
Quinnell, S  
Saffin, J (teller)  
Saliba, D  
Scully, P  
Stuart, M  
Tesch, L  
Vo, T  
Voltz, L  
Warren, G  
Washington, K  
Watson, A  
Whan, S  
Wilkinson, K

## NOES

Anderson, K  
Ayyad, T  
Clancy, J  
Cooke, S  
Coure, M  
Cross, M  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Dalton, H  
Davies, T  
Donato, P  
Henskens, A  
Hodges, M  
James, T

Kemp, M  
Lane, J  
Layzell, D  
Leong, J  
McGirr, J  
Moylan, B  
Petinos, E  
Preston, R  
Provest, G  
Roberts, A  
Saunders, D  
Scruby, J  
Shetty, K

Singh, G  
Sloane, K  
Smith, T  
Speakman, M  
Taylor, M  
Thompson, T  
Toole, P  
Tuckerman, W  
Tudehope, M  
Wallace, J  
Ward, G  
Williamson, R (teller)  
Wilson, F

## PAIRS

Daley, M  
Hoenig, R  
McDermott, H

Williams, R  
Di Pasqua, S  
Griffin, J

**Motion as amended agreed to.***Members***INAUGURAL SPEECHES**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with the earlier resolution of the House, we will proceed to the presentation of an inaugural speech. Before calling the member for Epping, I welcome her mother, Diane, and her father, the Hon. Damien Tudehope. He is well known to this House but is now a member of the other place. I also recognise and welcome Tim, the husband of the member for Epping. I acknowledge the member's friend, Wendy Lindsay, the former member for East Hills. I also acknowledge the attendance of a number of members of the other place, who shall remain nameless; I welcome them just the same. I now call the member for Epping to give her inaugural speech.

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping) (17:59):** It is an honour to stand before you tonight in a place where so many before us have helped shape the course of our State's story. This Chamber is more than walls and seats; it is where the past meets the present to shape the future. Yet, if we consider the grand sweep of time, our presence here is fleeting. Writer Tim Urban paints a striking picture of human history, showing all of it in an 800-page book with each page representing 250 years. If we are fortunate enough to reach the average Australian life expectancy, our entire existence fits into just one-third of a single page in that vast book. That means, at best, we will get to write a few words of New South Wales history. I want to make those words count, especially for those who have elected me to serve.

The people of Epping are the reason that I am here today. They have put their trust in me to serve in this place that makes the laws that shape their lives. The electorate of Epping was created in 1999 and was first represented by Andrew Tink. Like many electorates, Epping's true character can be obscured by being named after only one of its suburbs, yet Epping is an electorate where its suburbs are as different as they are the same. It has rail, metro and now light rail that connect to CBDs and beyond. It has town centres and village shops. It has some of the best schools in the State. It has bushland and parkland, heritage and history. Epping is a community of families, a community of many cultures, and a community of small business and hard work. It is an electorate of aspiration, where families like mine live in the hope that their children will have better lives than their parents did. There are many people from the community in the gallery tonight, and I thank them for the faith they have placed in me.

I myself am a product of Epping. I grew up in West Pennant Hills. I was educated in Cherrybrook, where I made friends with girls, now women, who remain my friends today. Some of them are here tonight. I cannot tell you a story of hard luck that has motivated my political journey, because I actually have a good luck story. The privilege I had growing up was not money, education or status. Instead, it was having two parents who were married and who gave me a loving home. They gave me the upbringing that all Australians aspire to give their children. Yet this did not happen by happy coincidence. It was a product of my parents' hard work and their choices. They had the freedom to choose schools that reflected their values, the ability to practise their faith and be part of a community, the means to provide the care that many parents are no longer able to, and the opportunity to demonstrate that working was both a responsibility and a way to make a contribution. I want those choices, freedoms and opportunities for others. I want everyone to have their Damien and Diane Tudehope.

My dad, of course, is here tonight. He also works here. It brings great joy to our family that Dad was able to enter politics later in life, after spending many years supporting his family running a small legal practice. In fact, my election marks the first time that a father and daughter have served together at the same time in any Parliament in Australia. I have already spent many years working with Dad here in New South Wales Parliament—he as a backbencher and me as a staff member to the former Treasurer and then Premier.

Even if I spend many more years in this place, I doubt anything will have a greater impact on me than watching Dad debate long into the night on the assisted dying bill. In the face of significant opposition and personal attack, he stood up and debated amendment after amendment with intellectual depth and a sensitivity for the topic of the bill. It was a demonstration of decency, social justice and democracy at its best. He rose above the derision from the then Opposition, thinking only of what he thought was best for our society. I have been truly overwhelmed by the number of Epping residents who tell me that they fondly remember Dad or they can still

remember a time that he helped them. I can only hope that I may emulate his commitment to public service, his integrity and the good standing that he has in this place.

My mum and seven of my nine siblings are also able to be here tonight—at least the seven that vote Liberal. There is something very special about being from a big family. There is always lots of love to go around but also large doses of humility and character building—perfect training conditions for election campaigns. My siblings and I would not be the people that we are without my mum. My mum was born in Tambar Springs in regional New South Wales to Jack and Joan. They worked hard to support their five children. My mum often tells us that she did not have birthday parties growing up and that her Christmas tree was just a branch from the garden. We laugh at those references because they have come up so often, but they hide a very real story of female empowerment that does not get acknowledged often enough.

Mum excelled in boarding school and, after achieving an outstanding year 12 result, she moved from the country to Sydney to study dentistry at the University of Sydney. She then started work at a dental practice in Pennant Hills. Mum could have propelled this story forward to great professional success, but she made a choice for her family. She would dedicate herself to them, and so she left dentistry for motherhood. Some of you may recall that Dad cried when he got to the point where he spoke of my mum in his maiden speech. She has that effect on all of us. Her love and service to our family is unmatched and continues today for her grandchildren. I am grateful for the advice that she gives me as I navigate being a new mum to my own girls, Alice and Grace. I deeply understand, and so do many of those in my electorate, the immense weight and constant responsibility that comes from the unrelenting burden of being a parent. I commit that, in my time here, ordinary people raising a family in whatever way they view best for their children will remain firmly in my focus.

I will resist the innate temptation of every Liberal politician to have ever given a maiden speech to tick the box of the "forgotten people". I am not sure I fit the Robert Menzies mould of a Liberal politician. My career has almost entirely been in government. My family's political traditions started in the Labor Party. However, like Robert Menzies, I am here out of a deep sense of public service to the people. But it matters what this public service looks like, because government is about choices, and those choices shape our society. For me, the best choices are those framed by the values of the Liberal Party—the Liberal Party that was created to protect freedoms and promote personal responsibility, to ensure government respects the liberty of the individual, to encourage personal accountability, and to prefer private enterprise and innovation over government subsidy.

My commitment is to those values. I want to see taxes low and small businesses thrive. I do not think that the government can or should solve every problem, but I do think families and communities need to be supported so they can provide the care that every person deserves. I will fight to ensure Epping gets the services, investment and support our families deserve—good schools, better transport and quality health care. I have already spent years in the trenches of policy and politics, and one thing is clear to me: Good policy leads to good politics and not the other way around. I have seen scare campaigns that get front pages but cheat the people of New South Wales out of good reform.

Our people deserve the best, but politics only seems to be able to offer them frustratingly small increments of progress. Our State's potential is enormous. But we are selling ourselves short with timid changes when we need bold action.

There has been no comprehensive tax reform in this State since a Prime Minister forced States to remove stamp duties, way back in the year 2000. Our transport system has just been updated for the twentieth century, but we are already in the twenty-first century. New mothers are given thick physical books to track their baby's milestones, when most of us do not even carry wallets. I know we can do better because I have worked for governments that did do better. I am proud to have worked for a government that had the vision to be able to conceive, finance and deliver a brand-new metro network that has transformed this city, and I will remain committed to delivering this for the families and workers of Western Sydney. I am also proud to have worked for a Premier that made the first steps towards removing one of the worst scourges on our society: pokie machines. Australia has the worst gambling losses in the world. When Australians lose their savings, they lose more than money; they lose their ability to care for themselves and their families. This is not just a social crisis; it is an economic one too. Today, I pledge to you that I will never be a politician beholden to this money-making mirage.

We are entering an era of TikTok politics where we assume that voters only have the bandwidth for a 30-second policy sound bite. I want to be an MP that can persuade people that good policy comes from thinking in the long term. And my commitment to these people is to always put them first. So here are three reforms that I believe we need in New South Wales. We have to put families first and give them a stake in our future. As we see populations shrink all over the world, families diminish and communities evaporate, it is little wonder that we debate the future of western democracies. Governments are spending more than ever on schemes trying to get people to have children, but birth rates remain in decline. Yet we have built an economy on the assumption that two parents will work full time, creating a false sense of choice for families.

Those who say women should revert to staying home and raising children are naive to cost-of-living pressures and fail to acknowledge that even if they wanted to, this is not an option for many. Those who say the solution is women having children and racing back to the workforce as fast as possible are failing to ask women if this is the motherhood they wanted. We are forcing families to choose between two impossible options and calling it freedom. By throwing money at women, we have reduced motherhood to an economic equation and, in doing so, we only further entrench women and motherhood as an economic problem to be solved. Perhaps we need to stop treating parenthood as a line item in the budget and, instead, start celebrating its cultural and societal importance. The best way we do this is by supporting families, not tokenistically but with genuine policies that meet their needs, support their right to choose and improve their quality of life. That starts with homeownership. Then it has to be about creating jobs that support real choices about child care for families.

But I propose that we go further, and we give families a stake in New South Wales by giving them a share of the NSW Generations Fund. I am proud to have worked on creating a sovereign wealth fund for New South Wales. This fund was created to use New South Wales resources to futureproof New South Wales budgets and started with proceeds from asset recycling. And so we should invest our resources for future generations. The math is simple: Investing just 10 per cent of stamp duty revenue into the fund, with a modest 4 per cent growth, would create \$21 billion by 2040—a payment of around \$8,000 for every family with children in New South Wales. Families could use these funds to help with the cost of education and skilling, in a rapidly changing world, where tomorrow's jobs will be transformed by AI. Families make choices all the time to invest in their children and we should invest in them, turning our State's wealth into your family's opportunity.

Secondly, we have to fix the way that State governments work. This means we have to become less addicted to the size of the funding and the number of people employed to deliver it. Our core services like health and education have become trapped in a cycle of funding announcements—addictions for the politicians who make them. Record education funding has not improved student outcomes. Record health spending has not created an innovative, responsive system. Why? Because we are measuring the wrong things. As Charlie Munger said, "Show me the incentive and I'll show you the outcomes." Well, the incentives in New South Wales are drops to the newspaper, photo opportunities with cute babies and grabs on the evening news. The result is more money for no change. There is no reward for genuine reform, no push for better service delivery.

We have come to expect States to deliver the best possible services but are too far removed from the ways in which those services are paid for. John Howard's tax proposal from 40 years ago still remains relevant today: Give 5 per cent of income tax to the States. This is not just about money; it is about accountability. Direct State income tax would create a clear link between taxes paid and services delivered—no more byzantine funding agreements that only bureaucrats understand. States could slash inefficient taxes, compete for excellence and have real incentives to grow their economies and create jobs. This is not radical; it is rational. We need to connect the money to the results and reward achievements, not announcements.

Lastly, we have to get rid of bad taxes. I previously worked for a Treasurer and Premier who started on addressing one of the more difficult challenges in our State: getting rid of stamp duty. Today, I promise to finish what we started and to do everything I can in Parliament to remove this costly tax for good and open the door to home ownership for more families—first, by extending to downsizers the choice of an annual property tax instead of stamp duty. Too many retirees are stuck in homes too big for their needs while growing families are squeezed into apartments. We need to unlock policies that match the right homes with the right families, adapting to their needs. Let's be honest about what is at stake here if we do not get this right. Already, many young people face a future where they will pay more income tax than ever before. Their chance of owning a home has never been more out of reach. Their salaries can never hope to service the mortgages they need, and they face making family planning choices their parents never had to make. Younger people do not want generational warfare. They just want to know that we have a plan and that we have the courage and conviction to execute it.

Finally, there are many people that I want to acknowledge and thank today, none more so than my husband, Tim. Tim's love makes this all possible, not only because of the role that he plays in our family but because he has done everything that I have asked of him. He has moved back to Sydney, started a family, taken paternity leave, worked part time and taken out the bins. My children were too busy to be here tonight, but they know that I love them. I am here today to make their future better. To my brothers and sisters, I love you and may you always keep me humble. I would like to thank my in-laws, Sally and David, who, by marriage, are now bound to campaign every pre-poll week for as long as they are able.

There are many people that helped me get here today. I acknowledge Ross Barwick and the rest of the Epping State Electoral Conference. I am lucky to have some of the most dedicated Liberal members in the State. I would like to mention everyone that worked on my campaign, but there are a few whose contributions must be noted: Clayton, David, Sue, Luke, JP, Tim, Jenny, Georgina and many more to whom I am forever grateful. I would especially like to thank those people that were early believers in me: Charlotte and Angus, Alex, Dallas.

Without your ongoing encouragement, I would not be here today. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Dom Perrottet. I believe Dom was one of the best Premiers we have had in New South Wales and with more time he would have continued to transform this State. He was a great boss and is a better friend. I am grateful for the faith he has in me.

To finish off, I want to tell you about three of my cousins. The four of us were all born in the same year. My cousin Mary runs a very successful family business with her husband, all while balancing the needs of her family. One of her sons, Charlie, is often in and out of hospital, yet Mary is now also doing her masters. I have never met a woman with greater strength. My cousin Tim is an advocate for policy change. Tim and I will not always agree on his advocacy, but I respect that he has the courage to put his voice to an issue and to work within democratic institutions to bring about change. And, finally, there is my cousin Beth, who last year passed away at the age of 38 from bowel cancer—one of many young people under 40 to be taken too early by cancer. Beth made a great impact in her time with us, not least of which was her daughter Belle, who is the same age as my daughter Alice. She has left a devastating hole in the lives of her family and friends.

Through their lives, their families, their small businesses and their actions, they represent the people that I want to fight for in my time here. I would like to dedicate my speech to them—to the impact that they have made and will continue to make. Before I sit down, I want to send a message to myself so that I may be accountable to my own values. I hope to serve with courage and conviction. I hope I avoid the politics of least resistance. I will work every day to deliver for the people of Epping and I hope that, when my time is done here, I will have left New South Wales and Epping a better place.

*Members and officers of the House stood and applauded.*

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

### **TRIBUTE TO GEOFFREY BASSER, OAM**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (18:24):** As the new year was just beginning, Port Stephens lost a man who had an immense impact on our community—a man of action, inspiration and deep humility. Mr Geoffrey Bassar, OAM, established Caring for Our Port Stephens Youth, which went on to operate Port Stephens' free youth mental health counselling service called Jupiter. Geoffrey drove this impactful initiative from its inception and backed it every step of the way since. In 2021, Geoffrey received an OAM in recognition of his enormous contribution to our community. I could not admire a man any more than I did Geoffrey Bassar for his big heart, his determination to make a difference and his extraordinary generosity. Geoff was a force of nature, who leaves a lasting legacy on our community and the lives of many. My deepest condolences to Nanette, their family, friends and loved ones, of which I know there are many across my community and beyond. Personally, I will miss walking into events, being warmly welcomed and kissed on both cheeks by this very special man. Vale, Mr Geoffrey Bassar, OAM.

### **HORNSBY ELECTORATE EMERGENCY SERVICES VOLUNTEERS**

**Mr JAMES WALLACE (Hornsby) (18:25):** Earlier this year the greater Hornsby area was impacted by severe storms that brought down large trees and caused major power outages. Much of the Hornsby electorate is rural. A large tree collapsing can make the difference between being able to get home or not, or whether you have power. Understanding this, the local community responded, as it always does, with strength, compassion and resilience. Our local SES volunteers were outstanding, often supported by RFS brigades. They worked around the clock to remove broken trees, secure damaged houses and ensure that local residents were safe. In the space of just a few days, they resolved almost 450 requests for assistance in our area. I recently visited them, and what struck me most while they were doing their work was the diversity of people's backgrounds. There are office workers, who have taken time off from their jobs, volunteering alongside those who have just finished high school. Thank you to all our volunteers.

### **CHRISTOPHER WILKINSON**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (18:26):** I acknowledge Christopher Wilkinson, an Engadine local and critical care paramedic. Mr Wilkinson was awarded the prestigious Ambulance Service Medal in the 2025 Australia Day Honours for his outstanding contributions to paramedicine and aeromedical care. Mr Wilkinson has been a dedicated paramedic for the course of his 42-year career. He has worked in several operational frontline roles that have been paramount in saving lives across New South Wales. His expertise has led to the critical care of numerous patients in remote and hazardous environments. Mr Wilkinson was involved in the rescue of Stuart Diver from the 1997 Thredbo landslide. He was also deployed to the 2024 Bondi Junction mass casualty incident and the Wakeley riot. On behalf of the community, I thank Mr Wilkinson for his dedication to saving the lives of those in need and congratulate him on his Ambulance Service Medal.

### **TAMWORTH DEMENTIA RESPITE SERVICE**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (18:27):** Today I celebrate the 30-year anniversary of the Oakwood Centre of the Tamworth Dementia Respite Service. Recently I had the pleasure of joining staff and clients in reflecting on 30 years of dedicated service to the Tamworth community. Living with and caring for someone with dementia can be incredibly challenging. Around 1,200 people live with dementia in Tamworth and its surrounding towns and villages, which is why the respite service offered at Oakwood is so important. Oakwood's day programs provide essential respite and relief for full-time carers, giving them an opportunity to go to the shops, get a haircut or just have an hour or two to themselves. That is the mission of the Oakwood Centre: to provide the right support to change the journey and ensure that those living with dementia can have a full and rich life. I sincerely thank all the staff for their commitment to care over the past 30 years. It was a pleasure to meet the staff and their clients. Their work makes Oakwood a very special place and a real asset for the Tamworth community.

### **LEBANESE AUSTRALIAN FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (18:28):** It was a pleasure to meet recently with the wonderful women from the Lebanese Australian Friendship Association, including president Hania Darwich. I recognise their outstanding dedication to fostering social cohesion and multicultural harmony between the Lebanese and Australian communities. This inspirational group located in Condell Park facilitates meaningful discussions and mutual understanding, and encourages diverse perspectives. Through community forums, cultural events and educational initiatives, the association brings people together and ensures that voices from all backgrounds are heard and valued. Their commitment has provided a vital space where individuals feel safe, heard and empowered within our broader community. By uniting people through social connections, cultural exchange and mutual support, they have helped create a stronger, more resilient and inclusive society. Their tireless work in fostering understanding is an inspiration. I look forward to supporting future initiatives that continue to enrich our local community. I thank them for all they do in our community.

### **NICHOLAS CHAMBERS**

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (18:29):** Today I congratulate one of my constituents, Nicholas Chambers, for receiving an Northern Beaches Council Outstanding Community Service Award at this year's Australia Day awards ceremony. Nicholas has shown ongoing dedication and commitment to his community through his work as vice president of junior cricket at the Cromer Cricket Club. Nicholas organises events in partnership with local schools to encourage young students to get involved in the awesome sport that is cricket. He has helped oversee a significant boost in engagement for the boys and girls junior cricket teams from fewer than 20 players to now almost 100 players. How amazing! Previously Nicholas won the Individual Achievement Award – Youth in the Northern Beaches Eco Awards 2023 for his efforts to get more young people involved in conservation. He is a man of many talents. Nicholas continues to be a strong advocate for the environment and volunteers his time with local organisations to support environmental awareness. I congratulate Nicholas on an award well deserved. May he keep up the good work, and I will see him on the cricket field next Sunday.

### **RON HUGHES**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (18:30):** Ron Hughes was a giant of local sport and one of Liverpool's most loved locals. We first met when I became chair of the Liverpool Sports Committee, where Ron was a vocal advocate for improving local sporting facilities and went above and beyond to make sure local kids had support. Ron and his wife, Judy, contributed their time extensively to the Southern Districts Soccer Football Association. He initially found new purpose and fulfilment with the Liverpool Rangers Soccer Club after a workplace injury changed his career plans. He was well known for being the Rangers' unofficial photographer. Most weekends he parked himself at the goals, camera in hand, refusing a drink so he that he would not miss a second of play. Ron often handed out CDs of the photos he took, sharing memories that still live on. Ron and Judy's contribution to Liverpool Rangers over 27 years led to the Committee Member of the Year award being renamed the Ron and Judy Hughes Shield earlier this year. Ron's contribution to local sport is so great that he was awarded Football NSW's prestigious George Churchward Medal in 2012. Vale, Ron Hughes. You will be missed.

### **SUSAN TAYLOR**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (18:31):** I acknowledge and congratulate Mrs Susan Taylor on an extraordinary 33 years of service to Baulkham Hills North Public School. For more than three decades Mrs Taylor has profoundly shaped the lives of thousands of students, guiding them with compassion, wisdom and unwavering dedication. As a classroom teacher, Mrs Taylor had an innate ability to bring out the best in every child. Her passion for literacy transformed the way students engaged with reading, opening doors to a lifetime of learning.



Her influence extended beyond the classroom. As assistant principal and, later, deputy principal, she mentored staff, supported families and played a pivotal role in shaping the very culture of the school. Her leadership was defined by kindness, professionalism and an unrelenting commitment to excellence. On 11 December 2024 I was fortunate to attend the school to commemorate her farewell. I witnessed firsthand the immense respect and affection she has earned from students, staff and families alike. It was a testament to the lasting impact she has had on the community and it was clear how deeply she will be missed. I thank Susan Taylor for her immeasurable contribution and wish her all the best in her well-earned retirement.

#### **GREG QUEENAN**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (18:32):** I congratulate Greg Queenan on being named Maitland's Citizen of the Year at the 2025 Australia Day Awards. Greg's lifelong dedication to music, particularly through his leadership and mentorship with City of Maitland Pipes and Drums, has made a profound impact on our community. For over 50 years Greg has inspired generations of musicians. His work with City of Maitland Pipes and Drums has helped preserve and promote the proud tradition of pipe band music. Through his leadership, the band has flourished with regular performances across the region, including hosting the 2024 NSW State Pipe Band Championships. What a fantastic event that was. Greg's tireless efforts have ensured that the tradition of Scottish pipe music remains alive and well in Maitland and also across the rest of our great State. On behalf of the Maitland community, I congratulate Greg on this well-earned recognition and thank him for his incredible service to music.

#### **MAYOR NEVILLE KSCHENKA**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (18:33):** I am pleased to share with the House that Mayor Neville Kschenka was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia at this year's Australia Day Awards. He has been acknowledged for his many years of service to local government and to the community of Narrandera. Neville's volunteering and community participation started over five decades ago with his first fundraising effort in the late 1960s, when his band, The Bandits, raised \$200—which was then a substantial sum—for the Tasmanian bushfire disaster. Neville became a Narrandera Shire councillor in 2012 and has served as Narrandera's mayor since 2016. During that time Neville has always put the community's best interests at the forefront of any decision, project or challenge that the council faced. Neville, in his familiar way, described receiving the award as "quite humbling". He emphasised the importance of the support he received from his wife, Carmel, family, friends and colleagues over the years.

#### **SARASWATI PUJA**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (18:34):** I was delighted to join Bongodyut to celebrate Saraswati Puja on Saturday 1 February. Bongodyut was recently established to bring the Bengali community together for important cultural celebrations after successfully running the Indian Fans Alliance Shield football competition at the futsal court at the Granville Centre over the past three years. As Bongodyut's president, Dr Rohan Chowdhury, said:

As we honor the cultural traditions of the South Asian community, we also seek to inspire our youth to contribute towards the betterment of Australia, encouraging them to come forward, engage with their communities, and help build a brighter future for all.

The celebration of Saraswati Puja was a perfect occasion to bring the community together. Saraswati is the goddess of wisdom, knowledge, music and learning. While the annual celebration of Saraswati Puja marks the start of spring in India, here it is a perfect time for Australian Hindus to seek the blessings of the goddess of learning at the start of the school year.

#### **KAY PELLIZZER**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (18:35):** Today I recognise Kay Pellizzer for her exceptional commitment to her town and community. Kay recently retired at the age of 80 from the Yenda Producers Co-operative Society after an incredible 63 ½ years. Volunteering has always been a priority for Kay. For 40 years she has served as President of the Yenda Progress Association. Her love of rugby league led her to being secretary and treasurer for Yenda Rugby League Football Club and treasurer for Group 20 Rugby League for 25 years. Kay's exceptional service extends far beyond those roles, having dedicated herself to numerous voluntary positions throughout her life. In 2020 she was recognised by the New South Wales Government as a Hidden Treasure for her outstanding contributions. Her unwavering dedication to the Yenda community is truly inspiring, and I am proud to commend her for it.

#### **LAKE MUNMORAH PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (18:36):** I acknowledge Grace Bendeviski, Sonny Quigg, Ivy Zammit, Kai Bramley, Sophie O'Connor, Addison Blake, Sunny Williams and Teddy Workman on being named as the Lake Munmorah Public School

leadership team for 2025. The students have consistently demonstrated a strong work ethic and a deep commitment to their school community. They represent Lake Munmorah Public School with exceptional pride and integrity. Throughout their time at school, each of the students has actively contributed to a wide range of school activities and events. Beyond their achievements, they have consistently served as positive role models, inspiring their peers with their behaviour and their actions. Their appointment to the 2025 leadership team is a testament to their hard work, character and dedication. I have full confidence that they will embrace their new leadership roles with great pride and, in doing so, develop valuable skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. I congratulate them all.

#### **ZARA SEIDLER**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (18:37):** I congratulate Zara Seidler on being nominated as a finalist for the 2025 NSW Young Woman of the Year Awards. Zara is well known in our community and online as one of the creators of *The Daily Aus*, a social-first news service that has transformed how young Australians receive news. Motivated to better inform her peers and promote a healthier democracy, she engages over two million young people each month via social media, newsletters, podcasts and a website. Zara has also co-authored the book *No Silly Questions*, designed to help young people understand the world around them. She is a regular commentator on *ABC News Breakfast* and *The Today Show*. As a business leader, journalist and presenter, Zara continues to make an incredible contribution to our community. I congratulate her on making the shortlist. I might be biased, but she has my vote.

#### **ALLIE PEPPER**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:38):** Today I acknowledge Allie Pepper. From her beginnings as a Hazelbrook local to her student days at Katoomba High School and Blue Mountains TAFE, Allie has gone on to do remarkable things. As an alpine mountain guide and self-described "menopausal mountaineer", Allie has honed her skills over the past 25 years. During that time, Allie has summited five of the world's 8,000-metre peaks without oxygen—more than any other Australian woman—and in 2011 she summited Mount Everest. Allie has dedicated her time to training others in climbing and guiding, and she is an incredible role model for women in the field. Allie took this even further when she became a strong voice in speaking out about her intense experience with perimenopause, divorce and depression, describing how it nearly brought her career to an end and how, through finding her right supports, she overcame and went on to feel stronger than ever. Allie's latest project is the 14 Peaks Challenge. Allie inspires us all, and I am in awe of her dedication, vulnerability and leadership, and her incredible drive to follow her dreams. Good on you, Allie!

#### **UPPER HUNTER ELECTORATE AWARDS**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (18:39):** I congratulate Geoff Sharrock of Fordwich, who becomes a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to the mining industry and the community. Geoff's AM is of State significance, having led exploration for the coal which became New South Wales' biggest open-cut resource: the Mount Arthur coalmine. He continues to serve the community on the board of the Broke Fordwich Private Irrigation District. Geoff and his wife, Helen, are wonderful people, and I am proud to call them friends. I also congratulate Gerard McMillan, who received the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community and to business. Gerard's OAM recognises 40 years as general manager of Singleton Diggers and decades of involvement with Rotary and the Catholic Church. Gerard is a true legend in our community. John Hedley is another worthy of congratulations, who was awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal. He has been fighting fire since 1974. Keep going, mate. You are a legend.

#### **NEW YEAR TET**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (18:40):** New Year Tet is the most important cultural celebration for the Vietnamese community. It marks the start of the Lunar New Year, and it is also a time for joy, reflection, respect and unity. It was an honour and privilege to represent the Premier of New South Wales and join my parliamentary colleagues, friends and the community in celebrating the 2025 New Year Tet festival, organised by the Vietnamese Community in Australia, NSW Chapter, over three days from 6 to 9 February 2025 at the Fairfield Showground. This year was especially significant as it marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Vietnamese community's settlement in Australia. We were honoured to have the Prime Minister, the Hon. Anthony Albanese, join us in celebrating this momentous occasion. The spirit of the Tet festival filled the air with vibrant decorations, cultural performances, formal ceremonies, festive music, fun activities and spectacular fireworks. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to Mr Thang Ha and the Vietnamese Community in Australia NSW organising committee for their outstanding efforts in making this a successful, safe and unforgettable celebration.

### KIAMA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (18:41):** Today the Parliament of New South Wales proudly recognises the Kiama Surf Life Saving Club and its exceptional volunteers for their bravery and dedication. Special acknowledgment goes to Charlie and Harry Britton, Dave Griffin, Brad Moore, Ed Birchall and Brian Taber, who were honoured at a bravery awards presentation on Saturday 25 January 2025. Their extraordinary actions on Christmas Day 2024 saved four lives at Surf Beach in Kiama during a dangerous rip rescue. I also commend Mr Phil Perry, president of Kiama Surf Life Saving Club, and patrol captain Ben George for their leadership. As the local MP, I am deeply proud of our surf lifesaving volunteers, whose courage and commitment ensure our beaches remain safe. This rescue is one of many complex operations undertaken by surf lifesavers across my electorate during the busy holiday season. Their efforts exemplify the spirit of community service and highlight the importance of water safety education. I thank all members of the Kiama Surf Life Saving Club for their unwavering dedication to protecting lives and keeping our community safe.

### CENTRAL COAST FOOD LOVERS

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:42):** Tonight I am delighted to acknowledge the Central Coast Food Lovers Facebook group for its ability to foster and unite thousands of community members who are from different walks of life. This magnificent group is filled with locals, tourists and business owners, who have a few things in common, including a love of food, support for local businesses and, best of all, community spirit. It does not matter if it is looking for a cheap takeaway or a fancy anniversary dinner—one or a hundred experts in this group of over 32,000 members will be sure to point in the right direction. As someone who enjoys home-cooked dinners, I greatly appreciate the mouthwatering dishes created by the exceptional home cooks in this group. On top of that, the members always have an open mind and willingness to learn about different parts of the world that inspire the incredible culinary scene on the Central Coast. The Central Coast Food Lovers group epitomises the core values of community, and I thank the superstar group admins as well as the members for making our coast a better place to live just one meal at a time.

### PROJECT YOUTH

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (18:43):** I recognise the incredible team at Project Youth in Miranda on being named Community Group of the Year at the Sutherland Shire Council 2025 Australia Day awards. Founded in 1992 as the Eastern Area Service for Youth, Project Youth supports young people aged 12 to 24 across the Sutherland shire, Georges River and Bayside, offering programs that enable young people to be connected, safe, achieving and healthy. This includes those who face disadvantages such as homelessness, mental health issues, drug and alcohol dependency, family dysfunction, lack of education, unemployment, involvement in the criminal justice system, abuse, neglect and poverty—through trauma-informed and relational approaches. This would not have been achieved without the hard work of the Project Youth team. I particularly recognise Jodie Darge, Kevin Crowe, Jade Bankier and Karen Tsoumbaras, along with team leads Justin, Matt, Taylor, Brooke and Ruby and the wider team. They work tirelessly to provide all young people, regardless of the disadvantage they may face, with the opportunity to thrive. I thank the team at Project Youth for their efforts in helping to change the world one young person at a time.

### HAJJEH ABLA KADOUS, OAM

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (18:44):** I am pleased to congratulate Hajjeh Abla Kadous on being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for her outstanding contribution to the local community, particularly in empowering women and girls. As the president of the Islamic Women's Welfare Association [IWWA], she has spent decades providing various services, including anti-discrimination forums, school readiness programs, youth camps, cooking classes and any other area that is required. IWWA was established in 2000 as a non-profit organisation to meet the growing religious and social needs of Muslim women and their families. Through her determination, she raised funds through sewing, cooking and selling items to purchase a state-of-the-art function centre to serve as the organisation's home. Leading a team of 50 volunteers, she shows no signs of slowing down and remains active well into her seventies, continuing to grow the organisation. Hajjeh Abla continuously instils the value and importance of females learning and enjoying tasks that they are passionate about. This recognition is truly well deserved, and I am so proud of everything she continues to do. I thank her for her fantastic work and continuous effort in making women all around our community feel valued and included. She inspires us all.

### JOHN SCOTT

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (18:45):** Friendly, helpful, caring and dedicated—those are just some of the words that Talbingo people use to describe community champion John Scott. It is not surprising that the

well-known quiet achiever and Rural Fire Service captain was named Talbingo's Citizen of the Year on Australia Day. It was my honour to attend the celebrations and see the award go to John as a most worthy recipient. At 79, the former Snowy Mountains Scheme worker is the longest serving RFS captain in the Riverina Highlands. As brigade captain for more than 23 years, he has led the fight against major fires, most recently the devastating 2019-20 disaster. This is a remarkable achievement on its own, but John's service to community extends even beyond protecting it. He is a life member of the Talbingo Country Club, where he has volunteered for more than 30 years, and in 2024 he became the town's first community-selected Australia Day ambassador—a choice that reflects the esteem in which he is held. Active in charity and sporting events, he is always there to lend a hand and is quick to assist those in need. I congratulate John, and I thank him for all he has done.

#### **NORWEST CHRISTIAN COLLEGE**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (18:46):** The start of a new school year is always a time of excitement and fresh beginnings: new classes, new opportunities and new leaders. With that in mind, I offer my congratulations to the 2025 Norwest Christian College student leadership team. Being recognised and chosen as a leader among their peers is a remarkable achievement, and they should all be incredibly proud of this honour. I extend special congratulations to school captains Adelle Hogan and Jeremiah Kaleeny, and vice-captains Kalycia Ong and Daniel McIntosh. With the guidance of principal Felicity Marlow, I am confident that they will make a lasting and positive impact on the Norwest Christian College community. The school's commitment to fostering a strong sense of connection, academic excellence, joy and responsibility sets the foundations for their leadership. I have no doubt that this new team will uphold and enhance those values in meaningful ways, benefiting both their peers and their future ambitions. Once again, I say congratulations.

#### **MOSMAN PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (18:47):** I am consistently impressed by the students, the staff and the culture at Mosman Public School, so I was not surprised to hear that the school had been shortlisted for the 2024 NSW Environmental Education Awards in the Sustainable Schools NSW School of the Year category. Being shortlisted in this competitive category is an incredible recognition of the school's ongoing commitment to sustainability and environmental education. It is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the teachers, staff, parents and students. Mosman Public School engages in numerous environmental and sustainable initiatives, including composting, clean-ups, garden club and worm farm, and it is always looking for ways in which it can increase its use of sustainable energy, including solar. I especially congratulate Sarah Hughes and Sally Giblin on being recognised for their continued support and leadership in driving the school's sustainability initiatives. I congratulate the students, teachers, staff and parent volunteers, and I thank them for their unwavering commitment to environmental sustainability and bettering our community. I look forward to seeing all the great work that Mosman Public School will continue to do this year and in years to come.

#### **DAVID STUART-WATT, AM**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (18:48):** I congratulate Catherine Field resident David Stuart-Watt, who has been recognised as a Member of the Order of Australia for his significant service to the civil infrastructure and transport industry. With nearly 50 years in the industry, David has played a key role in shaping Australia's roads and transport networks. A civil engineer since 1975, he held leadership roles, including president of Roads Australia from 2010 to 2019. He now chairs the fellowship mentoring program and also visits me on occasion to give updates and advice on local traffic issues. His impact extends across both the public and private sectors, having worked in senior executive roles in a number of organisations. His expertise has played a critical role in infrastructure planning, road safety and regulatory reforms, making our roads safer and more efficient for all users. His dedication to the industry and commitment to mentoring future leaders have left a lasting legacy. The recognition is a testament to his contributions and leadership. Congratulations to David on this well-deserved honour.

#### **ALI MOKDAD**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (18:49):** I recognise one of the youngest baristas in our community, Ali, aged 11, who has been brewing up some fantastic coffee at the Peaky Grinder Cafe. When his mum, Sarah Mokdad, opened the brand-new cafe in August, Ali began by helping to take orders. Over time, he has been trained to make delicious coffee, with many customers requesting him to make their order. It is always wonderful to see the younger generation serve the community, and Ali's passion and dedication at such a young age is a breath of fresh air. I am fond of a flat white, so I will definitely be dropping by to taste one of his famous coffees. Family small businesses are truly the backbone of our community. I encourage everyone in the local area to go and support Ali and his family by enjoying a coffee or a meal at the Peaky Grinder. I look forward to seeing Ali perfect his craft and continue serving customers for many more years to come.

**AUBURN ELECTORATE STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (18:50):** I acknowledge the outstanding efforts of the NSW State Emergency Service Auburn unit crew, who have been working tirelessly in response to storms that have impacted our community over the Christmas holiday period. The dedicated Auburn SES volunteers have been out in the field, assisting residents affected by the severe weather, providing support and helping with storm damage recovery. The volunteers responded to over 60 local jobs, ensuring that our community remained safe and supported during challenging times. With severe storms becoming more prevalent and more predicted, I urge residents to stay informed through the NSW SES website or the Hazards Near Me app. I thank the Auburn SES team for their commitment and tireless efforts. Their selfless dedication and rapid response have been invaluable in helping residents recover from flood, wind and rain damage. I thank every volunteer for their ongoing service to our community.

**GINA SMITH**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (18:51):** I acknowledge Gina Smith from Urana, who is retiring from the Urana District Health Service after 45 years of dedicated nursing. While Mrs Smith is retiring from full-time work, her passion for nursing remains strong. She will continue to work casually at Urana and Oaklands medical centres. Mrs Smith's nursing journey began in 1979, with her preliminary training in nursing commencing at Albury Base Hospital. She became a registered nurse in 1982 and started her career at Urana hospital, then called McCaughey Memorial Hospital. In 1985 she expanded her skills by completing a midwifery certificate in Sydney and returning to Urana. She has worn many hats, including director of nursing. I thank Gina for her incredible dedication to our community and for the years of care and compassion she has shared through her nursing career. As she begins this new chapter, I hope that retirement brings her all the joy she deserves, with plenty of time to enjoy her crafts and create wonderful memories with Patrick and her family.

**FATHER DOMINIC DINH**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (18:52):** Making the decision to join the priesthood, serve God and the community, and undertake years of study and reflection requires commitment, resilience and very strong faith. This year Father Dominic Dinh, the parish priest of St John the Baptist in Bonnyrigg Heights, celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination. Father Dominic was born in Vietnam and, like so many in our area, came to Australia as a refugee in 1980. He was ordained at St Mary's Cathedral in 2000, the great jubilee year, and celebrates his silver jubilee during another jubilee year. Father Dominic has served in parishes across Cronulla, Moree, Cabramatta and Bankstown, and now proudly serves the thriving parish at Bonnyrigg Heights by providing pastoral care, spiritual guidance and myriad other supports. I joined the community last month to celebrate and recognise Father Dominic's many years of service. I congratulate Father Dominic on this special milestone and wish him all the best as he continues to serve our community.

**JAMES RODGERS, OAM**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) (18:53):** I congratulate Mr James Rodgers, OAM, of Lane Cove West for his services to education and cricket. An institution at both Saint Ignatius' College Riverview and the Sydney University Cricket Club, he has published two books on old Ignatians who fought in World War I and World War II in addition to taking 869 wickets for the University of Sydney—a club record. Congratulations, Mr Rodgers.

*Private Members' Statements***CARNARVON GOLF COURSE**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (18:54):** I welcome everyone back to the Parliament after the Christmas period. Unfortunately for the people of Auburn, it was not much of a Christmas and we did not get the Christmas gifts we were expecting. In fact, we got quite a surprise in the Auburn electorate. I received a phone call from a journalist asking me whether I knew anything about a proposal to hand over Carnarvon Golf Course to the cemetery. I said to the journalist, "Surely you must be joking. Surely you mean Strathfield's golf course, which is co-located with the cemetery." A couple of days later I found out that the journalist was correct. Carnarvon Golf Course, one of the busiest golf courses in Western Sydney with 1,500 booked rounds of golf every week—not to mention the walk-ins that come in after three o'clock every day—is on a shortlist of sites proposed to be handed over to Rookwood Cemetery for more cemetery space.

I understand the need for more cemetery space. My electorate knows that all too well. I have a whole suburb dedicated to cemetery space. But in a growing city like Sydney there has been a severe lack of planning as we have built new cities around Western Sydney airport and other places. We know about the schools and hospitals, but a raft of infrastructure like churches, temples, mosques and cemeteries was not included in that

planning process. They needed to be included as part of the master plan when infrastructure was designed. At the end of the day, a golf course that is approaching its centenary in two years time, that is not the smallest golf course, that is not underused and that is the largest sporting precinct in my electorate is not extra space to be handed over to a cemetery to make up for the past failed efforts of governments and their lack of planning for cemetery space. The golf course and others around Sydney seem to be easy pickings for government, but they are fundamentally important.

We have just had community recognition statements, and I heard member after member acknowledging the volunteers and sportspeople in their communities. Things like golf courses are vital infrastructure that give us those sportspeople. They make a huge difference to the health of our communities. Talking about preventative health, 40 per cent of it comes from sport and exercise. There are not many sports that people can play from the cradle to the grave. They are not the sports that get the most money, like rugby league. Those sports are swimming, tennis and golf at community facilities. They are the sports making a difference from the day a person is born to the day they die. We have 95-year-old golfers who turn up for three rounds of golf every year. When we are concerned about mental health, isolation and the loneliness epidemic, we do not give away our busiest community open spaces that are used by everybody.

These golf courses and sporting precincts need to be protected. They need to be protected not just for health benefits; the Carnarvon golf course is a flood overflow area. If members were down at Olympic Drive the other day when the rain bomb hit, they would know that is probably the last place to put a golf course.

There is a dam in the old Lidcombe hospital site—dam number six—and the golf course is part of the important waterways that make up the Cooks River and the Haslams Creek precincts. They are not just empty spaces. While we get uplift and medium- to high-density done, governments of all colours need to recognise the benefit and importance of protecting those public spaces for our people. I will continue to fight this. I am very unhappy with the way I found out about it. The community is not happy. We will continue a campaign against it. I urge all members to give greater consideration to planning not just of cemeteries but of places of worship and public spaces that need to go along with everything else that we are putting in this city.

#### LANE COVE ELECTORATE

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) (18:59):** The summer break was a time for families to come together, celebrate and recharge for the year ahead. I hope that all of us had that opportunity to reunite and be thoroughly rejuvenated. However, not all of us were able to unwind and recharge, and I extend my sincere thanks to all our emergency service personnel, healthcare workers and volunteers who worked tirelessly throughout the festive season to keep us safe, supported and healthy. As members would be well aware, the summer break is often spent outdoors. As such, I acknowledge the continued progress on the revitalisation of Bedlam Bay in my electorate. This long-awaited project is steaming ahead and is set to be completed by April, hopefully with just enough time to get a dip in.

Wholly funded under the former Coalition Government's Places to Swim grants program, the \$560,000 capital works program is completely transforming the site with a new swimming enclosure and improved site access. Once completed, Bedlam Bay will join the officially opened Putney Beach, which is just a couple of kilometres up the river. Opened just a couple of weeks ago, the Putney Beach activation was also funded under the Places to Swim grant program and is already teeming with locals making use of the fantastic amenities on offer. Putney Beach will undoubtedly become a cherished community asset and a prime location during the summer months to celebrate important occasions such as Australia Day.

Australia Day should be a day on which we proudly recognise the outstanding achievements of citizens of our nation and those individuals in our community honoured for their contributions to public service, volunteering and excellence in their fields. It is often hard to impart the immense time and energy these recipients have dedicated to their particular causes and fields, often shying away from and refusing recognition for their work. Nonetheless, the Order of Australia is an appropriate way in which we can thank those individuals and their families, who have given so much for our nation and to our nation. As such, I extend my most sincere congratulations to Ms Penelope Margaret Gerstle, AM, who was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for her significant contributions towards upholding human rights and providing essential services to people with disabilities.

Additionally, I congratulate the following locals who received the Medal of the Order of Australia, or OAM, for their contributions to society: James Rodgers for his service to education and cricket, Maritsa Cibas for her service to the Lithuanian community and Romualdas Cibas for his service to the Lithuanian community. Australia Day is also a time when we welcome our newest citizens who have taken the pledge to become part of this great nation. The ceremonies in Lane Cove, Ryde and Hunters Hill saw close to 150 new citizenships conferred upon residents of my electorate. Our local citizenship ceremonies are always a moving reminder of the

values that unite us, being freedom, democracy and a fair go for all. I welcome those new Australians and wish them all the best as they embark on this new chapter of their lives and as they embrace their new identity as Australians alongside their respective cultures and customs.

In that vein, I also extend my warmest wishes to all those celebrating Chinese New Year and wholeheartedly wish auspicious fortunes to all. The Lane Cove community is off to a flying start in 2025 and is set for a jam-packed year. I look forward to working hard with my community so that we retain our crown as the best electorate to live, work and to raise a family.

### **LIVERPOOL ELECTORATE MOSQUITO OUTBREAK**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (19:03):** I provide an update to the House about mosquito management in Liverpool. Many would remember that last year south-west Sydney dealt with a mosquito outbreak. As many who live along the banks of the Georges River or near Chipping Norton Lake would know, mosquitoes are commonplace as the weather warms up. There are dozens of mosquito species. However, last year saw an increase in the sheer number and range of mosquitoes. This was, at least in part, because of the growth of frogbit weed in oxidation ponds at Sydney Water's recycling plant in Warwick Farm. This weed provided an ideal breeding ground for mosquito larvae. Because of frogbit's classification under the Biosecurity Act, Sydney Water was required to undertake a complicated process to remove the weed from the ponds. However, following the designation of the site as a breeding ground for mosquitoes, Sydney Water mobilised quickly to remove all the weed from the pond in the space of a few weeks.

During that time, I was briefed daily by Sydney Water, as well as by various other government departments that treated their sites for mosquitoes. That allowed for full transparency with the public about the actions that the Government was taking to mitigate the issue. I said at that time in this place that there will be time for an honest assessment of all the factors that led to the outbreak and space to talk about the ongoing actions required to prevent an outbreak of this degree from happening again. I am advised by Sydney Water that, as a longer term measure, they will be engaging licensed contractors to monitor vegetation in the ponds, and to continually treat and remove it to prevent any future frogbit infestation. In doing that, the breeding ground for mosquitoes will be removed. This is in line with NSW Health's pathology advice.

At the local level, I am glad to see that my Liverpool Labor colleagues—councillors Sam Karnib and Ethan Monaghan—have been successful in moving and passing a motion to re-implement the mosquito management plan that was previously put in place under Mayor Wendy Waller in September 2019. As reported in the *Liverpool Leader*, in response to questions posed by Councillor Dr Betty Green, it was found that Liverpool council had failed to allocate funds to the mosquito management plan in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial years. This was due to the financial department at Liverpool Council believing the \$30,000 in funding endorsed by council in 2019 was a one-year only allocation.

In those financial years, the team responsible for the delivery of the plan sourced funds from other maintenance teams to cover ongoing costs, which led to fewer sprayings of target areas and identified mosquito breeding grounds. When a specific budget line item was restored to the plan for the 2022-23 financial year, that funding was nearly halved to \$18,000 and \$20,000 in the 2023-24 financial year. Thanks to the work of councillors Karnib and Monaghan, Liverpool council has now allocated \$50,000 per year to properly fund mosquito management on council-managed lands. Liverpool council approved that budget variation in accordance with that motion.

It is not just governments that are making sure to implement preventative measures. I am advised that Transurban has investigated and treated sites on its lands. With changes to localised weather patterns, it is important that we actively monitor and look at this event as an example of how weather can influence local ecosystems and public health. Climate change is likely to expand the range of habitable environments for many species of mosquitoes, and while most mosquito species that live around the Georges River do not carry disease, some do pose a risk to human health. We must remain committed to long-term preventative measures to mitigate that risk.

For those interested in mosquito management around our city—I know many in Liverpool are—I cannot speak highly enough of Associate Professor Cameron Webb, who was the mosquito expert onsite monitoring the response to the outbreak at the Liverpool water recycling plant and regularly posts updates on mosquitoes and the wetlands around Sydney that they are found in. I am also pleased to report to the House that, contrary to some exaggerated claims, Christmas was not cancelled and did go ahead.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** Hear, hear!

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** It was a great relief to all, I am sure. I put on record my sincere thanks and appreciation to Minister Rose Jackson, the staff at Sydney Water and other agencies, including the Department

of Education, for their responsiveness in relation to the outbreak and the treatment of affected sites and their prompt action to ensure that the outbreak within our community was contained. The community appreciates the timeliness and responsiveness of their actions.

### **TAMWORTH ELECTORATE SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (19:08):** It is my pleasure to praise the dedicated clinicians, staff and support workers at headspace Tamworth. Recently, I had the opportunity to visit the headspace Tamworth team and discuss the important work they do for youth. The mental health and wellbeing of our youth should be the highest priority for the Government. The statistics are concerning. The Kids Research Institute Young Minds Matters Mental Health Survey found that around 14 per cent of Australian children aged between 12 and 17 met the clinical criteria for one or more mental disorders in the previous 12 months. Anxiety disorders, major depressive disorders, attention-deficit and hyperactivity disorders, self-harm, eating disorders and suicidal behaviours are some of the most concerning mental health issues impacting our young people.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in Tamworth approximately 5.5 per cent of the population is aged between 10 and 19. In a city of just over 65,000 people, that means that there is a population of more than 3,500 youth aged between 10 and 19 in our community. That cohort may need the help, support and care of the 22 staff and clinicians at headspace Tamworth. The population numbers in Tamworth alone reflect the enormous job undertaken by the clinicians and staff, who also offer outreach services to Gunnedah, Moree and Narrabri. It was a privilege to visit headspace and meet the clinicians and staff. My takeaway from that visit was that headspace Tamworth is a very special space and an asset to our community. The office is headed up by manager Jason Reed, and run by clinicians such as Yoeny and Anna, who work on the clinical mental health needs of their clients.

It was inspiring to hear the story of Anna, a clinician whose journey with headspace began when she was a young person who reached out for support. Her positive experience with headspace inspired her to go to university to study psychology so she could give back and work in the organisation that helped her so much. It was enlightening to speak to Alicia, a resident dietician, who gave me great insights into the eating disorders many of our young people face. We know how important food is to the development and growth of the brains and bodies of our youth. Anna's role is critical to keep young people who may be experiencing eating disorders on track. I left my visit to headspace Tamworth thoroughly impressed by our local team and confident that the organisation is working hard to improve mental health outcomes for local youth. I thank Jason and his team for their hospitality and sharing their stories and expertise.

During my visit to headspace, I also had the chance to meet some of the team from Centacare New England North West, which has been running the diversionary program Keep on Track for more than a year. Keep on Track is an early intervention program that helps disadvantaged and troubled youth stay away from a life of crime before their first interaction with the courts and police. Centacare has the data to show the program works. The former Government funded the program with \$1.3 million through the Our Region, Our Voice, Regional Youth Investment Program. Thankfully, that funding was retained by the current Government. However, one year on, the funding is about to run out, which would be devastating for the Tamworth region and could lead to more kids falling through the cracks. I implore the Government to fund the program.

Centacare has already written to the Government and has the data to support the call for funding. Between July 2024 and September 2024, the Keep on Track program received referrals for 172 participants, 71.5 per cent of whom identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The program has an 86 per cent participation attendance rate and participants have been engaged 2,299 times. Those engagements keep our youth on track and away from the influence of wrongdoers who seek to coerce young people towards a life of crime. In response to all the debate and discussion about youth crime across regional New South Wales, Keep on Track is a program that works and should be funded. I call on the Government to step up and fund the program now. I will continue to do what I can to support Centacare and headspace Tamworth. I thank them for the important work they do for young people in our community.

### **EUROBODALLA REGIONAL HOSPITAL**

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (19:13):** On Wednesday 29 January I was privileged to visit the site of the new \$330 million Eurobodalla Regional Hospital to inspect the progress of the project. Since my last visit in early December 2024, the concrete slab for the lower ground floor of the north-western corner of the hospital has been poured, marking a major milestone for the project. That site includes the foundations for a new maternity and birthing unit and the first paediatric unit in the Eurobodalla. Much has occurred since the sod turning ceremony in July last year, which marked the start of construction. The new access road and future hospital car park areas have been built. Bulk site excavation has been completed and the foundations for the main hospital building are close to completion. The community can expect the main building to rise out of the ground over the coming weeks.



and months. Work on the new roundabout intersection on the Princes Highway, which will support future access to the new level 4 regional hospital, is expected to start in the next few months.

The Minns Labor Government is getting on with the job of improving local health services and has fully funded the new hospital. The \$330 million project is expected to support approximately 550 direct jobs, with the potential to support many hundreds of indirect jobs over the life of the project, which is expected to be completed in 2027. The project is an enormous boost for the local economy. The new hospital will be much bigger than the existing hospitals at Moruya and Batemans Bay. It will provide a high level and broad range of specialist health services for the Eurobodalla community, from Batemans Bay to south of Narooma, and will complement the South East Regional Hospital in Bega, within the coastal network.

The new Eurobodalla Regional Hospital will, for the first time in the region, provide level 4 critical care services, including a level 4 emergency department, which will have greater capacity than the combined capacity of the emergency units of the two existing hospitals. The critical care service will be completed with a purpose-built resuscitation area for trauma and other life-threatening presentations. It will be equipped with specialised clinical staff and advanced diagnostic and therapeutic equipment to offer onsite intensive care and emergency surgery. The first onsite MRI machine on the Far South Coast will be supported by CT scanning, ultrasound, general radiology and fluoroscopy. Definitive care will be delivered for the most seriously ill and injured patients on one site.

For the first time in the Eurobodalla, the new hospital will feature a life-saving eight-bed intensive care close observation unit. That level of clinical capacity will elevate surgical, medical, maternity and special care nursery services to level 4 capacity. That will save lives and keep local patients closer to home. The clinical capacity will continue to support renal dialysis, medical oncology and future radiation oncology, pending the current market scoping process. The 22-hectare site allows for radiation oncology, carer accommodation, education facilities and future expansion as the Eurobodalla population grows.

Concurrently, a new \$20 million community health facility is being built in Batemans Bay, with construction expected to commence this year, following planning approval and the appointment of a contractor. The new facility will provide a range of services, including allied health; child, youth and family services; women's health; sexual health; community nursing; wound management; palliative care; Aboriginal health; and mental health, drug and alcohol services. Complementing the new level 4 Eurobodalla Regional Hospital and Batemans Bay Community Health Centre is the Batemans Bay Medicare Urgent Care Clinic, which has treated more than 11,000 patients since opening in December 2023.

The Federal member for Gilmore, Fiona Phillips, who secured this important clinical service, is campaigning for extended hours and scope of practice to provide a comprehensive range of clinical services in the Eurobodalla. Her leadership, integrity, honesty, humility and consistency are a contrast to the former member for Bega, who now denounces the former Government's clinical service plan. His denial of the clinical services plan and feigned ignorance of the former Government's plan to close the level 2 and level 3 hospitals in order to build a single level 4 regional hospital lacks integrity, honesty and consistency. After failing to fully fund the project, he also failed to commence construction. He was dragged by public protest to commit to opening the hospital with level 4 services. This week he has given false and misleading information about critical care services, undermining public confidence in our future health services. He has demonstrated that in his universe, truth is not linear; it is something to be distorted and rewritten for political expediency.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (19:18):** I congratulate the member for Bega on his very strong advocacy, even prior to his election to Parliament. The Eurobodalla Regional Hospital is a fantastic achievement. We all know how hard the member has worked. People love and respect him, but the work he has done to achieve a \$330 million investment into Eurobodalla and the hospital's scope of practice—including the maternity unit and all the other clinical services he just described—is a credit to him and the community. Of course, he has worked with the Federal member for Gilmore, Fiona Phillips, and the Federal and State governments to secure that investment. State and Federal Labor governments are investing in the people of the South Coast. I congratulate the member.

## INLAND RAIL

### WAGGA WAGGA TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (19:19):** Before I begin, I also record my congratulations to the member for Bega on the upcoming Eurobodalla hospital. I have to say, as a previous health administrator in that area, that I am sure that the prospect of that new hospital and its high level of services will be very well greeted by the community. It will mark a great step forward. I share the Minister's comments and say well done.

Today I share the experiences of people my electorate whose lives face the negative impacts of major corporations and quasi-government projects. As the first example, I refer to Wagga Wagga's Margaret Walsh, who lives in a lovely historic home in the city centre. It is a home she has cherished for some 13 years, but one that is facing an assault of noise and vibration from the Inland Rail development. Like hundreds of residents along the route, Mrs Walsh is preparing to be shaken and rattled by the passage of multiple double-stacked freight trains every day. In the meantime, during the construction phase, almost every Wagga Wagga resident will be affected by traffic congestion, road closures, heavy vehicle movements and what will effectively be a division carving our city into two.

To its credit, Inland Rail has offered Mrs Walsh double glazing of her windows to reduce the noise, but her home—built in 1880 and one of the oldest in the city—cannot be adapted to modern treatments without damaging its heritage values, which is undesirable and possibly will not be allowed. Mrs Walsh is also worried about the entire community. She is an immigrant from Scotland who has lived in Wagga Wagga for 50 years, raised her family there and has a deep affection for her adopted home. She is alarmed by the impact of Inland Rail on the city's lifestyle, which is creating a barrier between north and south, devaluing homes and making neighbourhoods less desirable places to live. A petition to this place has been circulated and is garnering signatures. I have been asked to present to it in due course, and I will.

There are actions we can take. I will work to ensure the planning approval and traffic management conditions are followed to the letter. The developers are on notice that they are under scrutiny. No lapse in standards will be accepted. Furthermore, the New South Wales Government must make grade separation at the intersection of Bourke Street and Docker Street a priority. Without it, there is a risk that access to the hospital and other emergency services will be much more difficult for thousands of people south of our new dividing line. Yes, it will come at a cost but, for the future of Wagga Wagga, grade separation will be a necessity, not a luxury. Finally, and most importantly, planning must begin now to identify and set aside an easement for a rail bypass. I understand that a bypass will not happen overnight, but it must happen within a reasonable time and the community must be assured of that.

My second example of the cost of what could be seen as corporate indifference is telecommunications: telecommunications that work, so long as not too many people try to use them. After being persuaded by Telstra to upgrade to 4G or 5G, Mr Ray Billing of Batlow and many others in town found they had little or no internet or phone coverage for two weeks after Christmas. The same problem recurred over the Australia Day long weekend. At one point, Mr Billing had to get up at 5.00 a.m. to pay bills online because, as the day progressed, services became increasingly absent. Many residents there rely on a single tower, and it seems the tower cannot cope with demand when holiday-makers descend on Blowering Dam and the region. At a time when services are most needed, they do not work. How ludicrous!

Mr Billing and others are now bracing for the next holiday, when they expect to be plunged into another internet blackout. Five years ago that region was ravaged by a terrible fire, and adequate communications were essential to survival. But, now that 3G has been switched off, it appears that phone and internet will only be fully available in Batlow when they are least needed, and may be non-existent when a crisis erupts. Let us hope the next emergency does not happen in the holiday season. Surely the point of communications services is that they will be available all the time. It would not be tolerated in a metropolitan area, and it is not acceptable in small communities where travel times are long and phones and internet are essential.

The issue has been raised with me at the Batlow United Community Chamber on many occasions. Telstra must deliver the service their customers are paying for, and I call on them to upgrade their systems and fulfil their obligations. Nothing short of that is acceptable. In the same way, Inland Rail must ensure that Margaret Walsh and others are not crushed under the heel of progress. For a long-term solution, the planning for that bypass must begin now. Corporate indifference is not acceptable, whether it is in Bankstown or Batlow, Woolloomooloo or Wagga Wagga. Action must be taken and the time to act is now.

#### **MAITLAND ELECTORATE STORM EVENT**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (19:24):** I acknowledge and commend the outstanding efforts of those who stepped up to support communities following the recent storm events in the Hunter. The storms had a massive impact across the State, the wider Hunter and the Maitland local government area in my electorate, but the community of Woodberry was particularly impacted. I am so grateful we had no loss of life from those incidents in Maitland, and my heart goes out to the family of the person we lost in Cowra. The devastating weather events brought destruction and hardship to many families in Woodberry, yet in the face of adversity the resilience and generosity of their community shone through. They supported their loved ones, checked in on their neighbours and rallied as a community.

Emergency services including the NSW State Emergency Service, Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Ambulance, NSW Health and the Rural Fire Service all worked together tirelessly to ensure the safety of residents in that first instance. Their prompt responses to fallen trees, damaged homes and flooded streets were instrumental in minimising harm. For the Woodberry community, due to significant damage to energy infrastructure, power was not restored for five days. That meant families had to throw away all their refrigerated and frozen foods, and food security became a major concern for them. Local charities, government organisations and volunteer organisations played a critical role in supporting the community throughout that time. I pay special tribute to Minister Dib, who I had a lot of conversations with, Mal Lanyon from the Reconstruction Authority and Janelle Saffin, the Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery. They were all helpful convening those meetings around recovery.

On the ground initially were the Rapid Relief Team. They provided hot lunches. The Salvation Army then stepped in to provide ongoing meals. Woodberry Place of Friends, with generous support from Survivor's R Us, brought fresh food. Maitland Sikhs offered their amazing regular free food, including curries and doughnuts. Maitland Region Community Support provided food hampers. Ausgrid providing advice and facilitated claims for food spoilage. Hume Housing and the Red Cross supported residents in housing need. Of course our amazing service clubs also provided support. As the response moved to the recovery phase, I acknowledge the NSW Reconstruction Authority for its lead with the Department of Community and Justice. I thank Minister Jackson for reaching out to me and being available to assist in that space. Maitland Family Support and the Salvation Army offered financial assistance and emotional support. I also acknowledge the assistance provided by Services NSW, Services Australia, Legal Aid NSW and the various insurance agencies.

I also thank the local businesses and residents. Local supermarkets, butchers, pubs and cafes all provided meals. The Woodberry Warriors Football Club put on a community breakfast even while the power was still out. I have attended a lot of these kinds of disasters in recent times and in the last 10 years. I have to say the response that we got from the community this time was so different. Instead of waiting until after the event and going through the whole disaster claiming process, there were hot showers, there was food, there were charging points for people, and there were laundry facilities. That was all really part of that connection with community and being able to hear from residents what the issue was.

I thank my team, particularly my senior electorate officer, Perry Watson, and my chief of staff. They both stepped in and helped get those messages where they needed to go so that we got real action on the ground. I also thank Maitland City Council for its coordinated response. Its work in clearing debris, facilitating the provision of free hot showers, providing additional red bin pickups and keeping the public informed was vital in ensuring a smooth recovery process. I thank general manager Jeff Smith for his work and leadership in the disaster. I thank the councillors and the mayor, who had discussions with us. Even though Councillor Race Barstow did not have power in her own house, I know she was out helping people in her ward.

I thank my State colleagues. I also thank the member for Paterson, Meryl Swanson, and her Federal colleagues, particularly the Minister for Emergency Services, Jenny McAllister.

They worked together so rapidly with the State agencies to ensure natural disaster support for the community in its time of need. I also thank all of the residents for their patients. My team has been fantastic in getting out on the ground. We are continuing to meet at Woodberry over the next few fortnights to catch up with people and make sure that everyone is going well. We had quite a few people there on Friday, and I hope to see them all in a fortnight.

## ANTISEMITISM

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (19:29):** We commence a new parliamentary year in the shadow of a deeply troubling reality, with a surge of violent crime targeting the Jewish community of Sydney. On the final sitting day in this Chamber last November, our community was shaken by a major antisemitic attack. A car was set on fire and others were vandalised. Buildings and a well-known restaurant in Woollahra were defaced with hateful graffiti. It was pretty confronting. That morning, I spoke to local residents who were in a state of deep shock and distress because it was such a pronounced escalation of violence. Shockingly, it was just the beginning. Over the summer since that day, Sydney has witnessed more than 16 significant antisemitic attacks—mostly in our community in the eastern suburbs—and dozens of smaller incidents.

We saw another firebombing in Woollahra and then in Dover Heights. Synagogues have been vandalised and a childcare centre was set ablaze. The chilling discovery of a caravan loaded with explosives was an event that could have resulted in mass casualties. The scale and frequency of these attacks is alarming, and they demand our urgent attention. Nowhere else in the Western world is experiencing a surge in antisemitism as severe as we are experiencing in Sydney. Police choppers are flying low over my community with heat sensors and infrared cameras to keep us safe at night. Police patrols have doubled, armed guards are stationed in front of our schools

and parents are too afraid to send their kids home in their school uniforms in case they are identified as being Jewish.

Yesterday, we heard about safe spaces being created for Jewish students at universities in Sydney. They have to lock themselves away. Today, two nurses at Bankstown Hospital were stood down for a chilling video in which they expressed hate against, and wished harm and death on, Israeli patients. What on earth is happening in this city of ours? So many people ask me what is going to happen next. Jewish people in our community and across Sydney are so strong and resilient, but this is often too much to bear. People tell me that they are exhausted and angry, they are deeply saddened and feel so alone. Hateful rhetoric and criminal attacks are, unfortunately, dividing our city.

The criminals are trying to pit good, peace living citizens from across our suburbs against each other, and this is creating a sense of fear and suspicion. I also want to highlight some of the good. Today, the Parliamentary Friends of Israel met at the New South Wales Parliament. It was a room full of people committed to fighting against antisemitism, including the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, the Premier, the Minister for Health and other Labor Ministers, and crossbenchers too. It was a room united in its fight against antisemitism and committed to tackling this issue in a bipartisan way.

Last week, we saw great leadership from Mayor Will Nemesh of Waverley Council, which has a large Jewish population, and Mayor Ned Mannoun of Liverpool City Council, which has a large Muslim community. They showed that friendship can thrive in spite of a war in the Middle East that is creating so much pain for families and their local communities in Sydney. Those two leaders, along with Mayor Darcy Byrne of the Inner West Council, brought 22 local government leaders together to work towards supporting grassroots action for peaceful communities. I found that incredibly inspiring.

We need to do much more in this place. Firstly, we need legislation. Both the New South Wales Government and the Opposition have introduced bills to provide safeguards and tougher penalties for hate crimes, and they can work in a complementary fashion. I hope and expect that the debate will be conducted constructively. We need to strengthen our coordination with the Federal Government. The breakdown in response to the caravan of explosives found in Dural must not be repeated. This is a national security issue and Anthony Albanese must provide the Federal resources to combat it effectively.

We need to call these incidents what they are: domestic terrorism. We must be honest about the severity of this threat. We must encourage more voices to speak out. The Jewish community both in my electorate and across the State should not have to live in fear. Our response must be decisive, strong and uncompromising. We must defend the values of tolerance, safety and respect that define us as a society. If we fail to act now, we will only embolden those who seek to divide us. We cannot let that happen.

### **GRANVILLE BOYS HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (19:34):** Granville Boys High School has been in the news a lot lately, mostly due to the outstanding 2024 HSC results. The school ranked 243 in New South Wales—up from 316 in 2023. That is an incredible result for a school with a low socio-economic background. Sadly, the school was also the subject of a grotesque Islamophobic attack when a former casual teacher tried to run down the principal and school chaplain outside the school. This was one of many horrific and terrifying Islamophobic and antisemitic hate crimes in communities across Sydney in recent months. Back to the good news—this year's top ATAR of 98.65 was achieved by Donovan Korosaya. Charles Liu achieved an Atar of 96.65. When Charles came to Granville Boys High School in year 7, he was unable to speak English.

In other exciting news this week, former Granville Boys High School student and widely-acclaimed artist, Khaled Sabsabi, has been selected to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale. Granville Boys High School is the fastest growing boys' public school in New South Wales. Student numbers increased from 490 in 2019, to 840 in 2025 with a record number of year 7 students. This is a huge turnaround from the "soldiers of Granville Boys" scandal from 15 years ago, where a viral video, intended as a joke, led to parents withdrawing their sons in droves. It implied that students were involved in organised crime. It also posted a map of Australia overlaid with the Lebanese flag, which was captioned "Under New Management". It was a stupid joke that caused enormous damage.

I acknowledge the incredible efforts of principal Noel Dixon; his predecessor, Dr Linda O'Brien; school chaplain Sheik Wissam Charkawi; and all of the teachers in achieving this hard-fought transformation. One of the things that is really attracting students to Granville Boys High School is robotics. The Granbots won the 2024 First Lego League [FLL] Asia Pacific Open Championship. They represented Australia in the international FLL competition in Long Beach, California, and then visited NASA in Houston, Texas. They have three teams in upcoming FLL robotics national championships. Students also competed in the VEX Robotics 2024-2025

Australian National Championships, and a team from Granville Boys High School was invited to participate in the VEX international competition in the USA.

Over 400 students participate in the innovation and robotics program, with over 32 teams competing in robotics competitions. Granville Boys High School robotics students also help mentor primary school students from more than ten primary schools. In fact, I was shocked to visit the school last Wednesday and find students there on their last day of school holidays working on their robotics project, including Imran Abdullahi, Hassan Jamal-edine, Asad Chazathibrahim Kaliboulah and Isaac Ibrahim. I was so impressed! However, it is not just about robotics. Granville Boys was one of the first schools to start a barbershop program, which has opened opportunities for many boys.

Granville Boys High School is also the only New South Wales public school with a pipe band. In 2024 the Granville Boys High School pipe band played at more than 12 events, including the Granville RSL Anzac Day ceremony, the Sydney Opera House and the Schools Spectacular. Along with the Arabic drummers and the Islander dance group, the boys celebrate their cultures and learn about other cultures too. They also learn to work in a team and be creative. Granville Boys High School has a great sense of community and brings together families ever year for their Eid dinner, which last year raised over \$10,000 for Human Appeal and Médecins Sans Frontières.

Sadly, in recent years the school community has lost two students to drownings. This is part of a wider, tragic trend where men and boys from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, many of whom were born overseas, have been significantly overrepresented in drowning statistics. There are wonderful organisations, like Swim Brothers, which are teaching boys and men in my community to swim. They are achieving incredible results with non-swimmers learning to swim and then becoming lifeguards. It is inspiring, but much more needs to be done to address what is a widespread problem that has devastated my community again and again. Back in the day, when Granville Boys High School was seemingly in the bad books, the entire school was banned from the Granville pool. This is absolutely not what you need at a school filled with non- or poor swimmers in a country like Australia, where we live in the water in summer.

I am proud to have been able to negotiate the ban being overturned with the help of Mayor Ola Hamed of Cumberland City Council. It had been in place for nine years. None of the naughty students were at the school any more, and no-one at the pool or the school could even remember what they did wrong. Stigmatising an entire community is harmful, and when the community is a school it sets kids up to fail. I am so glad things have changed for Granville Boys High School. It has taken a lot of work in many different areas. Granville Boys is clearly on an upward trajectory, despite the challenges it faces. It is a wonderful school community that I am very proud to represent.

#### **AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR NEALE DANIHER**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:39):** I congratulate Ungarie's very own Neale Daniher on being named the 2025 Australian of the Year. Neale's resilience in the face of motor neuron disease [MND] is inspiring. His incredible journey began in one of the smallest but most resilient communities in the Cootamundra electorate, Ungarie. One of 11 children to Jim and Edna, he was born in West Wyalong and spent much of his childhood on the family sheep and wheat farm, some 600 kilometres from the New South Wales Parliament. When I attended the Australia Day celebrations in Ungarie this year, it was clear the town was buzzing with pride and admiration for one of their very own. Many know Ungarie as the home of Australia's biggest football, an 800-kilogram fibreglass replica Sherrin that proudly resides in Bing Wallder Park. It is a permanent tribute to Ungarie's famous footballing family, the Danihers. Neale and his brothers—Terry, Anthony and Chris—are legends of Australian football. They remain the only four brothers to have played together in an AFL or Victorian Football League [VFL] premiership match.

Neale's early sporting life saw him divide his time between playing Aussie rules football for Ungarie in the Northern Riverina Football League and playing rugby league for St Joseph's. Even after moving to Goulburn for high school, he remained loyal to the Ungarie Football Club, before being drafted to the Essendon Football Club in 1978 at just 17. Neale made his VFL debut for Essendon and quickly earned a reputation as a highly skilled player. At just 21 years old he was appointed club captain—a testament to his leadership and ability. Unfortunately, a series of knee injuries forced him into early retirement from the game he loved. However, Neale's passion and deep understanding of football ensured that his involvement in the AFL continued, first as a successful head coach of the Melbourne Demons and later in an off-field role as the West Coast Eagles' general manager of football operations.

In 2013 Neale received a life-altering diagnosis of MND. But despite the challenges posed by his condition, he has remained a key figure in the AFL and beyond, co-founding FightMND—alongside the late Dr Ian Davis, OAM, and Pat Cunningham—to raise awareness and fund critical research. Throughout his journey he has been

strongly supported by his amazing wife of 40 years, Jan; their daughters, Lauren and Bec; and their son, Ben. The FightMND campaign has raised over \$100 million for MND research, treatment and care initiatives. That extraordinary effort has significantly advanced medical research, providing hope for future breakthroughs and bringing MND into national focus like never before.

Neale's impact extends far beyond the football world, touching the lives of Australians from all walks of life. He has always remained deeply connected to his roots. At the Australian of the Year ceremony, his message was clear: Anything is possible, regardless of your background or obstacles. While MND has taken much from Neale, he focuses on what he can control. Despite the ongoing impact of his condition, he continues to inspire hope, motivating others with his unwavering determination and commitment to finding a cure for MND. Neale's legacy is not just about football or his personal battle with MND but also about his vision for a future where no-one has to suffer from this cruel disease. He has given a voice to those with MND, transforming awareness and funding efforts in Australia.

Neale's 2025 Australian of the Year award is a well-deserved, long-overdue testament to his incredible contributions and tireless work. His leadership, compassion and dedication to raising awareness for such an important cause have inspired so many. He continues to make a profound impact on the community and on the lives of those facing unimaginable challenges. I conclude with a powerful quote from Neale:

This disease is not incurable. It is simply underfunded and misunderstood. With focus, funding and unwavering determination, we can change that.

Neale Daniher's life and work exemplify resilience, leadership and selflessness. His courageous fight has changed the conversation around MND. With each step closer to a cure, may Neale continue leading the fight for many years to come.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** I also acknowledge Neale's work and the MND awareness campaign.

#### **SWANSEA ELECTORATE SCHOOL BUS SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (19:44):** I too acknowledge the contribution from the member for Cootamundra and acknowledge Neale's campaign. I am pleased to say that in my community, the Government has started the year by expanding much-needed school bus services to parts of the community that had no bus service. Just this week I joined with my good friend the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads to announce that for the first time, students from Crangan Bay will have access to school bus services to five local schools in Lake Munmorah. They include St Brendan's Catholic Primary School, St Brigid's Catholic College, Lake Munmorah High School, Gwandalan Public School and Lake Munmorah Public School.

To accommodate the extension of school bus services, changes will be made to both morning and afternoon services, with specific routes servicing individual schools. In the mornings, route 2195 will go to St Brendan's primary school and St Brigid's Catholic College; route 2209 will take students to Lake Munmorah High School; and route 2205 will service Gwandalan Public School and Lake Munmorah Public School. In the afternoons, route 2793 will collect students from Lake Munmorah High School; route 2654, from Gwandalan Public School; route 99, both St Brendan's primary school and St Brigid's Catholic College; and route 98, Lake Munmorah Public School.

That is a great result for our community, but I know there is more work to be done to improve bus services across the electorate after the Liberals' disastrous privatisation of Newcastle's bus services. The community of Catherine Hill Bay are anxious to see bus services privatisation of the four schools on Carters Road, Lake Munmorah. I assure the community that I have been discussing the matter with the regional transport Minister, with very positive results. The Government faces the challenge of a bus fleet that was underinvested in by those opposite, despite the growth of many regional communities like mine and those in Western Sydney. The discussions between me and the Minister are ongoing, and I hope that we can deliver a positive outcome for that community like we did in Crangan Bay.

Parents of students on the Central Coast will also be pleased to hear that progress is being made on the \$1 million election commitment from the Labor Government to start the process of addressing traffic congestion on Carters Road in Lake Munmorah. This is not the first time that members in this place have heard me raise Carters Road. I called on the former Liberal Government to fund design work for a connector road to Carters Road. That is exactly what is outlined in Central Coast Council's *Greater Lake Munmorah Structure Plan*. Those opposite could not find a cent to support the project, but Labor is delivering, fully funding \$1 million to work with Central Coast Council to design the connector road. Transport for NSW completed its data collection in December, including on the number of vehicles travelling through the intersection during peak periods. Transport is now

developing traffic modelling, working with council to prepare the environmental investigations and designs that are necessary to get the job done.

Our community has fought hard for that project, and I am proud to deliver for them, in the same way the Government has delivered in establishing new school bus services. The New South Wales Labor Government is delivering, and I will continue to fight for the essential services that our schoolkids need to get to school and home again.

### WEE WAA HOSPITAL

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (19:48):** In April 2023 I received word that hospital services at Wee Waa were about to be "temporarily reduced" at the beginning of May, which was later officially confirmed by the Hunter New England Local Health District. As soon as I heard about the reduced hours, I called the Minister for Health, who gave me assurances that the situation was not permanent and that he wanted to get the hospital open and returned to normal operating hours. I also requested the formation of a community-based Wee Waa Hospital working group to allow local citizens to engage with the Hunter New England Local Health District to work toward a solution.

The Wee Waa community hospital working group had its first meeting in May 2023. Not long after that, the Minister issued a press release stating that "the New South Wales Government has no intention of closing health services at Nyngan and Wee Waa". Nyngan hospital had a similar issue with the recruitment of nurses and had been operating with a reduced number of beds since October 2022. I met with the Minister in May to discuss a way forward for the hospital, and I have continued to meet with him regularly since. The main point of contention has always been the Hunter New England Local Health District.

In August 2023 the health Minister attended a session of the working group. That was a sign he was listening to the local community through the group's discussions. However, it later became clear that the Hunter New England Local Health District was not fully engaging with the working group and was thereby ignoring the wishes and concerns of the Wee Waa community. The working group received correspondence from the Hunter New England Local Health District that undermined its confidence in whether the local health district was operating in good faith. Clearly there was some reluctance to engage with the community, but there was also reluctance to come to any kind of resolution about Wee Waa Hospital.

Negotiations with a local doctor about engaging a visiting medical officer for the hospital had consistently gone nowhere, but the Hunter New England Local Health District also insisted it had been doing all it could to recruit nurses for the hospital, without any result. By comparison, Nyngan hospital went to a reduced number of beds and hours in October 2022. A working party was formed in August 2023. By January 2024 the hospital, in a more remote location than Wee Waa, was back to normal operation after the Western Local Health District successfully recruited new nurses. The major difference seems to have been that the Western Local Health District engaged with the community working party and worked hard to recruit staff for the hospital. It acted in good faith.

My electorate covers parts of four local health districts: Hunter New England, Western, Far Western and Murrumbidgee. Three of the four local health districts are good to deal with. They are responsive, listen to their communities and work with others toward providing quality health care for the people in their district. Hunter New England is the exception. I often hear concerns from constituents that Hunter New England has little concern for people west of the Great Dividing Range. All the resources are concentrated on the coast. It has a hub-and-spoke model, concentrating resources in larger population centres at the expense of smaller remote towns and forcing people to travel to better equipped hospitals for most forms of treatment. That model overlooks the importance of regional hospitals, which are more than just a place of primary care; they are often the hub of the local community and of other nearby communities. Whatever affects the running of the hospital can have a major impact on surrounding towns and communities.

Over the past decade many regional hospitals have faced major problems with staffing. Recruiting the workforce and retaining experienced staff to keep hospitals open and operating at full capacity can be difficult. Although governments have provided incentives for people to uproot their lives and move to the country, there are also many other factors that need to fall into place for a person to make the move. One factor is finding a decent place to live. A critical shortage of housing in recent years has proved to be a roadblock to attracting people to live and work in regional areas. Other factors include finding child care and school places, if the worker has a family or intends starting one. People considering taking up a job in a regional area also look at the available amenities that will make a town a wonderful place to live.

It all takes time and money, and there is never one simple solution to staff shortages. However, we can start the process by looking at what is going wrong with the Hunter New England Local Health District. I have asked the Minister to undertake a review into the decisions the local health district has made relating to Wee Waa

Hospital, and the efforts that have been made to recruit the staff needed to return the hospital to full operational hours. Other things can be done in the meantime. Tomorrow, I intend to introduce a bill to split the Hunter New England Local Health District into separate Hunter and New England local health districts. A separate New England local health district would be able to focus its resources and attention on places like Wee Waa, rather than focusing on the coast. Splitting the local health district would end the great divide between the health services in the east and those west of the ranges.

### WILDLIFE REHABILITATION

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (19:53):** Since 2020 I have reflected on the utter devastation caused by the Black Summer bushfires in my community of the Blue Mountains and across New South Wales. It has truly been a privilege to stand as a witness to the resilience of many communities for whom the bushfire experience was not their first, nor likely their last. People hold each other up in such times, through the acute days and on the long road to recovery. Many people in these communities are working together to find ways to move forward, to thrive and, more importantly, to be prepared for what may come.

The fires tore through the bushland with unimaginable ferocity. The heat, smoke and winds were too much to combat in some locations. The scars left behind are clearly visible as one looks across the Jamison Valley from the Three Sisters to Narrow Neck in the Blue Mountains. There are matchsticks where thick bushland used to sit. It is a sobering reminder for locals and the thousands of visitors who come each year. This place is fragile. This place is volatile. This place needs our urgent care and attention. This is where we need the best of our humanity on show.

When I look at the matchsticks that remain—those fragments of a fertile land left in ashes—it is unbearable to think of other losses, especially the loss of our innocent wildlife. For those creatures that did survive, their habitat has been torn from them in an instant. With an estimated three billion animals destroyed, the devastation will take generations to repair. When I reflect on this devastation and the ongoing issues around caring for wildlife—every day, not just in bushfires—I feel the weight and responsibility of my role as not only the local member for a World Heritage area but also Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment. I also feel the immense privilege of playing a part in finding a way forward through the devastating impacts of climate change.

Habitat destruction and loss are just part of the story. There is an ongoing need to ensure the State has a strong wildlife care sector, with best practice at its core, to ensure we can care for and protect our precious wildlife. In that light, it has been my honour to lead the New South Wales wildlife rehabilitation and care sector review over the past nine months, with more to come. Not a week goes by without a call or email from constituents across New South Wales pleading with me to ensure that more is done to protect and care for our beautiful wildlife. I have heard the same call as I travel around the State on site visits to hear from those on the front line of wildlife care and rehabilitation—the carers, vets, volunteers, sanctuaries and organisations working to make the sector stronger and viable into the future.

I am taking the Minns Labor Government's message to the sector across New South Wales. We are listening to its concerns and aspirations. We are examining the challenges. We value the input from those on the front line, and we are prepared to take action to support the revitalisation of the sector. The Government is undertaking a comprehensive review of the work that carers, rehabbers and vets do in this space. I take this opportunity to thank those who have sat with me and shared their knowledge and experiences, those who have contributed to fruitful round-table discussions, and those who have shown me around their facilities and sanctuaries and eloquently illustrated the work they do for our wildlife and just how much it means to them. I also thank those who have taken time to make submissions to the review online. They offer an invaluable insight into the day-to-day realities of caring for vulnerable and injured wildlife.

I have travelled to Queanbeyan and the Hills Wildlife Sanctuary in Dural, and heard from the fabulous Northern Rivers crew. I have been to the Southern Tablelands, the South Coast, Dubbo—including the wildlife hospital at the zoo there—and, of course, the Blue Mountains. I have been to North Ryde, Newcastle and the Hunter, and will soon visit Armidale, Coffs Harbour and beautiful Ballina. The Government is committed to supporting volunteers in the wildlife care and rehabilitation sector by considering the data obtained in order to deliver better outcomes for our precious wildlife and those who care for it. By valuing the immense contributions of workers and volunteers in the sector, we can work towards real and sustainable change.

Finally, I acknowledge the fabulous National Parks and Wildlife Service team led by Janelle Brooks and Anna Felton, who are organising and facilitating the review with respect, dignity and incredible hard work. I also make a brief but heartfelt acknowledgement of Josh and Harry, who are among the dedicated staff of the Minister for the Environment in the other place, the Hon. Penny Sharpe. They have also been supporting me with vigour, good humour and dedication. I thank everyone who is participating in this important review.



## RYDE ELECTORATE JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (19:58):** This Parliament acknowledges and congratulates the newest justices of the peace in the electorate of Ryde. It is an honourable appointment that comes with significant responsibility, and I ask the House to join me in recognising and celebrating those who have taken on this important role in service of our community. Justices of the peace [JPs] play a crucial role in upholding the integrity of our justice system. They are often the first point of contact for individuals navigating legal processes, providing essential services such as witnessing statutory declarations and affidavits, and certifying documents. Their voluntary contributions are invaluable in ensuring the smooth operation of our legal framework and reinforcing public trust in the system. At its heart, being appointed as a JP is about community service. It is a position that requires dedication, impartiality and an unwavering commitment to honesty. I extend my deepest gratitude to all of those who have stepped up to serve. Their willingness to take on that role is a testament to their integrity and desire to give back to our community.

As the local member for Ryde, I have witnessed firsthand the growing need for JP services in our local community. With our electorate experiencing significant growth, the demand for trustworthy individuals to provide those services has constantly increased. It is heartening to see so many community-minded individuals willing to raise their hands and contribute their time for the benefit of others. I would like to personally thank and acknowledge the newly appointed JPs: Elisabeth Every, Matthew Russo, Chitty Chiu, Emma Crosscombe, Sze Ng, Joel Loiacono, Kim Ng, Xinlu Xu, Warner Leung, Glenn Hodges, David Collins, Grace Xiaoying, Luke Ray, Karen Zhang, James Dinahle, Henry Zhang, Sheng-Ju Chen, Tran Thao Linh Phan, Sunny Ho, Richard Li, Arezu Jolan, Jason Rebelo, Jennifer Chan, Elizabeth Holmes, and Sophie Homes. Their appointment recognises their character and reflects the trust that our community places in them. I have no doubt that their service will have a meaningful impact on the lives of those they assist. I congratulate them once again on their well-deserved appointment and thank them for the difference they will make for our community, now and into the future.

## CYBERBULLYING

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (20:01):** I talk tonight about cyberbullying and abuse. I have been floored by the toxic hate speech on social media recently. As technology has become entirely integrated into our lives over the past few decades, we have seen myriad improvements to the way we conduct ourselves day to day. But with those improvements have come evolutions to harmful activity that can have a profound negative impact on an individual or a community. Cyberbullying can be particularly difficult for anyone to deal with; it is so different to the experience of in-person bullying. It can happen in any place and at any time, and the harmful material can be shared rapidly and far beyond the scope of the initial incident. It can also be exceptionally difficult to defend oneself or to escape from the inflammatory comments that can be delivered straight to the phone in one's pocket. As we know, people of all ages can experience online harassment, negative comments, trolling and attacks on their physical appearance, character or activities. In the past bullying may have been considered a localised problem, but now it can happen to anyone, across all strata of society, at any time of day.

Politicians of all political persuasions are not immune to this treatment either, and I have seen unkind hate speech and harassment increasing of late. It must stop. We all have a responsibility to call it out. Remember that the standard we walk past is the standard we accept. I wonder at times, "Would that person say it to my face? Do they speak like that to their mum, partner, daughter or sister?" As a government, we have a responsibility to be on the forefront of these ongoing technological changes so that we can minimise harm. The online environment moves at a breakneck speed. If the Government gets left behind, it risks leaving the people of New South Wales behind. We cannot let that happen.

The Minns Labor Government is aware that real positive change can take time, so it has not wasted any time waiting around. It has been exploring and implementing strategies that immediately impact those here in New South Wales and has prioritised preventing cyberbullying across the State. It has been committed to minimising the potential harm of online activity for all people, especially those who may not be of a mature age or are simply not as experienced with online spaces. The Government will continue to honour its commitment to the people of New South Wales and work towards minimising the potential harm of online spaces to ensure that all people feel secure when utilising technology, which has become vital to our lives in the twenty-first century.

The project of building a better New South Wales involves not only constructing new infrastructure but also ensuring that the people of New South Wales feel safe so that they can build a better future for themselves and their communities. In the meantime, we should treat others in the way that we each want to be treated. My dear mum always said, "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all." How about we all become more respectful and act with dignity and kindness. Again, the standard we walk past is the standard we accept. I thank the House.

### ABERDEEN STORM

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (20:05):** Tonight I inform the House about a savage storm that hit the village of Aberdeen, between Muswellbrook and Scone, on the evening of Wednesday 15 January. It came at the end of a rugged, 40-degree summer day in the Upper Hunter electorate. Homes and businesses between Braxton and Scone lost power during the afternoon when a substation fault at Muswellbrook caused a major blackout. At 7.22 p.m. the Scone airport weather station recorded a westerly wind gust of 107 kilometres per hour. In Aberdeen, residents were experiencing the might of the storm. Multiple residences were damaged, and two homes lost their roofs completely, with the State Emergency Service responding.

In one of those two unroofed houses was probably the newest family to Aberdeen, who had only just moved into their house a few days beforehand. New resident Cassy Askey-Doran and her family, despite being left with a rental property that was uninhabitable, experienced Aberdeen's community spirit to help a neighbour in their hour of need. With the indulgence of the House, I will read the letter Cassy wrote to me in the days after her family's devastating experience. She said:

Hi Dave,

I have been creating a list of people we would like to say thank you to and on the top of that list is Nathan Hardcastle and Edwina Hamilton.

Throughout this whole process they have been by our sides, offering support, giving us somewhere to stay and helping us to save what we could.

I honestly cannot thank them enough, nothing we will ever do for them will repay what they have done for us over the last week.

They have removed everything from the house, washed clothes, fed us, counselled us, made phone calls, assisted us financially, guided me when I was in shock and not once have they complained about anything.

Next is Michael Chandler and Grace Benson, who came over and rescued me, when I thought my house was going to fall in on top of me.

I have never been so glad to see someone come to my door and Mick even gave me his thongs as I had no shoes to wear.

Grace was an absolute godsend calming me down when I was absolutely hysterical.

Then they opened up their garage and started removing items from our house and putting them in their garage to save what we could.

They continued to help over the next few days to get all our possessions out of the house and onto the utes to get back into storage.

Then there was Josh, I don't know his last name, but he lives next door ... and his kids who came over to help us remove our possessions and get them into the garage and onto the utes, not only on the night, but in the days that followed.

Adding to the list of people who helped us empty the house and put our possessions into storage and offered support are Margaret, Chris, Glenn and Megan Hamilton.

Chris, Glenn and Megan all came from Newcastle to help their Mum with the fallen trees which helped us as Nathan and Edwina were able to help us.

They also fed us meals over the next few days, ensuring that we stopped to eat and drink.

Then there were the people who helped us to wash our clothes so they weren't ruined, Kelly Callaghan and Kelly Hallett.

These wonderful friends took a massive amount of clothes for us which helped us greatly as we had maxed out on space to hang clothes and time to get them washed.

Then there was the amazing man in the Abby (Aberdeen) Takeaway, next to the laundromat who helped us put our clothes onto wash and he put them in the dryer.

We would have done around 20 loads of washing in there and he even let us use a machine for free.

Without his help transferring our clothes etc into the dryers and starting another load we would have had to return every 20 minutes.

Clinton Lane was another person who helped us greatly by helping us to get our possessions out of the house and onto the utes, but he also helped us by cutting up all the trees that came down at Margaret Hamilton's house which freed up Nathan and Edwina to help us.

We would like to thank Vision Excavation who loaned Nathan a bobcat to assist with our clean up at Margaret's house ...

Thank you to Megan and Brent.

We would also like to thank Bengalla (Coal) and Programmed who gave Brad (my husband), Nathan and Edwina time off work so they could assist with the cleanup which has taken us a number of days.

Without them doing this I would have been on my own attempting to clean and save everything.

I would like to thank all the people who have offered us a bed to sleep in, some people I didn't even know! But we appreciated every single offer ...

I also thank Trey Smith my landlord ... also Tony from the real estate, who has continued to offer support and is trying to find us a house in the Aberdeen area.

...

Thank you for coming and seeing us ...

As I said yesterday I had only been up here 4 days before the storm and we don't know many people up here, but the amount of support we have been offered has been absolutely amazing.

...

Kind regards,

Cassy Askey-Doran

I thank the community of Aberdeen for their amazing effort in coming together on that night.

### EAST HILLS ELECTORATE ROADS

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (20:10):** Safe and reliable roads are essential for our community, whether we are commuting to work, dropping the kids at school or just getting around. That is why it is so exciting to see real improvements happening in East Hills, thanks to the New South Wales Labor Government's commitment to fixing our roads. The upgrades are not just about easing congestion; they are about making everyday life safer and easier for everyone. One major improvement underway is at the intersection of The River Road, Sphinx Avenue and Marco Avenue, a spot that has been a source of frustration and danger for years. I know full well how confusing that intersection is from teaching my children how to drive through it. I have also heard from many locals who are concerned about that confusing, frustrating and dangerous intersection.

In 2023 I committed to finding a solution to fix the intersection. Now, with the support of my colleagues in the State Government, Federal Government and Canterbury-Bankstown Council, we are making progress. Council is preparing safety improvement plans, and the community will have a chance to provide feedback soon. Improvements are also on the way for the Henry Lawson Drive and The River Road intersection in Picnic Point, funded through the New South Wales Toward Zero program. That upgrade will help reduce accidents and make the area safer and easier for exiting our beautiful Georges River National Park when towing a boat. Pedestrian safety is another priority. This year the New South Wales Labor Government is upgrading the Henry Lawson Drive, Clancy Street and Dilke Road intersection. Those improvements include a new signalised pedestrian crossing, better pram ramps and clearer line markings, making it safer and easier for families and children to cross the road. But we are not stopping there.

The New South Wales Government is investing in a major upgrade of Henry Lawson Drive to reduce congestion, improve safety and enhance connectivity. The project is being delivered in stages to minimise disruption to road users. Stage 1A, from Auld Avenue to just north of Tower Road, will increase capacity at the intersection of Henry Lawson Drive, Milperra Road and Newbridge Road. That means less time stuck in traffic and a safer journey for motorists and pedestrians. Stage 1B will upgrade intersections at Auld Avenue, Keys Parade and Raleigh Road, while creating continuous pedestrian and cycle links to popular community destinations like the Auld Avenue sporting fields, which I spent over 20 years administering and playing sport at. That is an improvement I am very happy to see, and it will make it easier and safer for families, cyclists and walkers to enjoy our community's great facilities.

We have listened to community feedback about parking, lane widening, flood control and pedestrian crossings, and we are making the changes needed to address those concerns. For example, shared paths are being redesigned to minimise tree removal, and crossings at Auld Avenue and Keys Parade will now prioritise pedestrian and cyclist safety. Widening Henry Lawson Drive to two lanes in each direction and improving key intersections will make it quicker and safer to travel around our community. That will reduce travel times, make journeys more reliable and enhance safety for all road users. The upgrades will also boost local businesses by improving traffic flow and connectivity to Bankstown Airport, industrial areas and residential neighbourhoods. That means more opportunities for local jobs and economic growth.

Importantly, the project will improve access to public spaces, schools and shops. Families will find it easier to reach community facilities, and everyone will benefit from safer pedestrian and cyclist routes. These road improvements aren't just about fixing problems; they are about building a safer, more connected community. Thanks to the New South Wales Government, we are seeing the upgrades we deserve, making East Hills an even better place to live, work and raise a family.

### MURRAY-DARLING BASIN

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (20:14):** What kind of a year will 2025 be? Will it be a year of change or will it be a year of inaction and weasel words? As always, I am solely focused on the people of Murray. Long before I took time out from the farm to become a politician, it was clear to me that politics was killing rural Australia. Despite mismanagement, the Murray-Darling Basin still grows so much of Australia's food. But since

becoming a politician, it has become obvious to me that the Murray-Darling Basin system will never be fixed unless we take the politics out of our rivers. Successive Federal governments have continued to betray rural Australia by pandering to voters in South Australia and Greens-leaning voters in the cities. That political pandering has come at an incredibly high cost to rural New South Wales and Australia's economy. The pandering must end, right now, this year, in 2025.

Politicians want us all to believe the Murray-Darling Basin system will always be a mess. They want us to think it is all too hard and cannot be fixed, because if we all believe it cannot be fixed, we will not expect politicians to fix it. But the truth is the Murray-Darling Basin can be fixed. It will not be hard. It will just take honesty and effort—two things that can sometimes seem in short supply in our parliaments. Generations of my family have relied on the Murray-Darling for our livelihoods. Now, after years of consulting with experts and the people of rural New South Wales, I have come up with a simple seven-point plan to fix the system. Next time a politician says the Murray-Darling crisis is complicated, tell them that they are talking rubbish and all they need to do is read Helen Dalton's seven-point solution, and then implement it.

Here is the plan. Step one is to stop the Federal Government's latest water buybacks. For a start, they already have more water than the plan says is needed. And, secondly, it used to be illegal for the Federal Government to buy water from the Murray-Darling Basin system if those purchases were going to hurt rural communities. But recently Federal Labor quietly scrapped that law so it could conduct its so-called environmental buybacks, which do not actually help the environment. Those buybacks are unnecessary and must stop. Step two is to stop wasting water in South Australia's Lower Lakes—or fake lakes, as I call them. The entire basin system is rigged to provide fresh water to the fake lakes, even though for tens of thousands of years those lakes were naturally filled with tidal salt water and fresh water. We need to return the fake lakes to their natural state.

Step three is for South Australia to start making its own water rather than relying on water from interstate. South Australia's desalination plant could provide half of the water needed for the State, so why is that desalination plant barely used? Step four is to start counting every drop in the basin properly so we actually know where the water is and where the waste is. We also need to measure environmental flows instead of just estimating them. Step five is to fix water quality. We could kill most of the carp in the basin tomorrow if we wanted to with a virus that only affects carp. But governments will not do basic stuff like that, even though it would help improve water quality immensely.

Step six is to stop the Federal Government from flooding private properties in order to get water to certain parts of the basin. That mad plan will devastate regional communities and cannot be allowed to happen. Finally, step seven is to increase capacity in storage dams along the system.

If we had more storage, we would protect ourselves from floods when they happen and also save water when it is scarce. It is that simple. This seven-step plan is all we have to do to save the Murray-Darling Basin. Why would any politicians oppose this plan?

I believe any politician who is genuine about fixing the Murray-Darling Basin system and saving rural communities should be embracing my seven-point plan. And if people hear of any politicians who do not support the seven-point plan, then they have not read it, they do not understand it, or they do not care about rural New South Wales. I will spend every waking moment of 2025 fighting to finally fix the Murray-Darling Basin system, and I hope that every politician in every Parliament in Australia also gets on board right now.

#### NORTH SYDNEY COUNCIL

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (20:19):** I address this place this evening on behalf of distressed and frustrated residents and businesses within my community. Late on Monday night North Sydney Council voted through an obscene 87 per cent rate rise after what was a bungled community consultation process. I addressed the council at its meeting. At that meeting I shared just snippets of the community feedback I have been receiving regarding these rate hikes. Council also heard from 43 other ratepayers, the overwhelming majority of whom opposed the increase—but council still voted to proceed. In council's own consultation process, only 5 per cent of ratepayers supported this 87 per cent massive increase during a cost-of-living crisis.

I have received thousands of submissions to my own rate rise survey and I have documented almost unanimous opposition to council's alarming proposal. In fact, I received more than double the contributions that council did in its own survey. This has been the single most unifying issue within my electorate in my eight years as the member for North Shore—and the North Sydney Council accounts for only half of my electorate—and still North Sydney Council pushed ahead with its proposal. This is a classic case of severe financial mismanagement. Council highlighted a budget surplus in its June 2024 financial results and indicated no financial risks in that documentation, so how can its financial position have taken such a nosedive in a matter of months? Why are

residents and businesses being asked to bear the brunt of the council's fiscal failure to dip into their pockets to line the pockets of what is a financially reckless council?

What has council's response been to deal with this? It has only proposed to raise rates and has not proposed spending cuts, efficiency projects or a reassessment of council's assets. The councillors have not looked at ways in which to better manage their books. In fact, on top of not proposing any efficiency measures, the council has proposed \$150 million of entirely new spending on entire new projects—and my community is rightly outraged. My community also knows that when this council promises to spend \$150 million on projects, it will likely blow out tenfold in the end. The council's rate rise represents a blatant disregard for community consultation and input. It occurred over the Christmas and New Year period, allowing ratepayers almost no time to question the proposal and provide feedback. It offered only closed options. Everyone who participated was forced to support one of the rate rise options—a minimum of 65 per cent up to 111 per cent.

Shockingly, the council was also closed for a week of that consultation period and, worse still, council appears to have willingly ignored what was overwhelming opposition to its special rate variation proposal, leaving members of my community feeling completely dejected and overlooked. As their elected representative, I want to ensure that North Shore locals concerns are heard. North Sydney Council's astronomical rate rise is not just a number; it is a real burden for families, seniors, single parents, small business owners and renters in our community. Unfortunately, instead of finding a fairer and more sustainable solution or simply cutting unnecessary spending, council voted in favour of this extreme rate rise. My community is calling for the council to be sacked and to go into administration, which is why I gave notice of a motion calling for the Minister for Local Government to establish a public inquiry under the Act into this council for its maladministration. I thank the Minister for meeting with me today and for ensuring that I can speak with the Office of Local Government to progress these concerns.

My community is struggling with the cost-of-living crisis just like any other and to be further burdened by this extreme almost doubling of council rates is the last thing my constituents need. More than 50 per cent of people in my community rent. More than 65 per cent of my community live in two-bedroom dwellings or smaller. Some 90 per cent plus of the North Sydney Council area is apartments, townhouses et cetera, not standalone dwellings. As far as high rental costs go, the census data shows that 76 per cent of my constituents pay high rental costs compared with Greater Sydney costs of 54 per cent. In relation to mortgage costs, my electorate and my council area pays 54.5 per cent compared with the Greater Sydney area's average of 42.9 per cent.

The notion that there is a capacity to pay and a willingness to pay has been rammed home by the North Sydney Council, and the ignorance is astounding. I urge local ratepayers to continue the fight as the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal invites submissions from the community and evaluates council's application in April-May this year. I will ensure that I coalesce my community's views, but so much momentum is needed when local people are already feeling so defeated. I urge the Minister for Local Government to establish his public inquiry and work alongside us.

### **PITTWATER ELECTORATE BUS SERVICES**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater) (20:24):** Pittwater has a bus crisis. Most pressing are the cuts to the 190X timetable, which has hit residents north of Mona Vale particularly hard. The 190X is the only bus that takes commuters directly to the city. Even at the best of times, it hardly runs; it is a peak-hour service only. The timetable has now been slashed by 25 per cent, and not only has the service been cut but also the buses that are timetabled do not even show up. But it is not just the 190X. Routes like the 199, the 151 and the 151X are regularly late or missing altogether. Day after day, up to half the services are cancelled. I am getting inundated with screen grabs showing the cancellation of multiple bus services. Here are just some of the examples of messages I am receiving from my community about cuts to the buses north of Mona Vale. One states:

My trip ... is 1.5 hours on a good day but often it's taking me well over 2 hours to get home because of cancellations and overcrowding. You have to get up extremely early because the buses are often cancelled at the last minute and the next available bus will say that there's no tracking available, which means it won't show up or it's running very late. It has a significant impact on my family when I have to leave before my baby wakes up. I don't make it home to see my baby before he goes to bed."

The next one says:

It's so unreliable, I have to go in extra early as I can't rely on the timetabled services. It makes my commute incredibly stressful.

Another states:

The first day of the reduced timetable, where the services were reduced from 12 services to nine, two of the buses were immediately cancelled! So instead of a 25 per cent reduction, it was actually 42 per cent.

Finally—this is not the final message as I have a lot of them, but it is the final one for this speech—another says:

Yes, it took me two hours this morning from my door to Wynyard. It makes living in this area with a city job pretty much impossible.

It is not good enough. While I appreciate that the Government has had an unexpected issue with the articulated bendy buses, we were told they would be returning but they have not. The other issue is buses returning from the city. Many buses heading home in peak hour are so full that they cannot pick up passengers even at Wynyard. Then they drive past Neutral Bay, which is the only place that those who work in North Sydney can get on an express bus that travels past Mona Vale.

The other problem is the Keoride, which over time has deteriorated in terms of service. They used to be small nimble cars that could connect you to the B1 at Mona Vale but now they have been replaced by minibuses, which means they are taking too many people to too many places, winding through the back streets of Bilgola and adding close to half an hour to an already very long trip. Wait times with Keoride have also increased and people are waiting for vehicles that sometimes never show up. People are ditching public transport altogether at the moment, and I do not blame them. That is putting even more strain on what is an already congested A8 corridor—which is even on the Infrastructure Australia priority list—and of course the unfinished Mona Vale Road also creates a bottleneck.

The Bus Industry Taskforce has just confirmed what we already know: The Government is not managing its private contracts. The Government must reinstate the original timetable immediately, manage its contracts to ensure that there are no cancellations, and work on more strategic changes for the long term to reverse the damage that has been done by privatisation of the bus network. That privatisation was championed by the former Coalition Government and was meant to improve efficiency, reduce costs and enhance service delivery. But every year Pittwater's public transport gets worse—fewer routes, fewer timetables, more cancellations and smaller buses. Sydney is a major city. It is not good enough. Working people, students and everyone else in Pittwater deserve better.

### PEAKHURST WEST SWIMMING POOL

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (20:29):** I inform the House about the current status of the Peakhurst West swimming pool, which has served our local community for decades, and which this Labor Government wants to get rid of. Built in 1961 and funded by the community and the school's P&C association, the pool is an important piece of local infrastructure. In fact the majority of funding was collected by volunteers from the school's P&C and the wider community, who went door to door every day for months, if not close to a year, collecting spare change from residents who wanted to see the pool built.

Whilst the pool is currently owned and operated by the Department of Education and was previously managed by a private company called BlueFit, it is still used by hundreds if not thousands of local residents and several community groups each and every week. On any given day there could be a number of activities taking place at the pool, such as swimming lessons, fitness classes and competitive swimming programs. It is a place where, over the years, many local kids learnt to swim, parents and peers sat in the grandstand to cheer others on at swimming carnivals, and many people made friends for life. The conversations that happened in and around the swimming pool at Peakhurst West were no doubt the start of many lifelong friendships.

On 5 December last year, residents were informed that the pool would be closed until further notice. Many people who used the pool did not even know that it had been closed until they showed up for practice on the Saturday morning. Locals were frustrated and confused, and rightly so. They felt as if they had been absolutely blindsided by the Government. Families were left without a place for their children to learn water safety, and local fitness groups and swimming programs were disrupted mid-season. For me, and for many members of our community, it was personal. It is the pool where I learnt to swim as a kid. I always looked forward to my weekly swimming lessons at the Peakhurst West swimming pool with local legend Rose Agius. Decades later I watched my son swim his first laps in the same pool, under the same teacher. It was a very proud moment for me as a parent. That is why the pool's closure struck an emotional chord with the community.

The pool served and continues to serve many generations in our community. I am proud to say that when the Government made the decision to close the pool, the community did not stay silent. We banded together, signing petitions, writing letters and sharing stories on social media and, I must say, it certainly paid off. Thanks to the strength of our campaign, the Peakhurst West swimming pool reopened shortly after it had initially closed. It was a victory for common sense, a victory for our community and proof that we are stronger when we work together. I thank Georges River Council for putting pressure on the New South Wales Government. I particularly thank Mayor Elise Borg, Deputy Mayor Nancy Liu, Councillor Peter Mahoney and Councillor Matt Allison for their wonderful support.

Whilst we celebrate that victory today, we know that the fight is not over. It is obvious that the Government has no interest in keeping this vital piece of community infrastructure around. It is now up to our community to make sure that funding is provided to keep the pool accessible for generations to come. Therefore I am calling on the Government to commit to a full upgrade and long-term maintenance plan for the pool, with community

consultation and transparency regarding any proposed changes. We want to see better facilities, improved lighting, and new and upgraded change rooms. Those essential upgrades will mean that the pool can continue to operate for many years to come. Our community will not rest until we know for certain that the swimming pool is here to stay. I am already receiving emails each and every day from constituents who have joined our campaign. I have had over 900 people sign my petition. The Peakhurst West swimming pool was built by the community, for the community, and it is only right that it continues to serve current and future generations.

### **SOUTH COAST RAILWAY LINE**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (22:33):** The New South Wales Government wants to build more homes. I support that goal as an effort to reduce the cost of rents and make home ownership more affordable. However, what the Government deliberately ignores is the desperate need for community-building infrastructure that shoulders growth for existing residents and provides a platform to build the homes of the future. Whilst Sydney enjoys metros, ferries, light rail, buses, heavy rail and readily available point-to-point options, regional New South Wales is being left behind. The South Coast is growing. Bomaderry, Badagarang, Cambewarra, North Nowra and West Nowra are seeing major housing developments, but investment in transport infrastructure remains unfunded, neglected and ignored by this Government, which seems obsessed with Sydney's problems whilst ignoring regional communities.

One important piece of infrastructure that will help meet the Government's growth objectives is improving public transport and upgrading the South Coast Line. For those who are unfamiliar with it, the journey from Sydney to Bomaderry by rail is undoubtedly the most beautiful in Australia. The trip travels through the stunning Illawarra escarpment, enchanting rainforest, picturesque pastures and seemingly never-ending rolling green hills. The journey includes a station which is the closest to any New South Wales beach on any New South Wales train line. It is a journey I still enjoy to this day but got to know very well as a University of Wollongong student. Currently the line is electrified from Sydney to Kiama. At Kiama, passengers change trains and join a diesel train that operates on a single track between Kiama and Bomaderry. Primarily a single track is the major barrier, because seats and services cannot be increased unless the capacity of the line is increased.

I note a recent debate at the NSW Labor Annual Conference and I commend Shoalhaven City Labor councillor Matt Norris for pushing for a rail upgrade. Unions Shoalhaven has recommended a full duplication and electrification of the South Coast Line. If money was no obstacle, businesses cases were not required and no-one cared about value for money for the taxpayers, the union's proposal would be absolutely fantastic. But, be it the blue team or the red team, the union proposal is doomed. My alternative proposal is to deliver a four-kilometre passing loop at Toolijooa so that two trains can pass each other at speed. The passing loop negates the need for duplication from Kiama to Bomaderry, because the loop has the same effect without the need for massive engineering and costly excavation work.

The ageing Endeavour diesel trains are reaching the end of their life and are due to be replaced. By replacing the Endeavours with bi-mode diesel and electric trains, in combination with the passing loop, the benefits of electrification can be delivered for a fraction of the price. That modest proposal was savagely cut by this Government but it is needed if we want to see more passenger services on the South Coast Line. Last month I ran a rail survey, which received more than 1,000 responses. Of those who responded, 9 per cent were very satisfied or satisfied and 10 per cent were neutral, but a whopping 80 per cent were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. The survey included an option for comments, and I make special reference to rail staff, who received consistently favourable mentions from respondents. However, the overwhelming response towards management was disappointment and anger. Comments included:

Imagine planning your life around a train service you simply can't trust. A service so unreliable, so neglected, that it leaves you stranded, late for work, or even feeling unsafe. This is the reality for far too many residents of the South Coast, and it's a crisis we can no longer ignore.

Another comment was:

The South Coast Line is failing. It's failing our commuters, our families, and our economy. For years, we've endured cancellations, delays, and outdated infrastructure.

It is hard for locals who are now scared to take the train because they fear they will not be able to get home. We have got passengers sharing stories of being stranded at stations, facing violence and drug use on trains, and having to pay excessive amounts in taxi fares to get home. The service does not even have wi-fi or reliable bathrooms. Those are not just inconveniences; they affect people's ability to access jobs, education, health care and each other. They stifle our region's growth and create a sense of isolation in regional communities. We need urgent action.

I call on the Government to respond to my plan, which can be summarised as follows: one, undertake infrastructure upgrades by delivering the Toolijooa passing loop; two, increase service frequency to provide greater connectivity; three, provide express services that include very limited-stop express trains to reduce travel

times; four, deploy the new trains that are sitting idle at Waterfall; and five, improve communication by being transparent with residents about service disruptions and project timelines. The people of the South Coast deserve better. We deserve a reliable, safe and modern train service that connects us to the city and to each other. I urge this Government to prioritise the South Coast Line, invest in its future and give our community the transport options we deserve. It is time to get South Coast rail line back on track.

### **BEROWRA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK**

**Mr JAMES WALLACE (Hornsby) (20:38):** This evening I acknowledge the history of the Berowra Valley National Park. The Hornsby community is continually balancing our rural history with our commitment to future development. When I have the chance to acknowledge Hornsby's rich history, I will always take that opportunity. The establishment of the Berowra Valley National Park was a century in the making. In 1907 a mega-rich department store owner, Marcus Clark, purchased several large parcels of land in the Manor Road area of Hornsby. At the highest point of his department store empire success, he started construction on his mansion, Mount Wilga, which is now home to an exceptional and groundbreaking rehabilitation hospital. However, given that Clark was a somewhat eccentric tycoon, rumours abounded that he might purchase the surrounding bushland in the valley, including The Fishponds waterhole area, to establish a private deer-hunting park.

For that reason, residents of the community, the local State MP and Hornsby councillors came together to have the area declared a public reserve—named Fish Ponds Reserve at the time—under the management of Hornsby Shire Council. By the mid-1960s, Crown Lands expanded the bushland and established Elouera Bushland Nature Park. "Elouera" is a word shared across many Indigenous languages, including the language of the local Dharug people, for whom it fittingly means "a beautiful place". For 24 years, the park was managed by a group of honorary trustees appointed by the Minister for Lands. The first president of the trust was the Hon. Max Ruddock, MP, who was the father of a recent former mayor of Hornsby, Philip Ruddock. In 1967, Dr Joyce Vickery donated 100 acres of her own land at Joe's Mountain near Old Man's Valley in Hornsby.

In 1980 the Department of Lands, the Elouera Trust and the Hornsby Shire Council began construction of a 25-kilometre walking track, now known as the Benowie Track, through the park from Thornleigh to Berowra. The track opened in 1981. In 2012, after considerable lobbying from the Friends of Berowra Valley and influential members of the community, including the late Bob Salt, OAM, the New South Wales Government took the significant step to declare the 3,876 hectares of undedicated Crown land around the area as the Berowra Valley National Park. Its southern boundary is Boundary Road in Pennant Hills, its south-eastern boundary is Hornsby, its north-eastern boundary is the Pacific Highway and its northern boundary is Berowra Waters. It is an incredibly popular place in the Hornsby electorate and is easily accessible from a number of points.

The track can be walked to from five local railway stations across the Hornsby electorate: Pennant Hills, Thornleigh, Hornsby, Mount Kuring-gai and Berowra. In addition to showcasing our local bushland, the park also shows how much there is to discover in the Hornsby electorate. The park contains 69 recorded Aboriginal sites, including rock engravings, cave paintings, tool sharpening grooves, shell middens and habitation sites. It is home to 230 known vertebrate fauna species and 12 endangered species, including the powerful owl, red-crowned toadlet, Rosenberg's goanna, spotted tiger quoll, eastern pigmy possum, koala and southern brown bandicoot. The critically endangered small bird known as the regent honeyeater is also found in the park. There are more than 500 different flora species and 18 different vegetation communities, two of which are identified as endangered ecological communities, along with 10 threatened flora species.

Extensive areas of woodland, open forest, rainforest, mangroves, heath, saltmarsh and sandstone swamps also form part of the delicate ecosystem within the park. The Hornsby electorate is unique because suburban and rural areas sit side by side—they are often one and the same. Many of my constituents live 20 minutes drive from a major shopping centre and the same distance from a national park. There may be no better example than the story of Berowra Valley National Park.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 20:43 until  
Thursday 13 February at 10:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

### **NOEL PARKINSON**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Caringbah South's Noel Parkinson on being recognised for his loyal service to Marine Rescue NSW [MRNSW]. Late last year Noel was awarded life membership of MRNSW and in January his family and colleagues gathered to see rescue vessel Botany Hacking



32 named in his honour. Noel has been a volunteer with the local Botany Port Hacking unit since February 2001 and he is a highly respected and experienced member. As a coxswain and watch officer, Noel has played a vital role in countless search and rescue missions and he's been a commander of the local unit. He's been a valuable mentor within MRNSW, generously sharing his expertise and guiding aspiring skippers and he continues to lend his experience to the organisation in an administration role. Noel's service to MRNSW followed a 40 year career as a police officer. Commissioner Alex Barrell said Noel has dedicated his time and skills to supporting the local boating community and saving lives on the water and MRNSW was proud to name a vessel in his honour. I join MRNSW in acknowledging Noel's contribution to keeping the community safe on our local waterways.

#### **BLAKE HOLLINGSWORTH**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise Blake Hollingsworth and his dedication to volunteer work. Blake is a mature young man who has demonstrated a remarkable desire to volunteer his time and share his interests across the Yass Railway Museum, Yass Scouts, and the Yass Valley Youth Council. It is wonderful to see such wonderful leadership and genuine dedication and support of local organisations and bodies. Blake Hollingsworth was recently nominated as a finalist and announced the winner of the 2025 Australia Day Award, Young Citizen of the Year in Yass Valley Shire. I congratulate Blake on his award and recognise his support of the community which undoubtedly has a very positive effect on many.

#### **BILLIE SKELLY**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise Billie Skelly for her outstanding leadership roles whilst attending Crookwell High School. As Vice-Captain, Billie assisted in promoting the Crookwell Garden Festival in November 2024, which is a significant event for Crookwell. Billie aided volunteers by giving out pamphlets and providing directions to tourists as they entered the township. Billie has attended ANZAC Day marches representing Crookwell High School, sold legacy badges with funds raised being utilised to support veterans and their families. Billie has also has significant contribution to hockey in the region. She was selected to represent the ACT in the Under 15 Girls at the National Hockey Championships in 2022. Billie was recently nominated for the 2025 Australia Day Award, Young Citizen of the Year in the Upper Lachlan Shire. I congratulate Billie on her nomination and recognise her significant contribution as a role model for her peers and the leadership roles that she undertakes within her school and broader community.

#### **MS ALISON DUTHIE**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise Ms Alison Duthie. Ms Duthie has a longstanding commitment to the Penrose community, being a tireless advocate for the new Penrose Community Hall and instrumental in applying for the Australian and NSW Governments Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund to secure a grant to build a new Hall that was integral to the community's vision. Working collaboratively with Council and many other community members and volunteers, the new Hall has not only brought new life to the community and connected community members who can now utilise the Hall for events and gatherings. Ms Duthie was recently nominated for the 2025 Australia Day Awards, Citizen of the Year in the Wingecarribee Shire. I congratulate Ms Duthie on her nomination and recognise her significant contribution and leadership to reignite a vibrancy within the community of Penrose.

#### **BDCU THE COLLECTIVE IMPACT**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I thoroughly enjoyed catching up with so many people, including the BDCU The Collective Impact team, at the BDCU Limited Social and Economic Showcase and Annual General Meeting held on the evening of Thursday 28 November 2024 in Burradoo. The evening highlighted financial and social achievements and unveiled two initiatives to shape our community's future. The first is the Essential Workers Initiative, which is a dynamic initiative focused on empowering and assisting the vital workers who form the foundation of our community. The Board announced some outstanding measures focused on addressing and alleviating challenges related to essential workers and affordable housing in Wingecarribee—an incredible step towards meaningful solutions. The second is the 5-Year Scholarship Commitment, which is a significant investment in education and opportunity. This initiative underscores BDCU's dedication to empowering the next generation. The presentations also highlighted exceptional projects made possible through BDCU's Community Bank scholarships and grant programs, which continue to make a positive impact across the Wollondilly Shire.

#### **ARCHIBALD PRIZE 2024 EXHIBIT AT NGUNUNGGULA**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Saturday 30 November 2024 saw the premiere of a travelling showcase of the Archibald Prize at Ngununggula, the Southern Highlands Regional Gallery in Retford Park, and I was delighted to attend the event. The Archibald Prize is the pinnacle of portraiture painting in New South Wales and indeed Australia, and the travelling showcase was an opportunity for communities to see the finalists in the 2024 Prize without having to travel to the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Instead of the community having to

go to the art, the art came to the community. The showcase was at Ngununggula from 30 November 2024 until 27 January 2025, but is still on tour - first to Casula, then the Araluen Arts Centre in the Northern Territory, then at Lismore in July and August. I express my thanks to Ngununggula director Megan Monte, chair Jamie Burreket, the Ngununggula board, and all the staff and volunteers for having me at the opening. I also acknowledge the presence of Wingecarribee Mayor Jesse Fitzpatrick, Wingecarribee Deputy Mayor Erin Foley, Wingecarribee Councillors Heather Champion, Nicole Smith and Therese Duffy, and Wingecarribee general manager Lisa Miscamble.

#### **AMY HOLOHAN**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I express my congratulations to Wollondilly local Amy Holohan, who performed outstandingly at the 2024 BMX Racing National Championships in Perth, Western Australia last October. At the Championships, Amy's talent was on display and she excelled, securing a podium finish with a 2nd place in the 40-44 years, 20 inch class. Amy competed against nine other ladies in this class. Riders of all ages, from as young as five to masters' level, came from across the country to vie for the championship title. With strategic racing, remarkable lines, and outstanding track speed, Amy secured 2nd place in Australia in the final. Congratulations to Amy! We wish her all the best for the summer events and in 2025 and beyond.

#### **JOURNEY TO THE WORLD STAGE**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Belinda Fowler, a dragon boat paddler from Kempsey, has carved a path to the International Dragon Boat Federation World Championships in Germany, showcasing the potential of regional athletes to achieve greatness on the global stage. Starting her journey in 2017, Fowler embraced the sport to enhance her fitness, never imagining that it would lead her to represent her country. Living in a regional town came with challenges, such as limited access to elite coaching and facilities, but Fowler's determination drove her to overcome them. She took a bold step last year, joining one of Australia's premier dragon boat clubs in Sydney and committing to weekly travel for training. Fowler's dedication paid off when she competed internationally in Italy last year, gaining invaluable experience. Her selection for the prestigious Auroras team came after gruelling trials, highlighting her relentless work ethic and resilience. Belinda's story proves that, with determination and perseverance, regional athletes can break through barriers and reach the highest levels of sport. Her journey is an inspiration for others to dream big and strive for greatness. Congratulations Belinda on this achievement!

#### **A DEDICATED VOLUNTEER FOR HISTORY**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Volunteers are the heart and soul of our communities. They give their time, passion, and energy to keep our stories alive, ensuring future generations can connect with where they come from. Rachel Burns of the Nambucca Headland Museum has been honoured with the prestigious Volunteer Achievement Award at the IMAGinE Awards, recognising her outstanding contribution to preserving our local history and inspiring others to care deeply about our shared past. Her work in organising the Nambucca Heads Railway Station Centenary event not only brought the community together but also highlighted the significance of our region's heritage. Drawing over 2,000 attendees, the event was a great success, thanks to Rachel's tireless work securing funding, coordinating stakeholders, and even writing a book on the railway's history. Rachel reminds us how vital volunteers are in preserving our identity, our roots, and our local stories. Her dedication placed a well-deserved spotlight on the Nambucca Valley's heritage, raised the profile of the Nambucca Headland Museum, and earned her the title of Nambucca Valley Council Citizen of the Year 2024. We are incredibly fortunate to have volunteers who give so much to ensure our history is preserved. Congratulations Rachel.

#### **GRAEME WYNN OAM**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate GyMEA's Graeme Wynn, awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2025 Australia Day honours "for service to rugby league as a player, coach, and administrator". Following his top level playing career with St George, Wests, NSW and Australia, Graeme has given more than 30 years to junior rugby league. As well as being a junior representative coach and director with St George, he's been a big part of the GyMEA Gorillas club, coaching teams from under 8s through to first grade over a 23 year period. Graeme was also a Gorillas committee member for 15 years and he's been the club patron since 2011. He was awarded life membership of the Gorillas in 2003. In congratulating Graeme, the club said "Graeme's contributions have truly made an impact on our club over many years". He is worthy of this honour for giving back to rugby league through generously sharing his time, footy knowledge and skills to develop junior players and help local administration. His award citation is an impressive list of personal and volunteer achievements and I join the GyMEA Gorillas in congratulating him on this award.

#### **PAUL ARCHER OAM**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I recognise Woollooware's Paul Archer, honoured with the Medal of the Order of Australia "for service to rugby league as a referee" in the 2025 Australia Day honours. Paul joined

the Canterbury Bankstown Referees Association as a teenager in 1972 and has been a member for over half a century. As well as rising to referee at President's Cup level, Paul has made a significant contribution to the administration of local rugby league behind the scenes. He has served on the Association's executive committee since 1979 and demonstrated strong leadership across 22 seasons as its the longest serving president. He's won several awards for his work and became an Association life member in 1986. Paul has also contributed to junior rugby league in the Canterbury Bankstown area as member of its advisory board, judiciary committee and appeals panel. The Association says "Paul's ability to inspire and motivate our members has fostered a sense of unity and purpose within our Association. Further, Paul has always been a strong supporter of all members, ensuring that everyone's voice is heard and valued." I congratulate Paul on receiving this Australia Day honour.

#### **QUEANBEYAN AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education)**—Congratulations to Wendy Grant, Queanbeyan's Citizen of the Year, for her remarkable contributions to the century old Queanbeyan Park Tennis Club. Wendy's efforts to secure funding, manage projects, and grow club membership have significantly enhanced access to sport in the region, benefiting players of all ages and abilities, including me, as I am a member of the club. Jerikye Williams, Queanbeyan's Young Citizen of the Year, inspires with his passion for music and dedication to uplifting First Nations youth. Jerikye's work connects cultures, encouraging young people to follow their dreams. Googfest 2024, named Event of the Year, brought the community together in true Googonian style. Featuring country star Travis Collins and a family-friendly atmosphere, the festival showcased the town's vibrant spirit and offered a wonderful free event for all. Special recognition also went to the Queanbeyan Country Muster and Formally Formal Wear Op Shop for their invaluable contributions to the community. The Country Muster was a wonderful event for all, and the volunteer-run Formally Formal Wear Op Shop gave students and families a free formal wear service, helping relieve the financial pressures for students with end of year events. A wonderful service for the community!

#### **BRAIDWOOD AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education)**—Congratulations to Marjorie Lemin for being named Citizen of the Year for Braidwood! Marjorie's exceptional dedication to the community, particularly through her leadership of the Braidwood Book Fair, has left an indelible mark. Over three decades, the fair has grown into a cornerstone fundraising event for Braidwood, thanks to her tireless work, generosity, and vision. Beyond the fair, Marjorie is a valued member of the Anglican Parish and other community groups, embodying the spirit of selflessness and service. Kudos also goes to Isaac Gardiner, Braidwood's Young Citizen of the Year. Isaac's commitment to helping others shines through his work with the 1st Braidwood Scout Group and the Junior section of the Braidwood RFS. His contributions to Scouts, from mentoring younger members to active involvement in camps, reflect his strong leadership and kind nature. Isaac's efforts extend to his work at Braidwood Capital Chemist, where he's highly regarded for his respectful and helpful demeanour. Finally, a round of applause to the Majors Creek Hotel Woodchop, awarded Event of the Year. This inaugural event brought the community together, attracting visitors to Braidwood and securing over \$10,000 in donations. It showcased the town's camaraderie and creativity in full force.

#### **BUNGENDORE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education)**—Congratulations to Anthony Rayner, Bungendore's Citizen of the Year, for his unwavering dedication to the community. Tony embodies true selflessness, consistently working behind the scenes to ensure no one, especially young people, is left behind. From his work with the Bungendore Tigers to his presence at fundraising events, Tony exemplifies what it means to make a difference quietly and humbly. Evan Ball, Bungendore's Young Citizen of the Year, also deserves high praise. Evan's dedication to the 1st Bungendore Scouts and his consistent willingness to volunteer at community events highlight his kind and generous nature. A supportive peer and hardworking volunteer, Evan represents the best of Bungendore's youth. The Bungendore Show, awarded Event of the Year, was a true celebration of community spirit. Returning after a few years absence the show is a fabulous day out for the region, featuring livestock judging, equestrian events, woodchop displays, and local performances, the show brought together residents and visitors alike, creating a vibrant showcase of Bungendore's talents and traditions.

#### **BIRTHDAY MESSAGE - NATHANIEL TSO**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in wishing Nathaniel Tso a joyous 34th birthday! Nathaniel's wife, Esther, asked me to share these heartfelt words in the Parliament: "Dear my darling hubby and best friend, Natey. Happy 34th birthday! This year has been one of many challenges for us, with my postpartum depression and settling into parenthood, and yet, you have stood by me so faithfully, so willing to support me and quick to encourage me. Our love has grown through the ups and downs, and I am so grateful to God for you! I love you! Your lucky wifey, Esther Tso." It truly is a wonderful thing to celebrate a birthday with the love and

support of those closest to you, and I am humbled to be able to play a small role in making Nathaniel's day a little extra special. May this birthday be filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments that can be taken forward on life's journey. Wishing you continued happiness and prosperity in the years ahead. Happy birthday Nathaniel!

#### **BIRTHDAY MESSAGE - DEANNA WHITEFORD**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in wishing Deanna Whiteford a joyous 65th birthday! Deanna's daughter, Rox, asked me to share these heartfelt words in the Parliament: "HAPPY BIRTHDAY DEA!! Your child is super cool and loves you very much. Have a good one!!!" It truly is a wonderful thing to celebrate a birthday with the love and support of those closest to you, and I am humbled to be able to play a small role in making Deanna's day a little extra special. May this birthday be filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments that can be taken forward on life's journey. Wishing you continued happiness and prosperity in the years ahead. Happy birthday Deanna!

#### **BIRTHDAY MESSAGE - HOLLY HAUGH**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in wishing Holly Haugh a joyous 13th birthday! Holly's father, Jason, asked me to share these heartfelt words in the Parliament: "Happy birthday to Holly. As you officially go into your teenage years, I want you to know how proud I am of the wonderful daughter you are. We hope you have an amazing birthday." It truly is a wonderful thing to celebrate a birthday with the love and support of those closest to you, and I am humbled to be able to play a small role in making Holly's day a little extra special. May this birthday be filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments that can be taken forward on life's journey. Wishing you continued happiness and prosperity in the years ahead. Happy birthday Holly!

#### **MISS LUCY DARRAGH**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises local Gerringong resident and rising surfing star, Lucy Darragh, on claiming her first major junior competition win of 2025. Lucy secured first place in the Under 16's female division at the 20th annual Taj's Small Fries competition in WA, marking her second consecutive victory at the event. Lucy managed to post some solid scores in every heat, despite the varying conditions throughout the 5-day event. It was important for Lucy to start the year on a high and winning this first major event gives Lucy a lot of confidence and puts her in a sound position to achieve her goal of representing Australia again at the ISA World Surfing Games in 2026. At the end of 2024, Lucy was crowned the number one ranked Under 16's surfer in Australia at 14 years old. This win proves she is well on her way to her dream of reaching the world tour, winning a world title, and becoming an Olympian. Lucy expressed her gratitude for the support of Gerringong locals who watched her compete via livestream at the Gerringong Surf Life Saving Club. A huge congratulations to Lucy Darragh from Gerringong.

#### **TERRY NICOLL**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales honours and remembers the life of local resident Mr Terry Nicoll. Terry sadly passed away on 9 December 2024, and I extend my deepest condolences to his partner Gloria and Terry's extended family and friends during this very difficult time. In 1957, Terry became a proud member of the NSW Police Force, rising to the rank of Senior Sergeant and Acting Inspector, serving for over 31 years, receiving several commendations and awards. He was a regular medallist at the Australian and World Police Games in the 1980's. Terry was also a fiercely competitive sportsman after retiring from the Modern Pentathlon, becoming a Masters Swimmer, and winning 19 gold medals in that sport. He excelled at golf, having a very low handicap and was a member at the St Michael's Golf course in Sydney as well at Kiama and Shoalhaven Heads following his retirement. Terry played at many iconic courses including Augusta National in Georgia. He was actively involved in our local community. Terry was much admired and respected by all. Vale George Terence Nicoll, 22nd August 1933 – 9th December 2024. Sadly missed and forever in our hearts.

#### **GERRINGONG ALL-SPORTS**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the President of Gerringong District All Sports, Mr John Trevenar. On Monday 3rd February 2025, I joined with John to officially open the newly completed upgrade at the Gerry Emery Reserve clubhouse in Gerringong. In 2023, John and I worked to secure a grant of \$466,000 under the NSW Stronger Country Communities program to upgrade female and accessible facilities at the clubhouse. This is in addition to funds raised by John and his committee from generous community contributors that helped make this project happen. I was delighted to celebrate this official opening with John, his committee and volunteers. My thanks to John's wife Karen, along with sponsors such as Gerringong Hardware and the Gerringong Bowling Club. Because of John's efforts, no longer will women and girls need to get changed in the car park to participate in sport. This isn't acceptable in 2025. The field will host

various sports, including cricket, touch football, soccer, and Women's Oztag. Gerringong Public School aims to use these facilities for sports carnivals and cross country.

#### **CASTLE HILL GYMNASTICS, ATHLETE OF THE YEAR, AWARD, YUN NI WONG**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I congratulate Yun Ni Wong who received the Castle Hill Gymnastics Club, Athlete of the Year Award at the Annual Presentation Night, held on 29 January 2025. Yun Ni had outstanding competition results in 2024. She came 1st on the Vault, 1st on the Uneven Bars, 1st on the Balance Beam, 1st on the Floor and 1st Overall at the NSW Women's Artistic Gymnastics (WAG) State Trial 1 and 2 in Future International Division. Yun Ni qualified for the Australian National Championships. At the Australian National Championships Yun Ni came 1st on the Vault and 5th on the Floor in the Individual Competition. Yun was also selected into the NSW WAG Senior International Team and the Australian National Training Camp – International Pathway Camp. Yun Ni has a very high training ethic and is regarded as an outstanding role model for the younger generation. On behalf of the community, I commend Yun Ni for her dedication to gymnastics and for being a wonderful role model for our young athletes.

#### **CASTLE HILL GYMNASTICS, CLUB CONTRIBUTION AWARD, HAYDEN TAYLOR**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I congratulate Hayden Taylor who received the Castle Hill Gymnastics Club, Club Contribution Award at the Annual Presentation Night, held on 29 January 2025. I joined the gymnastics community to celebrate hard-working athletes and the achievements of the Club. Hayden's citation acknowledges his commitment to the club. Hayden's citation includes statements such as: "You have continued to initiate and implement regular activities that add value to club members. You have been solely responsible for organising two movie nights this year to benefit the athletes. in addition to your role as coach and judge within our Men's Competitive Program." Further, "You have been a strong role model continuing to provide regular assistance in mentoring new coaches and supporting our Beginners Recreation program Coordinator, adding value to both the program and the younger coaches." Participation in the sport improves social life and skills of children, allowing them to learn how to interact with peers, adults, instructors, and mentors. Children are also able to learn self-discipline and commitment through continued participation in gymnastics. On behalf of the community, I commend Haydon for his leadership and for being a wonderful role model for our young athletes.

#### **KATHERINE KIRK – CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I wish to extend my congratulations to Katherine Kirk on being named Citizen of the Year at The Hills Shire Council's Australia Day Awards. Katherine has made a significant contribution to the community through her extensive volunteer work. As President of the Castle Hill High School P&C Association, she has led fundraising initiatives, chaired meetings, and worked to enhance the school environment for students, teachers, and staff. She has further expanded her involvement in education as Vice President at Northmead CAPA High School. Beyond the school community, Katherine is an active supporter of local sports clubs, including the Baulkham Hills Hawks AFL Club and Hills Spirit FC. She played a key role in ensuring that the new women's team at Hills Spirit FC received uniforms upon their arrival. Katherine also contributes to the Castle Hill RSL Sub-Branch, assisting with event organisation for veterans and their families. Her efforts in the Sport and Recreation program were instrumental in the Sub-Branch receiving an award at the RSL NSW Congress in 2024. Katherine's recognition as Citizen of the Year is well deserved. I thank her for her ongoing service and for making The Hills a better place.

#### **THE ORIANA RETRO HOTEL AND RESORT**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to congratulate the team at the Oriana Retro Hotel and Resort for claiming a 2024 NSW Tourism Award, their second in as many years. Following on from its 2023 success, the Oriana has won gold in the 4 to 4.5 star deluxe accommodation category, recognising its commitment to providing a unique experience for its guests. Owner Espen Harbitz should be commended for his vision and dedication to transforming a tired 1960s three-star motel to a vibrant and sophisticated luxury escape with a Palm Springs vibe and style that remains true to its 60s heritage. And his team doesn't just cater for visitors, with Orange locals invited to take advantage of the Oriana's beautiful grounds and pool for outdoor dining and socialising. In July 2024 the Oriana was also recognized as one of the Australian Good Food Guide's readers' choice winners for its Peacock Room which serves classic European cuisine in a vibrant atmosphere. Orange has a thriving tourism profile through its amazing eateries and wineries. By winning NSW Tourism gold, The Oriana has again placed the spotlight on our city and I thank the team for that.

#### **JACINDA ACHESON**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, Jacinda Acheson is a well-known member of her community through her family's hardware business but she's also a hard-working volunteer for the Cancer Council. Most recently Acheson's hardware shop hosted a ladies' night which added over \$8000 to the Cancer

Council's coffers. One of the features of the evening was Jacinda rallying local tradies to donate their time and skill for an auction. The tradies' generosity was matched by the community's, who were spirited in their bidding for the cause. Jacinda also rallied donations from the business community for the auction. Apart from doing their bit to combat cancer, the night is a great opportunity to raise community spirits with Forbes still battling the aftermath after floods and draught. Apart from doing more than her bit for the Cancer Council, Jacinda is also advocating for better domestic violence support for her community and is active in disability support. Rural and remote communities are resilient and resourceful. People like Jacinda Acheson lead the way and for that I thank her.

#### **CHERYL CARTER – 2025 LOCAL CITIZEN**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I congratulate Cheryl Carter of Illabo for being named Junee Shire's 2025 Local Citizen of the Year. This well-deserved recognition is a testament to the dedication, compassion, and hard work she has demonstrated over many years. Cheryl has shown unwavering commitment, whether through Illabo Show Society, SRE teaching in schools, or chaplaincy in Junee High, supporting the local P & C's and sporting groups. Cheryl's efforts have made lasting impacts not only in village of Illabo but throughout the Junee Shire, and we are grateful for her dedication and service to the community. Although Cheryl, like many other volunteers, dedicates her time to supporting and inspiring others in the community without seeking recognition, it's truly wonderful to see her efforts celebrated. This honour is not only a reflection of Cheryl's individual contributions but also the spirit of service that thrives within the community. I am proud to have such a remarkable individual part of the Cootamundra electorate. Once again, congratulations, Cheryl. Your passion and dedication are truly inspiring, and we thank you for all that you do to make our community a better place for everyone.

#### **GUNDAGAI -YOUTH HUB AND NETBALL COURTS FUNDED**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—The Youth Hub at Gundagai is now open. This is excellent news for the youth of Gundagai and has been done in conjunction with the Gundagai Netball Club. The newly renovated youth Recreation Space initially received \$50,000 in grant funding under the NSW Government's Stronger Country Communities Fund [SCCF] in 2016, with a further \$200,000 under the SCCF in 2020 and an additional \$200,000 for lighting, storage and shelter for the netball courts, helping young people keep active and connected. This outcome was a whole of community effort with much advocacy from youth and the town community of Gundagai. The Youth Hub is now operated by Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council Officer Destini Warren and the Gundagai Youth Councillors, and it has much to offer. This Youth Hub is the second in the region and along with the Cootamundra Youth Hub, both of which are open with kitchenettes, fast internet, gaming and study spaces to giving young people the ability to engage with their peers and share their skills in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere.

#### **DELILAH CROSS GETS CREATIVE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I wish to congratulate Delilah Cross of Boorowa Central School (Year 10) for recently being selected as one of 75 young adults to participate in the Regional Futures Horizon Creative Industry Career Launchpad. The Career Launchpad is an initiative designed to equip individuals with the tools, mentorship, and resources needed to thrive in creative industries such as film, design, technology, and art. By fostering collaboration between industry leaders and emerging talent. The Horizons program is designed to support 16–27-year-olds from rural areas. The program offers hands-on experience, access to networking opportunities, and professional development that empowers participants to launch and grow their careers. In Delilah's case, the talented singer songwriter has been able to engage and gain crucial industry knowledge and industry insight by being mentored by renowned Australian two-piece Indie band "This Way North". All this culminating in an incredible three-day group meet where Delilah and her group spent time at APRA Studios in Ultimo, writing, and recording a song. This amazing experience began with a tour of Golden Retriever studios where they explored cutting edge technology and learned about the production side of the music industry. Well done Delilah.

#### **TOM CURPHEY**

**Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend)**—We have lost a class warrior, a giant of betterment for the working class. Tom Curphey, MUA veteran and Newcastle Convenor, has died at age 93. He was quiet, never argumentative, but could get his point across powerfully. A wonderful writer, Tom believed in the power of the pen and though not a tall man, his legacy is towering, being known and respected not only in Australia, but in Great Britain, New Zealand and the United States. Known as "Uncle Tom" by many, seafarer, official and trade unionist, Tom was born in Great Britain. He became a merchant seaman as a 17-year-old deck boy in 1948. Tom learned about politics by reading books and became a great reader and listener to British radio broadcasts. Tom was a strategic thinker and understood class structure in society, wanted no poverty, was dedicated to social issues

and always advocated the need for an Australian shipping line. His activism involved a lot of travelling and campaigning. Tom believed in younger workers and was adamant that we fight for what is right and must not sell out our principles. Vale, comrade.

### **TARRO QUALITY MEATS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—On Friday 17 January, responding to a suggestion by staff at the Beresfield Tavern Bistro to do something to help people without power, food or phone service due to the violent storms, Tarro Quality Meats generously donated food that would go towards comforting around 260 people in need. Owner/Manager of Tarro Quality Meats Rachel Randall and her loyal team of Lisa and Lewis provided 17 kilograms of bacon and 60 eggs to the Beresfield Tavern Bistro to provide the breakfasts. Rachel, a mother of four, has been in her business for 21 years. She was on-board immediately with this idea because the recipients were generally customers of both businesses. Rachel says that helping brings a smile to her heart – such as barbecues for Youth on the Streets and at the local skate park. Her customers are loyal, and she has seen many kids grow up to become her adult customers. These acts of kindness and generosity generally go unnoticed by the public, so it's important to make a fuss. Thank you, Rachel and your team, for all that you do to help our community.

### **BERESFIELD TAVERN**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—On Friday 17 January, The Bistro at the Beresfield Tavern decided to do something to help people without power, food, and phone service after the damaging storms. Manager Carla was assisted and supported by Tarro Quality Meats and The Steggles Shop Beresfield, generously donating bacon and eggs that would go towards comforting around 260 people with a breakfast. Owner/manager of Tarro Quality Meats Rachel Randall and her loyal team of Lisa and Lewis provided 17 kilograms of bacon and 60 eggs to the Beresfield Tavern Bistro, and The Steggles Shop Beresfield 200 eggs, to provide the welcome breakfasts. The Beresfield Tavern and the Bistro team managed by Carla are building a reputation as a great place for locals and guests to eat good food in a relaxing and friendly environment. The Bistro's customers are often the same as those who shop at the other two local businesses. These acts of kindness and generosity generally go unnoticed by the public, so it's important to make a fuss. Thank you Carla, the Bistro team and Beresfield Tavern for all that you do to help our community.

### **WILLIAM DEWSBURY-LOVE**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to congratulate William Dewsbury-Love, who has been named Young Citizen of the Year for his outstanding contributions to Shoalhaven High School and the wider community. William has demonstrated a remarkable passion for creating positive change, focusing on mental health awareness, environmental sustainability, and the arts. William's leadership and dedication have inspired those around him, making a lasting impact on both his peers and the broader Shoalhaven region. Through William's advocacy for positive mental health, William has helped foster a culture of support and well-being within his school community. William's commitment to environmental initiatives showcases his determination to protect and preserve our natural surroundings for future generations. Additionally, William's love for the arts has enriched the school community, encouraging creativity and self-expression among students. William's passion, leadership, and tireless efforts serve as an inspiration to us all and this recognition as Young Citizen of the Year is well deserved. I congratulate William on this incredible achievement.

### **PETTY OFFICER JUSTIN BROWN**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Petty Officer Justin Brown on his remarkable journey and selection to represent Australia at the 2025 Invictus Games in Vancouver and Whistler, Canada. A proud Sanctuary Point local, Justin will swap our South Coast beaches for the icy slopes as he competes in alpine skiing, indoor rowing, the skeleton, and seated volleyball. Justin's story is one of perseverance, courage, and resilience. Since joining the Royal Australian Navy in 1996, he has served with dedication and currently holds the role of Imagery Operations Manager at the Navy Imagery Unit East. Justin's journey has not been without challenges, living with major depression and anxiety following his deployment to Afghanistan in 2013, however through the power of sport, Justin has found healing, purpose, and strength. Justin's unwavering determination and the support of his family have assisted Justin to embrace new opportunities, pushing past adversity to inspire those around him. Justin truly embodies the Invictus spirit of being unconquered. I wish Justin every success at the Invictus Games.

### **SHOALHAVEN MEALS ON WHEELS**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate North Shoalhaven Meals on Wheels for receiving the Proudly Shoalhaven Award. This well-deserved recognition celebrates their 58 years of dedicated service, providing essential support to some of our most vulnerable

community members. With an incredible army of 250 volunteers, North Shoalhaven Meals on Wheels prepares, packs, and delivers over 500 meals every day across the Shoalhaven. Their unwavering commitment ensures that individuals in need receive not only nutritious meals but also vital social connection and support. This service goes beyond meal delivery—it represents compassion, dignity, and community spirit in action. Their volunteers are a shining example of the selflessness and generosity that make Shoalhaven such a special place. For nearly six decades, North Shoalhaven Meals on Wheels has made an immeasurable difference in the lives of so many, and this award is a fitting tribute to their dedication. Congratulations to all the volunteers that are at the lifeblood of this organisation - you truly are the heart of our community!

#### **ST JOHNS PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL 2024 PRESENTATION DAY**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—In the final weeks of the school year 2024, I had the privilege of visiting schools across my electorate to present awards and celebrate the achievements of their students. One notable visit was to St Johns Park Public School, where the sheer number of outstanding students receiving awards meant that their presentation ceremony was held across two days. My Tri Vo MP Leadership Award recognises students who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, resilience, and dedication to their school community throughout the academic year. It was a pleasure to present this award to 14 deserving students - two from each grade, from Kindergarten to Year 6. The Awards went to Connor Bou, Amiya Gao, Lucas Wong, Hayley Pitzing, Lucas Nguyen, Cynthia Nguyen, Ayden Le, Emma Luong, Clinton Nguyen, Raylee Tran, Kevin Dang, Juliana Sia, Angus Tran and Nina Chen. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Principal Ms. Dianne Donatiello, Deputy Principal Ms. Donna McCammond, and all the dedicated staff at St Johns Park Public School for their unwavering commitment to the success and well-being of their students.

#### **MOUNT PRITCHARD PUBLIC SCHOOL 2024 END OF YEAR AWARD PRESENTATION DAY**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 9 December 2024, I had the pleasure of attending Mount Pritchard Public School's Award Ceremony, where students were celebrated for their outstanding efforts and achievements. I had the privilege of presenting the Most Improved Awards to one student in each grade, including those in Kindergarten and the Support Unit Class. The Awards were presented to Aisea Tafolo, Alyssa Alameddine, Mohammad Hussaini, Aryia Long, Kevin Duong, Mateo Markovski, Gabriella Nair and Azra Sipahi. Witnessing their joy and pride as they received their awards was a heartwarming reminder of the importance of encouragement and recognition in education. I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to Principal Mrs Natalie Piccinin and Deputy Principal Ms Courtney Knight for the kind invitation to be part of such a great occasion. I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the incredible contributions of public school teachers. Their dedication and commitment to shaping the minds of young Australians play a vital role in the future of our state, and their efforts deserve our deepest appreciation.

#### **MARY IMMACULATE PRIMARY SCHOOL, BOSSLEY PARK 2024 PRESENTATION DAY**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—I had the privilege of attending the end-of-year presentation of Mary Immaculate Primary School in Bossley Park on the 13 December 2024. I was truly impressed by the wonderful accomplishments of the school, reflected in their strong sense of genuine care, leadership, and excellence. We are fortunate to have Mary Immaculate in our electorate—a school that strives to prepare our students for a successful future, guided by Catholic teachings and an inspiring learning environment. Additionally, I had the honour of presenting my Tri Vo MP Leadership Award to students demonstrating outstanding leadership qualities, from Kindergarten to Year 6. This year, the Award went to Thomas Khoury, Adrianna Korkees, Katia Bayyoodh, Joseph Ventura, Maria Jibrael, Alejandro Piaggio, Jean-Marcus Du Buisson Perrine, Georgia Mileto, Oliver De Souza, Clarissa Shamoael, Joseph Perrone, Emilia Gando, Gloria Petros, and Rosemary Mekha. I congratulate all the award recipients and students for their wonderful achievements. A heartfelt thank you to Principal Ms Bev Coffey and Acting Assistant Principal Ms Jillian Ripepi for the kind invitation, and to all teachers, staff, parents, and the school community for their dedication and hard work.

#### **RHIANNAN HARRIS**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Rhiannan Harris, for being elected as vice-captain of Shellharbour Anglican College for 2025. Being elected as vice-captain is a tremendous honour that carries both pride and responsibility. It reflects the trust and confidence that students, teachers, and the school community have placed in their leadership abilities and commitment to serving others. It also involves him balancing academic, extracurricular, and leadership duties, which helps develop essential skills like communication, teamwork, and decision-making. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Rhiannan on this wonderful achievement.



**SAMUEL SCHOOLEY**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Samuel Schooley, for being elected as School Captain the Shellharbour Anglican College for 2025. Being elected as school captain is a tremendous honour that carries both pride and responsibility. It reflects the trust and confidence that students, teachers, and the school community have placed in their leadership abilities and commitment to serving others. It also involves balancing academic, extracurricular, and leadership duties, which helps develop essential skills like communication, teamwork, and decision-making. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Samuel on this this wonderful achievement.

**ELHANNAH LAIRD**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Elhannah Laird, for being elected as School Captain the Shellharbour Anglican College for 2025. Being elected as school captain is a tremendous honour that carries both pride and responsibility. It reflects the trust and confidence that students, teachers, and the school community have placed in their leadership abilities and commitment to serving others. It also involves him balancing academic, extracurricular, and leadership duties, which helps develop essential skills like communication, teamwork, and decision-making. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Elhannah on this this wonderful achievement.

**ED BROWN'S RETIREMENT FROM XAVIER HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge Mr Ed Brown who has retired from his position at Xavier High School, after more than three decades of dedicated service in the education. Throughout his distinguished career, Mr Brown, has held key leadership roles, including Principal at St Mary's in Corowa and St Joseph's in Finley, and most recently, Religious Education Coordinator and Faith and Mission Leader at Xavier. His commitment to Catholic education and his passion for the spiritual and academic growth of students have left an indelible mark on the school community. Ed's influence extended to countless school, parish, and community initiatives, from Vinnies at School to retreats and parish events, ensuring that every student felt known, respected, and valued. As Mr Brown embarks on his well-deserved retirement, I thank him and celebrate his remarkable legacy of service, compassion, and humility. I wish him all the best in his next venture, including plenty of time on the golf course.

**LEANNE HAS LEFT AN INCREDIBLE LEGACY**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge Leanne Johnson, who recently stepped down as Chief Executive of Carevan after several years of exceptional service. Leanne's dedication to the community has been extraordinary, making a lasting impact on countless lives. Under her leadership, Carevan grew into a vital resource, providing thousands of meals and a safe space for those in need. Leanne's advocacy for the vulnerable and tireless commitment to the community extended beyond the kitchen, including a valuable partnership providing Ruffy swags for people experiencing homelessness. Her recent recognition with the Food Kindness Award at Jamie Oliver's Australian Food Heroes is a testament to her passion for making a positive difference. Leanne's final day on January 2, 2025, was marked by heartfelt farewells, afternoon teas, and a guard of honour—a reflection of the profound gratitude the community has for her. Leanne, your passion, drive, and commitment to those you served have made you a beloved figure across the border. Your legacy of generosity and dedication will continue to inspire and guide those who follow in your footsteps. I wish you great success in your next chapter.

**JUNE DANGAR WINS CROWN LANDS AWARD**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Armidale local June Dangar, on winning an Individual Excellence award at the Crown Lands Awards held in Sydney. This award recognises a person involved in Crown reserve management, who demonstrates outstanding community service and makes tangible improvements to public land for the benefit of all. I congratulate June on this award and for her tireless efforts serving the Armidale Showground Land Managers group, charged with managing crown reserve lands accommodating the showground facilities. The group secured funding to restore and maintain the showground's lighting and infrastructure, in particular one of the twin grandstands of key significance, after it fell into disrepair. Thank you also to each member of the group, for your support to this project and ensuring the longevity of these facilities. I commend June on this well earned accolade and for assisting to retain part of Armidale's heritage and history, for many years to come.

**DIPPER'S HOME TIMBER AND HARDWARE**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Moree local business Dipper's Home Timber and Hardware, for being named the New South Wales Store of the Year, whereby excellence and

achievements are acknowledged by the Independent Hardware Group. I congratulate Dippers not only on this accolade, but on backing up on earlier NSW wins in 2021 and 2022, along with an impressive nationwide win in 2014. I extend my congratulations to the whole team at Dippers, led and enabled under the stewardship of duo, Bec Diprose owner of Dippers and site manager Mark Baker. Dippers continues to grow from strength to strength, recently undergoing a major redevelopment. With growth Dippers remain firm on their fundamentals, ensuring they deliver continued excellence in customer service to the community. I commend all involved in this wonderful achievement, for their hard work and commitment to the organisation and I wish Dippers all the best in the upcoming Nationals being held at Adelaide this month.

#### **SINGER AND SONG WRITER MATT SCULLION**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Glencoe local Matt Scullion, on winning three prestigious awards at the 2025 Tamworth Country Music Festival. Matt won the People's Choice award for Best Bush Ballad for his song 'Beer Box Man,' with same song winning the Local Heroes Song of the Year award. The third honour was The Song Maker Award for songwriting, which cemented Matt into the TSA wall of fame in Tamworth, alongside many of the greats in the music industry. I congratulate Matt on his accomplished singing and song writing career. Having produced three albums, 26 number 1 songs, along with his song 'Our Backyard,' winning the Song of the Year at the 2018 Golden Guitar awards. Such reward has followed a lifetime of experiences, which took Matt from Ulladulla to Tamworth, Darwin and Nashville, where he studied the art of song writing and learning from the best the Music City had to offer. I commend Matt on this impressive repertoire of accolades, talent, hard work and commitment to his craft, as well as on his contribution to the Australian Country Music industry.

#### **40 YEARS OF SERVICE**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I congratulate Rtd Inspector Gerry Burnage, who recently served his last day at the Ballina SES after 40 years of service to the region, 36 of them in the role of Unit Commander. Gerry was instrumental in leading the Ballina NSW SES Unit, committing endless hours to the safety and wellbeing of his staff and the Ballina community. Some of the events that showcased Gerry's leadership were the Lennox tornado in 2010, and the 2022 floods, during which the Unit also served Coraki, Woodburn and Broadwater. While these were highlights in a long career, Gerry was also involved in many SES lead developments such as the design of all the SES vehicles, working on the General Land Rescue Committee, maintaining equipment and procedures to the highest level and refining safety protocols. Ballina and surrounding areas have benefited immensely from Gerry's tireless work and dedication. On behalf of our community, I express my appreciation for his service and leadership, especially his determined advocacy for better conditions for the Ballina based SES volunteers. I wish Gerry a well-deserved and fulfilling retirement.

#### **FLYING-FOX EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I congratulate the team that developed the Byron Shire Council's flying-fox education program who were recently recognised at the 2024 Local Government NSW Excellence in the Environment Awards. I particularly commend Claudia Caliri, Council's Biodiversity Project Officer and the force behind the project. Claudia has worked tirelessly on the No Bat No Me community engagement project aimed at teaching people about how crucial flying-foxes are in the natural environment. Their community engagement programs involved talking to children in preschools and schools, going to Splendour in the Grass and other events and spreading the message through advertising and social media. With strong collaboration between Council, WIRES and wildlife volunteers Lib Ruytenberg and Annie Crowley, as well as local schools, flying-fox educators and wildlife rescuers, this initiative is exactly what our community needed to protect our important wildlife. I commend Claudia, her team and the project partners on this fantastic initiative.

#### **EUREKA PUBLIC SCHOOL RELAY TEAM**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today, I recognise the outstanding achievement of Eureka Public School's relay team at the recent State Athletics Championships in Sydney. The team, consisting of Tully, Cyan, Jackson and Mason, competed in the Small Schools category of the Nigel Bagley Relay and secured an impressive eighth-place finish - just one second behind the winning time. This exceptional accomplishment saw the small school, with only 84 students in total, punching well above its weight. Equally inspiring is the overwhelming community support that helped make this opportunity possible. Thanks to the dedication of the Eureka Hall committee, the EPS P&C and generous community contributions, more than \$8000 was raised to cover travel costs for the students and their families. I congratulate these talented young athletes and commend the entire Eureka community for their generosity and commitment to supporting local students in their sporting endeavours.

### ADAM BRAYBROOK – GIFT OF MUSIC

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge Adam Braybrook, a remarkable father and local business owner from Albury, whose extraordinary act of kindness has transformed a young student's life. Adam made a generous donation of \$1500 towards a gift voucher from a local music store, where one lucky person could choose an instrument of their choice. Two staff members from Belvoir Special Development School saw the post on Facebook and nominated student Blake, with Blake then becoming the winning recipient of this gift. Adam it was truly a privilege to hear your heartwarming story and how music has made an impact in your life. At the same time, you have reminded us of the power of giving and the strength of community support. Thank you for your inspiring generosity, and Blake, may this opportunity lead you to an incredible musical journey.

### JOHN SCOTT

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Friendly, helpful, caring, dedicated – these are just some of the words that Talbingo people use to describe community champion John Scott. So, it is not surprising that the well-known 'quiet achiever' and Rural Fire Service captain was named Talbingo's Citizen of the Year on Australia Day. It was my honour to attend the celebrations and see the award go to John as a most worthy recipient. At 79, the former Snowy Mountains Scheme worker is the longest-serving RFS captain in the Riverina Highlands and as brigade captain for more than 23 years he has led the fight against major fires, most recently the devastating 2019-2020 disaster. This is a remarkable achievement on its own but John's service to community extends even beyond protecting it. He is a life member of the Talbingo Country Club where he has volunteered for more than 30 years and in 2024, he became the town's first community-selected Australia Day Ambassador – a choice that reflects the esteem in which he is held. Active in charity and sporting events, he is always there to lend a hand and is quick to assist those in need. Congratulations, John, and thank you for all you have done.

### WAGGA'S WINNERS

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—A group of diverse citizens with a shared passion for their community are well-deserved recipients of Australia Day awards from Wagga Wagga City Council. Among them are Uncle Hewitt and Auntie Dot Whyman who received nominations for the city's Walk of Honour in recognition of their tireless work to improve the lives of First Nations people, including the establishment of critical childcare, health, legal and administrative services. Also nominated for the Walk was Zita Denholm, who has enriched thousands of young lives as a teacher of English and history as well as teaching speech and drama to children at the Wagga Eisteddfod, where is recognised with a perpetual trophy in her name. Congratulations also to Ted Ryder Sports Memorial Award recipient, David Dunn, for his many years of service to school sporting activities and Environmental Citizen of the Year Leanne Scott for her work to reduce waste, with a special focus on recycling small plastic items to keep them out of landfill. Wagga's award recipients each bring something different to their community service, but all are making a real and lasting difference – and I thank them for their passion, care and drive. Well done to all.

### CLAYTON BARNES

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Congratulations to Wagga Wagga ophthalmologist Clayton Barnes whose dedicated service to regional health care has been recognised in a Distinguished Service Medal from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists. It is a fitting honour for the long-serving specialist who has dedicated his energies to community care and better regional health for more than 30 years. His journey as an advocate for the regions began soon after specialist graduation when he moved to Wagga in 1992. He has changed the lives of thousands of patients over the years, has trained more than 110 registrars and attracted five ophthalmologists to our community. Sydney-raised Dr Barnes is an example of those medical experts who have built a career and made a genuine difference by moving to a regional centre and delivering vital services, while enjoying a great lifestyle in a country environment. He hopes his example will inspire other metropolitan-based doctors to make the move to the regions. As a doctor originally from Sydney, I can testify that life in the regions is rewarding at work and at home and I thank Dr Barnes for his invaluable work in spreading the word.

### HSC CLASS OF 2024

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I was thrilled to see extraordinary HSC results from students across the Badgerys Creek electorate in the HSC Class of 2024 and I congratulate all students following years of dedication and effort. I congratulate Ryan-James Watson from Macarthur Anglican School for obtaining First in Indonesian Continuers and First in Indonesian Extension. I commend staff and parents for the important roles they played in the educational development of all students. I congratulate all students of the HSC Class of 2024 on completing their schooling and I wish them all the very best going into the future.

### MULGOA PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESENTATION 2024

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I was delighted to join the Mulgoa Public School community at their school presentation event in December 2024. Congratulations to all students of Mulgoa Public School on their achievements in 2024, including Charlette for winning the 2024 Badgerys Creek Excellence Award in recognition of her outstanding commitment to bringing positive change to the school community. I extend my congratulations to all school students in the Badgerys Creek electorate who excelled last year and wish all students the very best for this year and the years ahead. I recognise and commend the outstanding work of staff and parents in support of the students.

### SHARING THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—Once again it was such a joy to share the Christmas spirit of hope and peace with families and community members who received my personalised Christmas cards towards the end of last year, with around 4000 posted out! Well done and thank you to my 2024 Christmas Card Winner Sophia Hassaplidakis of Macarthur Anglican School for brightening the day of so many people!

### PELICAN CROQUET CLUB

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the outstanding achievement of Pelican Croquet Club for their recent success in the NSW Division 3 State Finals. The Pelican Croquet Club emerged as the champions of the Division 3 Pennants Golf Croquet for the Newcastle/Hunter Zone, a remarkable accomplishment that speaks to their skill and dedication. Hosted by the Canberra Club late last year, the state titles brought together for competitive zones. The Pelican team faced tough opponents, including Manly, Jambaroo and Cheltenham Croquet Clubs, all vying for the coveted state title. In a thrilling display of teamwork and precision, the Pelican team triumphed over each of these formidable clubs, ultimately securing the state title and bringing home the well-deserved trophy. The team, consisting of Liano, Jan A, Phil, Jill, Eve, John C and Gary, was expertly led by their captain, Judy. Their collective effort and determination have not only earned them this prestigious title but have also brought pride to their club and community. Congratulations to the entire Pelican Croquet Club team, you are an inspiration to us all, and I look forward to your continued success in future competitions.

### CARMEL BROWN

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Carmel Brown, a deserving recipient of the John Hughson Soaring with the Eagles Award at the Environmental Excellence in Landcare Awards 2024. This award is given to an individual who has excelled in Landcare and had a significant regional impact. Carmel, as Team Leader at Catherine Hill Bay Landcare, has been a driving force in preserving and enhancing our local environment for over a decade. Through her welcoming spirit, Carmel has been instrumental in bringing new Landcarers into the Catherine Hill Bay area. Her deep knowledge, passion and enthusiasm have led to the establishment of several new Landcare sites, furthering the impact of this vital work. In addition to her work with Landcare, Carmel serves as a committee member of the Hunter Region Landcare organisation and is an active leader in the Catherine Hill Bay Progress Association. Carmel, your contributions have made a lasting impact, and it is with great admiration that I congratulate you as a truly worthy recipient of this prestigious award.

### MARINE RESCUE LAKE MACQUARIE

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the remarkable efforts of Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie for their swift and highly professional response to a distress call on Sunday 12 January. Rescue vessels Lake Macquarie 30 and 31, along with a jet ski, were launched from the Marine Rescue base following an urgent distress signal from a commercial vessel off Swansea Heads. Within just 45 minutes of the initial call, the highly skilled and experienced team successfully rescued all nine individuals on board the vessel and returned them to shore. This remarkable rescue is a clear testament to the team's exceptional training and unwavering commitment to the vital work of keeping the Swansea community's waterways safe. Their actions undoubtedly made a difference in what could have been a much more dangerous situation. On behalf of the community, I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to every member of the team for their quick response and tireless efforts.

### A MEMORABLE 2025 AUSTRALIA DAY FOR KYOGLE

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I popped into Kyogle's Australia Day barbecue to personally congratulate Kyogle Lions Food Pantry Manager Roz Knights on being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for her outstanding public service. True to form, a smiling Roz was cutting onions for the barbecue, giving back to her community she has been an integral part of since moving from Melbourne to Kyogle in 2012.

Roz Knights OAM manages a staff of 40 at the food pantry, which supports more than 800 families every month. Her medal listing on the Australia Day Honours List recognised her honesty, empathy, respect and trust. I also congratulate Kyogle Lions Club Secretary Janette Meehan and the organising committee on another successful Australia Day ceremony in Kyogle. Eden Creek's Dale Oxtoby is the Kyogle Citizen of the Year for 2025. Patricia Vidler was named Senior Citizen of the Year. Young musician Angus Joyce received the Senior Student of the Year Award. Jocelyn Blackburn received the Junior Student of the Year Award. Tennille Owen was named the Junior Sportsperson of the Year. Maureen Welsh took out the Senior Sportsperson of the Year Award, which was accepted by her brother Tom.

#### **BONALBO AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD WINNERS 2025**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I made it to all three Australia Day ceremonies in Kyogle Local Government Area this year and Bonalbo in recent years has featured not only the traditional awards but a novel Gumboot Toss. I wish to warmly congratulate Bonalbo's Citizen of the Year for 2025 – John Johnston, who has been involved with Tunglebung Hall for an amazing 30 years. Young Citizen of the Year went to Stella Dean. The Creative Arts Award went to Jayden Creighton and Duck Pond Productions. Jayden was absent from the event. James McCullagh was awarded Sportsperson of the Year. Bonalbo's Business of the Year was awarded to Bonalbo Caravan Park. Bonalbo Bowling Club was the venue for proceedings. A highlight was Christine Gambley and John Tart leading us in the national anthem. Gumboot Toss winners were Open Men's -- Tony Dean with 17.23 metres; Open Women – Talitha Page; Under-18s – Sarah McCullagh; Junior – Ava Williams; Toddler – Nicholas Cooper. In a first, the Rivers of Gold Gumboot Toss was won by West of the Range (Clarence River) over East of the Range (Kyogle/Richmond River). Fun competitions for best cars and motorbikes, heaviest cane toad and best dressed were all hotly contested.

#### **WOODENBONG AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD WINNERS 2025**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I WISH to warmly congratulate Koreelah's Wendy Fletcher on being named Woodenbong's Citizen of the Year for 2025. Wendy, who has lived in the Woodenbong area all her life and is married with two children, is heavily involved in a variety of local committees, including Rodeo and Campdraft, RSL Women's Auxiliary, and Woodenbong Central School P&C Association. She is also a CWA member, Woodenbong Show steward, a TSKF Karate instructor, Woodenbong Pony Club instructor and volunteer for the Woodenbong Swimming Club, bike weekends and SSAA Shooting competition days. Senior Citizen of the Year Lynette Downham married a Woodenbong man in 1970 and has been an active volunteer in the community ever since, from sport to scripture, and everything in-between. Sportsperson of the Year is Elke Johnston, of Bean Creek, who, as a real all-rounder, has excelled in the sports of touch football, futsal, beach volleyball, athletics, and swimming. Community Organisation for 2025 is the Woodenbong Golf Club, trading as the Woodenbong Sports Club. The club and course have been reborn under a new committee. Business/Service of the Year is the innovative McMillan Steel Fabrication, of Woodenbong, owned and operated by Noel and Leanne McMillan.

#### **ONA WINS GOOD FOOD GUIDE'S CAFE OF THE YEAR 2024**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Congratulations to Ona in Marrickville on winning the Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide 2024 Cafe of the Year award. This is the second consecutive year a cafe in my Summer Hill electorate has taken out this coveted title after Happyfield's win in 2023. We inner westies know how fantastic our cafe culture is, and it is wonderful to see our dedicated cafe owners and teams recognised by the Good Food Guide. Founded in 2008 by Sasa Sestic who came to Australia from Bosnia in 1997, Ona has cemented itself amongst the very best in the business. Home to a leather-bound menu that would satisfy even the most exacting of coffee lovers, Ona is equally appealing to those looking to enjoy a laid-back brunch with their drink of choice. Owner Sasa's dedication to his trade is evident in his journey from handball representative at the Sydney Olympics to World Barista Champion in 2015. Congratulations Sasa and all the team at Ona on this well-deserved award.

#### **BABA'S PLACE RECEIVES THE GOOD FOOD GUIDE'S BILL GRANGER TRAILBLAZER AWARD**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Congratulations to Baba's Place in Marrickville for receiving the Bill Granger Trailblazer Award at the 2024 Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide Awards. Founded by co-owners Alex Kelly, Jean-Paul El Tom and James Bellos, Baba's Place is a true melting pot reflecting their individual Lebanese, Macedonian and Greek heritages. This award honours Bill Granger's hospitality, warmth, integrity and entrepreneurial spirit, and in taking out the inaugural award Alex, Jean-Paul and James are continuing this wonderful legacy. Baba's Place reflects the unique community in Marrickville, where people from many places have brought their rich cultural heritage together to create the vibrant and diverse place we love. It is a celebration of the suburban Sydney experience, grounded in the experiences and stories of immigrant families and their shared

passion for food and cooking. It is great to see Marrickville's amazing dining scene being recognised as one of Sydney's best, with venues like Baba's Place leading the way. Congratulations Alex, Jean-Paul, James and all the team at Baba's Place on this fantastic award.

#### **YASSER ZAKI – CEO OF THE YEAR AWARD**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I would like to offer my congratulations to Yasser Zaki for being awarded the Healthcare CEO of the year award at The CEO Magazine's 13th annual Executive of the Year Awards. Yasser Zaki is the Global CEO for the organisation Tender Loving Care Disability Services which provides support for children, young people and adults with a disability all around the world. This prestigious award is a testament to his extraordinary leadership, vision and unwavering commitment to advancing the healthcare and disability sector. By providing easy access to the services that these individuals need to achieve their goals, Tender Loving Care is dedicated to reducing and eliminating barriers for those with physical, sensory, psychological and learning disabilities. Tender Loving Care aims to enhance the well-being and quality of life for clients by offering personalised care that respects their dignity, privacy and independence. This award is a well-deserved recognition of Yasser's extraordinary contributions to healthcare and the legacy he continues to build at Tender Loving Care. I congratulate Yasser on this remarkable achievement and look forward to the continued success and positive impact of his leadership.

#### **MISSION OF HOPE - 2024 MUSLIM MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I was deeply honoured to have had the opportunity to speak at the Mission of Hope 2024 Muslim Mental Health Conference. I would like to acknowledge Hanan Dover, founder of Mission of Hope, for her dedication to this cause and for providing a vital platform for discussing the unique challenges that individuals face, as well as the critical need for culturally sensitive mental health support. Mental health is an issue that transcends all backgrounds, yet it is particularly important within communities that may face unique cultural, religious and social challenges. The Mission of Hope initiative has done incredible work in breaking the stigma surrounding mental health, providing culturally competent care and ensuring that individuals in our community feel seen, heard and supported. It was very inspiring to engage with so many passionate individuals, experts and advocates who are committed to improving mental health outcomes and breaking the stigma surrounding mental health in Muslim communities. The 2024 Muslim Mental Health Conference reminds us that together, we can build a future where mental wellness is a priority for all and where every person feels supported, heard and understood.

#### **BANKSTOWN CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the local primary schools in my electorate who participated in my end-of-year Christmas card competition. My office received over 250 entries, showing off the extraordinary artistry and creativity of students from the Bankstown electorate. This year our community judges, Father Melition from St Euphemia Greek Orthodox Church, Jasmine from Bánh Mì Bảy Ngõ, Inaam from Australian National Sports Club and Ms Osman from St Charbel's College had the difficult task of choosing 7 finalists out of the hundreds of entries. Many of the entries were also on display in my office during the Christmas season. I would like to congratulate Angelique Bozatzis from Bankstown West Public school on her winning illustration of the nativity as well as the finalists Ruah Shin (Greenacre Christian College), Ruwayfe Mahmud (Wiley Park Public school), Shreya Sarker (Wiley Park Public School), Beth Koutelas (Greenacre Christian College), Nicholas Tsardoulis (St Euphemia College Bankstown) and Ezekiel Fazio (Greenacre Christian College). I thank every student for their participation and look forward to visiting their schools in the year ahead.

#### **EPIPHANY GREEK FESTIVAL**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I wish to thank St Basil's NSW/ACT and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia for organising the 2025 Epiphany Greek Festival. Thousands of people attended the event in Carss Bush Park, Kogarah on the 12th of January. The day included the Blessing of the Waters Ceremony led by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, along with traditional dancing, music and market stalls. People were invited to attend the beautiful and sunny day to celebrate and immerse themselves in Greek culture. This event is truly a testament to the Greek-Australian community of NSW in maintaining and celebrating their faith and actively promoting multiculturalism in NSW. I again would like to thank St Basil's NSW/ACT and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia for organising this wonderful event, the 2025 Epiphany Greek Festival, that celebrated such rich culture, cuisine, community and faith.

### GRAEME ISAKO

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to congratulate Kogarah's Graeme Isako on his impressive performance as Simon in Jesus Christ Superstar and his continuing success in the dramatic arts. Jesus Christ Superstar is a critically acclaimed, Oliver Award-winning global phenomenon, which dramatises the final week of Jesus's life through the point of view of Judas. It is an incredible achievement to be in a musical which has seen some of Australia's highest musical talents lead, including John Farnham in the original Australian production in 1992. Mr Isako's success in the dramatic arts began in 2002 in Mackintosh's Oliver, and his more recent performances have included Miss Saigon and Moulin Rouge! The Musical!. Mr Isako's passion for his craft is highly commendable and his success is a testament to his hard work and enthusiasm.

### CRAIG JAMES

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and celebrate senior Police Officer, Detective Chief Inspector Craig James on being awarded the prestigious Australian Police Medal. Craig has spent most of his nearly 30 year long career policing the St George and Sutherland Shire area. He was promoted to Sergeant in 2004 and then to Inspector in 2008. In 2011 he was selected as one of 122 NSW Police Force Members selected to be deployed in Christchurch, New Zealand in the wake of a devastating earthquake. In 2013 he transferred to the Public Transport Command as a staff officer, where he played a pivotal role in creating the new Police Transport Command. Currently he is the Training and Development Manager of Dog and Mounted Command. Instilling pride back into a historic division with his "March out" and "March in" ceremonies that celebrate retired and newly inaugurated police dogs. Congratulations on your long and accomplished career and thank you for everything you have done for the community.

### 50 YEARS OF DEDICATION TO RFS

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Fifty years ago, in 1974, a group of local residents came together to form what is now a lifeline for the community, the Clybucca Bush Fire Brigade. The brigade's first captain, Noel Swan, passed the leadership to his son, Ron Swan, in 1992. Now 75, Ron continues to lead the brigades' volunteers, balancing his role with running a livestock transport business. At the beginning, the brigade was hauling firefighting gear in trailers attached to personal vehicles, later using an ex-army truck. Since joining the RFS they now answer the call in the face of bushfires, motor vehicle accidents, house fires, and even search-and-rescue operations. Over the years, Ron and his team have seen countless emergencies. He vividly remembers a fire in the late 1990s that tore through Clybucca's bushland, as well as the devastating 2019 fires that nearly destroyed the nearby town of Willawarrin. Every member of the brigade has been a volunteer, balancing family, work, and service to their community. These unsung heroes save lives, protect homes, and provide hope during the darkest times. Well done Ron!

### BLACK SPOT BEACONS

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega)**—Mr Speaker congratulations to Surf Life Saving NSW and our local volunteers on the installation of emergency response beacons in the Bega electorate. As a result of the Minns Labor Government fast-tracking the installation of emergency response beacons, they have now been installed at Bar Beach Merimbula, Camel Rock Bermagui, and the Pambula River mouth. For the majority of the year, those beaches are unpatrolled and have a record of rescues or incidents. Emergency response beacons directly connect callers to Surf Life Saving NSW's state operations centre enabling rapid deployment of lifesaving and emergency services to a potential rescue site. The next generation of beacons are fitted with floatation devices and enhanced technology such as high- definition video live-streaming. This complements the free Surf Life Saving Australia Beachsafe app which provides real time hazards, weather reports, hours of beach patrols, recent incidents, and tips on how to spot a rip. Thank you to the volunteers and lifeguards who have given 1,462,000 volunteer patrol hours and performed more than 8880 rescues according to the 2024 Surf Life Saving Australia National Coastal Safety report.

### BROGO WATER TREATMENT PLANT

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega)**—Mr Speaker congratulations to the Bega Valley Shire Council on being awarded the Local Government NSW Excellence in Environment award in the water management category. The Brogo water treatment plant was developed through a \$10 million grant from NSW Department of Planning & Environment Safe and Secure Water program. It was supported by a \$2.5 million contribution from the Bega Valley Shire Council. In the award, the Council was commended on the development and communication of the Brogo water treatment plant project. The project will provide safe and secure water supply to the northern communities of the Bega Valley. As a consequence of the black summer bushfires of 2019-2020, 80 % of the ground cover in the catchment area was destroyed. This resulted in an urgency for water quality and security. The

Brogo water treatment plant incorporated modern and long-term solutions including flocculation, aeration, and filtration. Congratulations Bega Valley Shire Council on this project supported by the NSW Government

### **BEGA MEN'S SHED**

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega)**—Mr Speaker I rise to congratulate the awarding of life membership to 4 members of the bega men's shed. Eric Myers, Ray Spencer, Bob Russell, and Brian Gerathy were honoured with life membership in November 2024. Eric, Ray, and Bob are three of the 5 founding members of the shed. This wonderful community organisation is dedicated to the health and welfare of its members. It is open twice a week and members work on community projects, specific men's shed projects, or a member's project of choice. There are hundreds of years of combined experience which skilled tradesmen share in the shed. The work is done in a spirit of mateship with a focus on safe working practices. Men's sheds provide positive impacts in our towns through camaraderie, building a sense of community, increasing social interaction, and reducing isolation. The Australian Men's Shed Association is the national service provider for over 1200 men's, women's, and community sheds across Australia. As they say, "men don't talk face to face, they talk shoulder to shoulder." Congratulations Eric, Ray, Bob, and Brian and the Bega Men's Shed.

### **WE CARE CONNECT**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Congratulations to We Care Connect for being recognised as the Joint Volunteer Award Winner in the Central Coast Council 2025 Australia Day Awards. Derryck Klarkowski, a Wyongah resident, and the volunteer CEO of We Care Connect, has made a significant impact on the lives of disadvantaged children by founding this local charity. Since its establishment, We Care Connect has provided essential items like pre-loved clothing, cots, prams, and car seats to over 26,000 children across the Central Coast and Hunter regions, effectively supporting families with severe financial struggles, family violence, and various urgent circumstances. Derryck's leadership and unwavering dedication to combating childhood poverty through We Care Connect have resulted in the successful re-homing of over 803,000 items, diverting more than 500 tonnes from landfill, and fostering a robust referral network of over 500 caseworkers from 120 agencies. His humble nature and relentless motivation inspire a passionate team of over 120 volunteers, ensuring that every child receives high-quality necessities. Through various roles, including repairing cots and creating an online database, he keeps operational costs low while making a tangible impact on the lives of vulnerable children, continuously driving We Care Connect's mission forward.

### **THE BIKERS HAND INC.**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Congratulations to The Bikers Hand for their well-deserved recognition as Community Group Award Winner in the Central Coast Council 2025 Australia Day Awards. This acknowledgment highlights the dedication and hard work of the volunteers who contribute to making a positive impact in the community. The Bikers Hand, founded in 2015, is a charitable organisation that combines a love for motorcycle rides with a commitment to giving back to the community, specifically focusing on supporting homeless individuals and making a positive impact on their lives through various charitable events and initiatives. Since 2018, The Bikers Hand has significantly impacted the Central Coast by aiding over 50 charities and schools with diverse initiatives, from breakfast programs and domestic violence support to homelessness aid. Their annual Christmas Toy Run brings joy to families in need, complemented by various community events designed to uplift and support local causes. In addition to their human-focused efforts, they also advocate for animal welfare, assisting shelters and rescue groups for animals. Beyond their charitable actions, The Bikers Hand embodies a compassionate community dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of many across the Central Coast.

### **SONS OF OBIWAN SABER ACADEMY**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—The Sons of Obiwan Saber Academy from Tuggerah received recognition as a nominee as Community Organisation of the Year in the Central Coast Council 2025 Australia Day Awards, an event celebrated at The Art House in Wyong, highlighting their contributions to the community. Founder Luke Boyton's innovative program uniquely blends theatre combat with cognitive and dialectical behaviour therapy, providing students aged 10 and above an opportunity to develop resilience and adaptability through physical activity. By extending the curriculum beyond traditional academics, the program empowers students to face challenges and failures while



accommodating diverse fitness levels. With tailored classes that emphasize both fitness and personal growth, Mr Boyton's approach fosters a holistic environment for the development of essential life skills in young individuals. At the academy I had the experience to wield a lightsaber handcrafted by Mr Boyton himself from materials sourced locally on the Central Coast. It was more special to see the behind-the-scenes of the manufacturing process and were able to learn some beginner-friendly choreography.

#### **JUBILEE COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to recognise Jubilee Community Services, a community group that delivers invaluable services to residents in my electorate and the St George area. Initially established as Georges River Community Services in 1971, today Jubilee continues to grow, adapting to the emerging needs of our communities. Through consulting with local people and working with like-minded organisations – Jubilee works hard to provide much-needed services to the community through ongoing commitment and support from volunteers. As I say time and time again, volunteers really are the backbone of our community. Their dedication to help serve and work towards an equitable society is always commendable and deeply appreciated. Jubilee offers a variety of services, from catering to the needs and wellbeing of the elderly to childcare services and English tutoring classes – they do it all. I would like to thank Marion Smith, Jubilee's Chairman of the Board, and all staff and volunteers for their tireless commitment to fostering community ties and service to our community. I look forward to our continued partnership in helping serve the best interests of our community and wish you well for the coming year.

#### **MARONITE CATHOLIC SOCIETY - ANNUAL FUNDRAISING GALA DINNER**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the Maronite Catholic Society for their outstanding efforts in celebrating cultural diversity and giving back to the community. I was honoured to be part of their Annual Fundraising Gala Dinner this 2025. The event was a celebration of our unity here in New South Wales, as a connected, multicultural society. I am so proud of our commitment to harmony and I must say, the Maronite Catholic Society exemplify this incredibly well. All the funds raised at this event went directly to supporting the Maronite Catholic Society to continue the invaluable support to families facing hardship across the globe. Their vigorous efforts deserve our recognition, reminding us of the vital role that the Maronite Catholic Society plays. By staying united and supporting one another, we can make a positive impact on the lives of others. Once again, I would like to thank the Maronite Catholic Society, Nadia Obeid, and Amal El-Hamwy for your remarkable efforts not only throughout New South Wales, but the globe.

#### **EPIPHANY GREEK FESTIVAL 2025**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to congratulate the St Basil's NSW/ACT organisation and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, for successfully hosting the Epiphany Greek Festival in 2025. This is a fantastic event that takes place each and every year at Carss Bush Park, with thousands of locals flocking to the area to enjoy some beautiful food, listen to some great music and take part in cultural activities. On the day, there were also some fantastic performances by several Greek dance groups, including the Hellenic Lyceum Dance Group, Sydney Greek Dancing School, and the Aristotelion Dance Academy. The array of local talent on display was nothing short of incredible. The highlight of the day certainly was the 'Great Blessing of the Waters', where hundreds of men and boys swam out into Kogarah Bay to retrieve the Holy Cross, cast out into the Georges River by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios. I would like to thank everyone who made the day a success and I especially want to thank St Basil's and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia for continuing to put this event on every year.

#### **VALE JOHN WEINGARTH**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I pay tribute to a much-respected Northbridge local, John Weingarth, who passed on 26 December 2024 aged 86. Born in 1938, John trained as a lawyer and served the legal profession with distinction. After working in private practice, he transitioned to corporate law, taking on lead roles at Citibank, where he helped transform the banking sector by designing and implementing Mortgage Power. A man of great integrity and ahead of his time, John was a strong advocate for Alternative Dispute Resolution, working alongside Sir Laurence Street to promote its role in the legal system. He later worked as a mediator with the NSW Workers Compensation Commission, committed to fair outcomes. John served as Chair of the City of Willoughby Bicentenary and had the honour of being presented to Queen Elizabeth II. A dedicated member of Northbridge Rotary, he also led the 'Save the Baths' campaign to protect Northbridge Baths from development. Guided by faith and social conscience, he worked pro bono with Balmain Uniting Church to advocate for refugees. John's legacy is one of love, service and dedication of which we can all be proud.

**VALE BARRY MALEY**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I pay tribute to the late Barry Maley of Crows Nest who died in January 2025 at the age of 99. Barry was a much-respected Australian author and intellectual who served for many years as a Senior Fellow at the think tank, the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS). As a Senior Fellow, Barry's research primarily focussed on social policy with particular attention to family and taxation. Barry wrote numerous books for the CIS including *Family & Marriage in Australia* (2001), *Divorce Law and the Future of Marriage* (2003), followed by *Family on the Edge* (2009). Prior to joining the CIS in 1989, Barry served as a Senior Lecturer in Behavioural Science at the University of New South Wales. Barry was not only a great thinker and writer, but a man of compassion and conviction who believed firmly in the importance of the family to a stable and flourishing society. A devoted husband and father himself, Barry raised his family in Castlecrag where he lived for forty years. I thank Barry for his long contribution to our public and intellectual life.

**THAI NAAN**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—Willoughby is home to many fantastic restaurants serving an array of the finest cuisine from around the world. Thai Naan in Victoria Avenue Chatswood is a classic example, striving to serve the best Thai food in Chatswood. After opening its doors in 1996, Thai Naan will be sadly closing its doors as its owners take a well-earned rest from almost thirty years of continuous operation. Dedicated to catering excellence, Thai Naan prided itself on the freshness of its produce, the quality of its food preparation, and the warm, friendly hospitality which delighted its many customers. Serving a variety of classic Thai favourites, including noodles, steamed rice, seafood, meat, vegetables, dumplings and spring rolls, Thai Naan catered for every occasion from casual take-away lunches to sumptuous banquets for weddings, birthdays and other special occasions. This ever-popular Thai restaurant will be much missed. To many locals in Willoughby, Thai Naan has been a constant and a personal favourite. I congratulate and thank Peter and Air, their family and staff on three decades of serving our community.

**CONARGO PUBLIC SCHOOL AND DENILQUIN HIGH SCHOOL - CONARGO**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today, I would like to commend the collaborative efforts of Conargo Public School and Denilquin High School students in restoring the Billabong Creek at Conargo. In December 2024, these students, alongside the Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council Inc., Denilquin Kolety Lagoons Landcare group, and the Ricegrowers' Association of Australia, planted 600 native wetland species along a 400-metre stretch of the creek. This initiative aims to enhance habitats for native fish and bird species, particularly the eel-tailed catfish. Such hands-on environmental education not only enriches our natural surroundings but also instils a sense of stewardship in our youth. Congratulations to all participants for their dedication to preserving our local ecosystems.

**PINK RIBBON BREAKFAST**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—As I walked into the foyer of Parravilla I caught a glimpse of several women dressed immaculately in saris and frocks in pink from one end of the colour spectrum to the other; pastels to vivid pinks, dusty to shocking pink. Every colour imaginable was on display as women gathered for the Pink Ribbon Breakfast. The Pink Ribbon Breakfast is an effective way of engaging with the broader community. Sharing personal experiences and providing easy to understand information about breast cancer awareness helps to reduce incidents of breast cancer in our community particularly within communities where language can create barriers. I acknowledge the impactful speakers who discussed the importance of prevention, regular mammograms, and other ways to monitor for signs and symptoms of disease. Speakers included Associate Professor Sanjay Warriar who gave a compelling presentation about breast cancer awareness. Hats off to the hardworking women who year after year host this event. What they have done over the past twelve years for breast cancer awareness has been vita. Thank you Rekha, Sue, Poornima, Bharti, Meena and Shipra. You are outstanding role models for all women in our community.

**PARRAMATTA MEMORIAL SWIMMING CLUB – KELSO KING EXCELLENCE SHIELD**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—Congratulations to the Parramatta Memorial Swimming Club [PMSC], that was presented an award by Royal Life Saving Society Australia, New South Wales Branch, for 2nd place in the Kelso King Excellence Shield. This is an award points score trophy for affiliated amateur swimming clubs. Operating out of the Parramatta Aquatic Centre, Parramatta Memorial Swimming Club focuses on providing the wider community with an environment that encourages the development of safe water skills, enables the improvement of swimming techniques, and encourages members to achieve their personal best. PMSC guides young swimmers through the Royal Life Saving Medallion course, teaching vital soft skills such as teamwork, communication, problem solving and effective decision making. Congratulations to Janice Woodward and the team at PMCS for the well-deserved recognition and, for her dedicated guidance to the lifesaving program

participants for the 2023-2024 season. A big shout out to all the swimmers who participated in the Club's 2025 long distance charity swim. Collectively everyone swam a mammoth 50.2km or 1005 laps, generating approximately \$1.26 per lap with a total of \$1270 raised for The Cancer Centre for Children at Westmead Children's Hospital.

#### **ASEAN FOUNDERS AWARD**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—This year the Australian South East Asian Network [ASEAN] celebrates their third anniversary. ASEAN was founded in January 2022, as an organisation that promotes intercultural and interfaith dialogue to help strengthen multiculturalism. ASEAN's founder, Sawathey Ek OAM is a lawyer, legal educator, and community advocate, arriving in Australia in 1983 as a refugee from Cambodia. ASEAN's membership has grown to include members from backgrounds including Cambodia, Lao, Myanmar, Vietnam, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Korea, India, Indonesia and the Cook Islands. Each year, ASEAN presents the ASEAN Founder's Award, to recognise individuals and organisations that work with ASEAN to promote Australian values and strengthen multiculturalism amongst our culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The ASEAN Founder's award consists of two categories, individual and community. ASEAN will hold its 2025 Summit in this place on 18 February 2025. I look forward to attending to meet the dedicated individuals and community organisations recognised for their efforts as recipients of these awards.

#### **FRIENDS OF THE POUND**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—I wish to congratulate Friends of the Pound in Tweed for 25 years of amazing service. They are a not-for-profit organisation who rescue animals from the Tweed Shire Pound. They have rehomed thousands of dogs and cats over the years all due to the tireless work of the wonderful band of volunteers led by Sonia Trichter, the President. These dedicated volunteers give up their time to save animals' lives and find their forever homes. Congratulations Friends of the Pound Tweed on your 25 Year Anniversary!

#### **AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS TWEED**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—This year's Tweed Shire Australia Day Awards recognised and celebrated a new cohort of outstanding local community members, highlighting the wonderful array of people who call the Tweed Electorate home. Congratulations to the Tweed Coast Band on being receiving the 2024 Arts and Culture award for creating community connection for musicians and music lover for more than 30 years. Fingal Head surfer Dane Henry was a joint winner of the 2024 Sporting Achievement Individual category. Dane adds this achievement to his 2024 International Surfing Association under-18 world champion title and his Australian Open men's title. Paris Olympic breakdancer Jeff Dunne was named the 2024 Young Achiever in Community Service for using his worldwide platform to advocate for underfunded sports. Jeff is also a regular motivational speaker, working to inspire youth to follow their dreams. Well done to all award recipients, the Tweed thanks you for your service and congratulates you on your achievements.

#### **CHEF HAT AWARDS**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—The Tweed has featured in the Australian Good Food Guide 2025 Chef Hat Award winners, with six local restaurants awarded honours. Pipt in Pottsville, Paper Daisy in Cabarita Beach, Potager – A Kitchen Garden in Carool, No. 35 in Cabarita, and Taverna and Fins Restaurant, both in Kingscliff, were all recognised for excellence in culinary artistry and outstanding dining experiences. Well done and congratulations to the teams behind each and every one of these superb restaurants for receiving a Chef Hat Award from the Australian Good Food Guide. The Tweed continues to shine as an exciting culinary destination.

#### **DONITA PILTON**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to Donita Pilton on your retirement. Donita Pilton has spent the last four decades in dedicated service as a retrieval nurse in our region. Throughout her career, Donita has provided critical, life-saving care to patients in some of the most high-pressure and challenging environments, including aeromedical retrievals and emergency response situations. Her extensive clinical expertise, quick decision-making, and unwavering commitment to patient care have made a profound impact on the lives of countless individuals and families across our region. Her work required not only exceptional skill but also immense resilience and compassion, qualities that defined her distinguished career. Beyond her frontline service, Donita has been an invaluable mentor to many in the nursing profession, sharing her knowledge and experience to support and guide the next generation of healthcare professionals. On behalf of the Maitland community and the broader Hunter region, I extend my deepest gratitude to Donita Pilton for her decades of service and wish her all the best in her well-earned retirement.

**ROTARY CLUB OF MAITLAND SUNRISE INC., CITY OF MAITLAND MEDAL RECIPIENTS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to the Rotary Club of Maitland Sunrise Inc. for receiving the City of Maitland Medal in recognition of their outstanding contributions to our community in this year's Maitland Australia Day Awards. This dedicated group of volunteers has long been committed to making a positive impact in Maitland, supporting a diverse range of local initiatives and organisations. The club has played a vital role in assisting individuals and families in need, working closely with community support services to provide essential aid. Their efforts extend to social inclusion programs, ensuring vulnerable members of the community feel supported and connected. They have also been active in supporting local sports, particularly through their involvement with the Maitland Netball Association, helping to enhance opportunities for young athletes. In addition, the Rotary Club of Maitland Sunrise's ongoing support of Maitland Hospital and compassionate assistance to people experiencing homelessness and supporting low-income students truly exemplify the meaning of service above self. Congratulations to the Rotary Club of Maitland Sunrise Inc. on this well-deserved recognition. Their tireless efforts have made Maitland a stronger, more inclusive, and more compassionate community.

**STACY JACOBS, CITY OF MAITLAND SERVICE AWARD**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to Stacy Jacobs, recipient of the City of Maitland Service Award, for her exceptional dedication to supporting and empowering youth in our local community. Stacy's contributions are both diverse and impactful, reflecting her unwavering commitment to service. Stacy offers free driving lessons and assists young drivers in obtaining their provisional licences, having supervised over 1,600 hours and supported more than 66 young people in achieving their "P" plates. She also operates a free formal clothing collection, ensuring that students have access to appropriate attire for job interviews and school formals. Her commitment to mental health is evident through her provision of low-cost mental health first aid training to schools and community members. As a mentor, Stacy offers guidance to young people facing challenging situations, providing them with the support they need to navigate difficulties. Stacy's involvement extends to several organisations, including the Rotary Club of East Maitland, Maitland Basketball Association, and PCYC Cessnock. She has been recognised as the 2022 NSW Youth Worker of the Year, highlighting her significant contributions to youth development. Congratulations to Stacy on this well-deserved recognition.

**SENIORS' STORIES – GRAHAM MURRAY**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I'd like to acknowledge a constituent of the Manly Electorate, Graham Murray, for his selection in this year's Seniors' Stories publication. Now in its 10th year, the NSW Seniors' Card anthology features 100 stories under the theme What Made Me? Graham's piece, Going Home, beautifully captures the nostalgia of returning to his country home, where his father would greet him at the gate and his mother welcome him from the balcony. He vividly describes the traditional homecoming meal of roast lamb, vegetables, and apple pie, enjoyed alongside heartfelt conversations free from modern distractions. His story also paints a rich portrait of the countryside, weaving childhood memories into a heartfelt reflection on what home truly means to Graham. Thank you, Graham, and congratulations on your evocative and touching contribution to this milestone edition of Senior's Stories.

**BRUCE DAVIS**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to recognise a true Manly local, Bruce Davis, who was recently honoured with the 2025 Outstanding Community Service Award by Northern Beaches Council. Over many years, Bruce has been instrumental in the growth of Manly Yacht Club and in strengthening our boating community. As Commodore of the Club for 14 years, Bruce oversaw vital infrastructure improvements, expanded the club's junior sailing program, and worked to revitalise the community boating facility in North Harbour during his tenure. Outside of his duties at the Club, Bruce served as Race Officer for Sailability, a fantastic organisation which supports sailors with disabilities, and moreover played key roles in the 2000 Olympics and World Youths. Bruce's unwavering dedication and visionary leadership has enriched the Manly area's sailing culture, leaving a lasting impact. Today, I proudly recognize and celebrate his exceptional service and I thank him for his efforts. Congratulations, Bruce on this well-deserved achievement.

**MARG PARNELL AND THE CHRISTMAS BUS**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Locals of Lake Macquarie and Newcastle know it well. Every December, as the days grow hotter and the nights grow shorter, we wait with bated breath... and then we see it, decked out in tinsel, holly and wishes of peace and joy for the season: it's the Christmas Bus! Over the past twenty-seven years, the Christmas Bus has become an iconic sight on Newcastle and Lake Macquarie roads.

I know for a fact that it prompts smiles and waves everywhere it goes over the lead-up to Christmas. The Christmas Bus is the brainchild of one particular Newcastle Transport Bus Operator Trainer, Margaret Parnell. 2024 was an extra special year for the Christmas Bus, as Charlestown electorate local Marg planned to retire in the new year. She's leaving an incredible legacy, and I want to thank Marg for spreading so much cheer over the years! I hope you had a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year with your loved ones, Marg, and here's to a long and happy retirement.

#### **CHARLESTOWN ELECTORATE SANTA RUNS**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without our awesome local fireys welcoming a special mate all the way from the North Pole—and giving him the VIP treatment on a run around town! I'm talking, of course, about Santa Claus, who popped by Fire and Rescue NSW Stations 255 Charlestown and 500 Tingira Heights on 16 December and Christmas Eve, respectively. The fantastic firefighters at Station 255 took Santa around Charlestown, Gateshead, Redhead, Dudley and Kahibah, while their colleagues at Station 500 took him on a circuit around Tingira Heights, Windale, Mount Hutton and Floraville, spreading Christmas cheer and fire safety awareness as they went—one bag of lollies at a time! This has been a tradition for more than fifty years, and I know it's one both our firefighters and the broader community really appreciates. Thank you to all our firefighters for the work you do at Christmas and every day of the year. I trust you'll be able to pass on my thanks to Santa as well. It's very considerate of him to come to the Charlestown electorate. Here's to a fire safe year ahead and the 2025 Christmas runs!

#### **HUNTER SPORTS HIGH NAPLAN RESULTS**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—There are many wonderful public schools across the Charlestown electorate. The students, teachers and staff work hard to excel. As we start in on a new school year, I wanted to highlight one particular achievement from the 2024 school year: Hunter Sports High at Gateshead has been named as a high-achieving school in the latest release of school-level NAPLAN results. Hunter Sports High was identified as one of the schools making a difference across NSW by the Australia Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority, highlighting consistently strong NAPLAN performance. Compared to schools with a similar background, Hunter Sports High's year 7 and 9 grades were above average across all NAPLAN testing, and student performance has been improving each year—particularly in literacy and numeracy. Principal Rachel Byrne credits the results to a data-driven approach identifying areas for improvement, personalised learning plans to meet the needs of individual students and a professional learning program for teachers. While I am sure these strategies are a big part of these results, we mustn't forget the importance of Rachel, her staff and the whole Hunter Sports High community in achieving these amazing results. My congratulations to you all!

#### **KRISTIN FALKINER**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge Kristin Falkiner who has celebrated the significant milestone of thirty years at Peter Milling Boutique Travel in Dubbo. Kristin has seen significant changes to the industry since walking into the agency as a nineteen-year-old, including recruitment processes, as Kristin's interview included doing a handwriting test! From the moment she stepped into the role, and with the advantage of having an office next to Mr Milling, Kristin seized the opportunity to learn everything she could, paving the way for an esteemed career in the travel industry. Kristin's dedication to the Milling's and her clients is evident in the commitment and care she shows her customers, who keep coming back, as well as the knowledge and loyalty she brings to the workplace. She can always be relied upon to support new and junior staff, making them feel welcome and valued in the workplace. Congratulations Kristin on not only this fantastic achievement, but also your tenacity and loyalty to the Milling Family and the travel industry.

#### **JESSIE QUIGLEY OAM**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge Jessie Quigley OAM of Trangie who has recently celebrated fifty extraordinary years as a patron and member of the Trangie Branch of the Country Women's Association [CWA]. When Mrs Quigley first became involved with the CWA as a teenager, she was known as part of the 'younger set', bringing fresh energy and ideas to the association. Mrs Quigley took time to focus on her family before joining the Trangie Branch in 1974, following in the footsteps of her mother, who was a member of a Sydney CWA branch. A highly respected member of both the CWA and the community, Mrs Quigley's contributions have been invaluable. Over her fifty years of service, she has held numerous positions at State, Group and Branch levels, including State Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Known for her exemplary leadership, unwavering support, and commitment, she is an inspiration to everyone around her! Thank you, Jessie, for your incredible dedication and all you've done for the Trangie community.

**HARRY DUNCAN**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge Harry Duncan, a kind-hearted young man making a change to his personal appearance for the benefit of children in need. Harry has been growing his hair since pre-school, but at the age of eleven he parted with his long blonde locks to donate them to a charity that creates wigs for children battling hair loss. His decision to cut his hair was driven by a powerful mix of emotions and an inspiring reason. Having recently lost his grandfather Ralph, who battled prostate cancer, Harry wanted to raise awareness and funds for a cure. Additionally, by donating his hair, he hoped to make someone else's day brighter. Harry started with a goal of raising one thousand dollars, and quickly surpassed this, raising more than eighteen hundred dollars. Congratulations Harry, your actions of cutting and donating your hair is a wonderful example of selflessness and generosity that will make a meaningful impact on others' lives. I am sure your grandfather Ralph would be extremely honoured and proud!

**PETERSHAM PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to recognise the 2024 Petersham Public School Student Leaders and their contribution to the school community. The 2024 Student Leadership Council includes Hannah Beglane (Captain), Zahra Payten (Captain), Elias Richardson (Vice-captain), Arthur Shannon (Vice-captain), Francesca Haji (Prefect), Solomon Nusinovitch (Prefect), Oliver Richards (Prefect), and Rose Whiteman (Prefect). Representing your school is a highly rewarding way to contribute to the strength and wellbeing of our community - whether at school, in our neighbourhoods, or around the world. It has been so wonderful to see these Student Leaders enact some incredible initiatives over the past year. I acknowledge Petersham Public School's 2024 Student Leaders, and thank them for their contributions to the school, their community and beyond.

**ERSKINEVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to recognise the 2024 Erskineville Public School Student Leaders and their contribution to the school community. The 2024 Student Leadership Council includes Arlo C, Audrey G, Christina Y, Clara S, Georgia D, Harry A, Indigo A, and Lewis P. Representing your school is a highly rewarding way to contribute to the strength and wellbeing of our community - whether at school, in our neighbourhoods, or around the world. It has been so wonderful to see these Student Leaders enact some incredible initiatives over the past year. I acknowledge Erskineville Public School's 2024 Student Leaders, and thank them for their contributions to the school, their community and beyond.

**CAMDENVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to recognise the 2024 Camdenville Public School Student Leaders and their contribution to the school community. The 2024 Student Leadership Council includes Charlie Crane (Head Minister), Saffi Gumley (Deputy Head Minister), Kai Fong (Sports Minister), Daria Newman (Environment Minister), Astrid Lawrey (Wellbeing Minister), Patrick Elliot (Technology Minister), Gea Riyanto (Community Minister), and Lizzy Ray (Deadly Legends Minister). Representing your school is a highly rewarding way to contribute to the strength and wellbeing of our community - whether at school, in our neighbourhoods, or around the world. It has been so wonderful to see these Student Leaders enact some incredible initiatives over the past year. I acknowledge Camdenville Public School's 2024 Student Leaders, and thank them for their contributions to the school, their community and beyond.

**PHYSIOFIT**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I wish to acknowledge Physiofit, recipient of the 2025 Small Business Award at the Liverpool Australia Day celebrations. Established in Moorebank over 30 years ago, Physiofit has grown into a valued pillar of our community, not only through its professional services but also through its outstanding commitment to community support. Physiofit sponsors numerous clubs and community organisations and actively engages with local elders' groups, such as the Liverpool/Fairfield Legacy Widows Club, providing free exercise lessons and assistance with mobility and other health-related concerns. Their dedication extends further through sponsorships of vital organisations, including Lifeline Macarthur and Western Sydney, the Ingham Centre International Women's Day Function, and Liverpool Community Kitchen. Liverpool's Australia Day event celebrates businesses like Physiofit, whose contributions go beyond commerce, fostering health, wellbeing, and community spirit. I commend Physiofit for their remarkable service and ongoing support of the Liverpool community. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition.

**FARIHA DEAN**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I wish to acknowledge Fariha Dean, recipient of the 2025 Young Citizen of the Year Award at the Liverpool Australia Day celebrations. Fariha is the current Chairperson of the

Liverpool Youth Council and has shown exceptional leadership and dedication to her community. She was the driving force behind Liverpool Council's highly successful Year 12 HSC Tutoring Program, held at Yellamundie Library, providing invaluable support to students during a critical time in their academic journey. In addition to her role on the Youth Council, Fariha served as an Academic Coach at Amity College, where she made a significant impact by supporting senior students, particularly those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Her commitment to education and youth empowerment has created meaningful opportunities for many young people in Liverpool. Liverpool's Australia Day event celebrated individuals like Fariha, whose contributions strengthen our diverse community. I commend Fariha for her outstanding achievements and dedication to making a difference. She is an inspiring role model for young people across our city. Congratulations, Fariha, on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **SEWA AUSTRALIA, SAHYADI SYDNEY AND FRIENDS OF INDIA AUSTRALIA**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I wish to acknowledge Sewa Australia Inc, Sahyadi Sydney, and Friends of India Australia, recipients of the 2025 Fraser Environment Award at the Liverpool Australia Day celebrations. These organisations joined forces to launch the "Respectful Devotion, Responsible Immersion" program, a remarkable initiative aimed at minimising the environmental impact of idol submersion through responsible, eco-friendly practices. As part of this program, a temporary pond was installed at Haigh Park, allowing for the immersion of 150 eco-friendly idols. This innovative approach prevented over 100 kilos of clay and 500 kilos of organic waste from entering local waterways. The program's success was made possible by a dedicated team of volunteers committed to protecting the environment while respecting cultural traditions. Liverpool's Australia Day event celebrated outstanding environmental initiatives like this, which promote sustainability and community awareness. I commend Sewa Australia Inc, Sahyadi Sydney, and Friends of India Australia for their leadership and dedication to environmental conservation. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS 2025**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I commend and congratulate the 732 people honoured in the 2025 Australia Day Awards. I recognise those from the Davidson electorate. The Honourable Justice Brian Preston SC AO become an Officer of the Order of Australia [AO] in the general division for his significant service to the judiciary and the law, to legal academia, to environmental and natural resources governance and education. Adam Johnston AM became a Member of the Order of Australia [AM] in the general division for significant service to community health, to the law, and to people living with disability. Medals of the Order of Australia [OAM] in the general division were awarded to Jennifer Anderson OAM for her service to the community of Ku-ring-gai; and to Alan Gilmour OAM for his service to the arts, particularly through music. Stuart Clark AM was awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal [AFSM] for his distinguished service as a member of an Australian fire service of over 50 years. Stuart's long and dedicated public service is an inspiration to all. Thank you for your service to our local and Australian community.

#### **KU-RING-GAI CITIZENS OF THE YEAR 2025**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I recognise the 2025 Ku-ring-gai citizens of the year that were announced on the Australia Day. The 2025 citizen of the year is Madeleine Steel who established Empowering Parents in Crisis [EPIC] to connect with parents in need of support and social interaction. In 2024, EPIC created 1065 parent/carer connections, supported 709 people through a phone helpline, organised 24 walks for parents/carers and hosted 29 workshops and forums. I pay tribute and recognise the 2025: Young citizen of the year is Matthew Hayes, for his passion for the Youth Parliament, advocacy for people with disabilities and his impressive YouTube channel, AheadMatthewawesome. Environmental citizen is Sofia Zvolanek, for her work in the rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife including the endangered powerful owl through BirdLife Australia's Powerful Owl Project. The Mayor's Award was presented to the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Women's Shelter to recognise their work providing support, assistance and hope to women and children in crisis. Thank you to all whose service to the Ku-ring-gai community has been recognised. You are all winners and all champions of our community.

#### **NORTHERN BEACHES CITIZENS OF THE YEAR 2025**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I recognise the 2025 Northern Beaches citizens of the year that were announced on the Australia Day weekend. The 2025 citizen of the year is Kevin Lee of Belrose. He has dedicated several years of service to Narrabeen Beach Surf Life Saving Club, undertaking activities of beach patrolling, event planning and education. I recognise Kevin's remarkable dedication to both his club and to the wider Northern Beaches community. I pay tribute and recognise the 2025: Senior citizen of the year is Ian Hocking. Young citizen

of the year is Saskia Rundle. Sportsperson of the year is Chris Turnbull. Community event of the year is Link Church for Carols by the Lake. Community group of the year is the Lifeline Northern Beaches Book Fair Volunteers. I am proud to recognise the outstanding community service awards to Nicholas Chambers, Roland Davies, Bruce Davis, Vipul Jajal, Laurelei Moore, Gaye McLindin, Leanne Shanahan and Mel Thomas. Thank you to all whose service to the Northern Beaches community has been recognised. You are all winners and all champions of our community.

#### DAVID HOWE

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, family doctors who care for more than one generation in their home town is becoming an all-too-scarce commodity for rural communities which is why Dr David Howe is a rare gem. Dr Howe was recently acknowledged as one of 16 GPs who have given more than 35 years of service to country NSW. Dr David Howe has worked extensively in rural areas including as an intern and Resident Medical Officer [RMO] at Wollongong Hospital, RMO at Albury Base Hospital, RMO and Registrar Orange Base Hospital, Visiting Medical Officer at Orange Base Hospital, Dudley Private Hospital and Orange Health Service from 1984 until present. He is also a Sexual Assault Service Forensic Examiner and Lecturer for Sydney University Rural School of Medicine. He has been a doctor for Camp Quality for more than 30 years where his impact and support for kids and their families is undeniable. In 2015, Dr Howe received a Medal of the Order of Australia, a thoroughly deserved honour considering his input to the people of Orange. I thank Dr David Howe for his commitment and loyalty to the wellness of his patients and the work he has done in the wider community.

#### MEALS ON WHEELS

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—I congratulate City of Liverpool's Meals on Wheels Inc. for another successful year, marked at their 2024 Annual General Meeting for 2024. I want to highlight the essential work this charity does to support the elderly, young people with disabilities, and their carers in maintaining their independence at home. For over 60 years, Meals on Wheels has been a driving force for providing nutritious meals, social interaction, and well-being check-ins for clients. Whether for short-term recovery or long-term assistance, they offer a variety of meals tailored to individual dietary needs and cultural preferences. With 14,000 volunteers delivering over 4.5 million meals annually across NSW, the impact of Meals on Wheels is truly significant. A friendly visit, a meal, and a warm conversation can transform lives. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Meals on Wheels for their invaluable contributions to community care and for enhancing the well-being of so many Australians.

#### INDIANS IN SYDNEY GALA NIGHT LAUNCH - INDIA INDEPENDENCE DAY

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—Attending the Gala Night celebrating Indian Independence Day and the launch of "Indians in Sydney" was a memorable experience filled with culture, community spirit, and pride. The event featured traditional music and dance performances that highlighted India's rich heritage. It was great to see so many people come together, celebrating their roots and their community in Sydney. The Gala Night also served as a celebration and launch of "Indians in Sydney" a significant moment, promising to be a platform that amplifies the voices of the Indian diaspora and fosters a stronger connection within the broader Australian community. Being part of this event was a celebration of both culture and community. Adding to this celebration, it was an honour to have the founder of Indians in Sydney, Nadeem Ahmed attend my office to receive his NSW Community Service Award. His dedication and contributions to building and uplifting the community are truly inspiring and an example of the incredible individuals who drive positive change.

#### LIVERPOOL QUOTA CLUB 60TH ANNIVERSARY

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—On the 14th of July, I had the distinct honour of attending the 60th Birthday celebration of the Liverpool Quota Club. This remarkable milestone highlights the club's steadfast commitment to empowering women, children, and individuals in our community. Quota Liverpool is a respected non-profit organisation that has tirelessly supported numerous local and international charities including Liverpool Hospital, The Shepherd Centre, Miracle Babies, Women's Refuge, the Liverpool Salvation Army, and Little Wings. The club's dedication is evident during their annual International Women's Day Breakfast, every March. Each and every year, this event celebrates the achievements of women and underscores their vital role in society. Organisations like Quota Liverpool are crucial in fostering this empowerment. As we reflect on the club's 60 years of service, I acknowledge the profound impact they have made in uplifting the lives of many. Their ongoing efforts to champion the rights and well-being of women and children remind us all of the importance of community support in creating a more equitable society. Congratulations to the Liverpool Quota Club on this significant anniversary, may your inspiring work continue for many more years to come.



#### 14TH ANNUAL TOY DRIVE

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the generous community members for their heartfelt donations to my 14th Annual Toy Drive to children in need this past holiday season. Every gift, no matter how big or small, contributed to creating lasting memories for families facing difficult times at Christmas. The Keira electorate and the broader community of the Illawarra, including individuals, local business and the ever-supportive clubs, has shown incredible community spirit by generously providing gifts. These donations were delivered to SAHSSI, (Supported Accommodation and Homelessness Services Shoalhaven and Illawarra) an organisation dedicated to supporting women facing hardships and their families. I want to acknowledge the generous organisations: Wests Illawarra, Woonona Bulli RSL, Balls Paddock Children's Centre, SAHSSI, and the wonderful Bungalow Group for their kindness and continuous support. I am incredibly thankful to each and every one who donated, volunteered or supported this cause in any way. Your selflessness reflects the spirit of togetherness and hope that makes our community so special.

#### JULIAN CASHMAN

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It is an absolute privilege to be here today to acknowledge a fantastic achievement by one the Terrigal Electorate's very own young sports stars, eight-year-old Julian Cashman of Terrigal. Julian has been selected as one of the Woolworths Cricket Blast First XI for this season—a remarkable honour that recognises his passion, dedication, and love for the game. As part of this incredible achievement, Julian had the amazing opportunity to travel to Tasmania for the Big Bash Final, a well-deserved experience for such a committed young cricketer. The Cricket Blast First XI is a new initiative designed to celebrate junior cricketers from all across the country, and Julian's selection is a testament to his hard work and enthusiasm. Having participated in the Terrigal Matcham Cricket Blast program since the age of four, Julian is not only a talented player but also a key contributor to the program, always eager to help and inspire those around him. With his two younger sisters and brother following in his footsteps, cricket is truly a way of life for the Cashman family. Congratulations, Julian! Keep chasing your cricketing dreams!

#### MOUNTIES GROUP

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It is always an absolute pleasure to acknowledge the incredible individuals and organisations who have made a meaningful difference in our school communities. For the second year running, Breakers Country Club Wamberal, Halekulani Bowling Club, and Club Wyong, as part of the Mounties Group, have demonstrated their unwavering commitment to supporting students and families in need. Through their generosity, an astounding 172 school bags, each filled with essential supplies were donated to local public schools across the Central Coast. These backpacks, containing lunch boxes, water bottles, pencil cases, stationery, and exercise books, have provided invaluable support to children as they begin the new school year. A special thank you to Breakers Country Club Wamberal for their generosity and dedication to our school communities. Your kindness has eased the transition back to school for so many families, ensuring that every child is equipped with the tools they need to succeed.

#### DR ANDREW KWONG

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It was an honor to recently celebrate the incredible achievements of our local seniors who have shared their inspiring stories in the 10th edition of Seniors' Stories. This milestone edition marks an incredible 1,000 stories published since the competition began in 2013—a true testament to the rich experiences, wisdom, and resilience of our senior community. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Andrew Kwong, whose powerful story reflects on his time as an assistant nurse in the 1970s while putting himself through medical school. His touching account of a lonely WWI patient at the Repatriation General Hospital in Concord is a moving reminder of the profound impact human connection can have. That experience shaped him into becoming a very compassionate doctor, reminding us all of the importance of kindness and care in our daily lives. A huge congratulations to all the Central Coast authors whose stories feature in this year's book. With more than 500 submissions, the competition was at its strongest yet, highlighting the extraordinary depth of talent and life experiences in our senior community. Our talented seniors continue to amaze and inspire us, and we are truly grateful for their contributions.

#### MICHAEL DANIEL

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—A huge congratulations to Michael Daniel for developing the NeuroTranslator app, a groundbreaking tool designed to bridge communication gaps between neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals. After being diagnosed with autism, Michael personally understood the difficulties of navigating social interactions. This inspired him to create the NeuroTranslator app, which translates text, speech, and complex social moments, making connections and understanding easier than ever. The app offers real-time,

neuroaffirming translations, customisable guidance for specific relationships, and enhanced accessibility features like speech-to-text and text-to-speech. Michael's dedication to improving communication and fostering empathy is truly commendable, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact NeuroTranslator will have on many lives.

#### **EVELYN COLLINS**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—Congratulations to this year's local Senior of the Year recipient, Evelyn Collins, who was recognised for her commitment to improving the welfare of patients with Parkinson's disease in the Hunter region. A dedicated clinical nurse, Evelyn played a key role in establishing and coordinating essential services for Hunter Parkinson's patients, including the Hunter Deep Brain Stimulation service and support group. Further, Evelyn regularly travels from Sydney to Newcastle in her own time to accompany patients and support them through surgery. Evelyn's leadership and dedication has made a huge difference to the quality of life for Parkinson patients in Newcastle, and I thank her for everything she has done for our community.

#### **KHUSLEN BATMANDAKH**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—I would like to acknowledge the incredible achievements of this year's local Young Citizen of the Year recipient, Khuslen Batmandakh. At only 16 years old, Khuslen was recognised for her dedication to improving literacy and community engagement as president of the Merewether High School Leo Club. After learning that her neighbourhood had one of the lowest literacy rates in Australia, Khuslen established a book nook at her local shopping centre. Running solely on donations and support from volunteers to provide local families access to free books. In addition to fulfilling her role as the 2024 NSW Youth Parliament representative for Newcastle, Khuslen also launched 'Love From Leos' to foster deeper connections between nursing home residents and high school students through hand written letters. Khuslen's passion, altruism and leadership are truly aspirational, and I thank her for her incredible contributions to our city.

#### **ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL – RED MASS**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On 3rd February, I was pleased to join Judicial officers and legal practitioners to celebrate the Red Mass, at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta, and open the 2025 Legal Year. The Red Mass carries forward an ancient tradition, celebrated by members of the legal fraternity since 1245. The Red Mass once marked the opening for the Sacred Roman Rota, the Catholic Church's supreme judicial body. Today, it emphasises the significance of law in our fair and democratic society. Officiated by Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv, I was joined by the Hon. Michael Daley, Attorney General, Jennifer Ball, Law Society of NSW President, and Judges from the Federal Court and the Supreme Court and District Courts of NSW. Hosted in Sydney's second-largest legal precinct, the Mass reinforced the responsibility of lawmakers, to carry out our vocation equally and justly. During the Mass, we reaffirmed our commitment to act in God's vision of justice. I thank Bishop Long, the Diocese of Parramatta, Stephen McAuley and Members of the St Thomas More Society for this meaningful ceremony. I look forward to a great year ahead, serving our legal community.

#### **AUSTRALIAN CHINESE BUDDHIST SOCIETY – LUNAR NEW YEAR**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Sunday 2nd February, I was pleased to join community leaders and distinguished guests for the official ceremony celebrating Lunar New Year at Mingyue Lay Temple, Bonnyrigg. Western Sydney is home to a dynamic Chinese Buddhist community, and over many decades they have made a remarkable contribution towards our inclusive and harmonious multicultural society. Established in 1982, Mingyue Lay Temple is one of the largest Chinese Buddhist temples in the southern hemisphere. The Lunar New Year Festival is one of the most important events in the Chinese-Australian calendar. This year, thousands attended the Temple from across Western Sydney to offer prayers, enjoy Lion dances, NSW Police Band, and other traditional performances to mark the beginning of the Year of the Snake. At the official ceremony, I was joined by State and Federal Parliamentary colleagues the Hon. Anouack Chanthivong MP, Tri Vo MP, Charishma Kaliyanda MP, David Saliba MP, Nathan Hagarty MP and Anne Stanley MP. Congratulations to James Chan OAM, Chairman, Vincent Kong OAM, President, and all our amazing committee and volunteers at the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society on hosting a wonderful Lunar New Year event. Happy Year of the Snake 2025!

#### **TAIWAN IN AUSTRALIA – LUNAR NEW YEAR**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Monday 27th January, I was pleased to join our local Taiwanese-Australian community to celebrate Lunar New Year at Liberty Palace, Bankstown. New South Wales has a substantial relationship with Taiwan, including trade and investment, education, tourism and people-to-people ties. With a population of more than 23 million people, Taiwan has the 22nd largest economy in the world. We share a commitment to democratic principles, as well as an interest in a rules-based, open, inclusive and stable Indo-Pacific region. Lunar New Year is one of the most important festivals in the annual Taiwanese calendar. At the event, I was pleased to address more than 250 guests from our local Taiwanese-Australian

community in attendance, who were also treated to lion dances, traditional performances and lucky draws, as well as an evening of fantastic food and great company. My heartfelt thanks go out to Paul Huynh, President, Association of Overseas Taiwan Alumni in Australia, David Cheng-Wei Wu, Director General, Taipei Economic & Cultural Office in Sydney, and all volunteers, committee and supporters from our Taiwanese-Australian community on a great celebration. Happy Lunar New Year, the Year of the Snake 2025!

#### **PRIMA CUCINA**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I wish to acknowledge the hard work of Olivia Ruggeri and her partner Kilian Díaz and congratulate them on the success of their restaurant Prima Cucina in Russell Lea. Having owned and operated the restaurant for the past nine years, Olivia and Kilian are dedicated to providing the highest quality in authentic Italian cuisine for our community to enjoy locally. With a welcoming environment and an expansive menu consisting of pastas, woodfired pizzas, steaks, ribs and, of course, Nonna's famous meatballs, a visit to Prima Cucina is guaranteed to leave you filled and wanting to come back for more. Congratulations once again Olivia and Kilian, the success of Prima Cucina is a testament to your hard work and skill, and I wish you many more years of success to come.

#### **NICOLE YADE**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I sincerely congratulate Nicole Yade on her recognition as the 2024 Burwood Council Citizen of the Year. As CEO of the Women's & Girls' Emergency Centre, Nicole has been committed to ensuring the community is a safe place for all women and children to live free from violence. In her role, she has touched countless lives with the passion and dedication she brings to working closely with survivors of violence to help them rebuild their lives and move forward with courage. With over 25 years of continued service working with marginalised people in various NGOs, Nicole has exemplified a continuous service to others and has made our community safer and more inclusive for all. This award is a testament to Nicole's selfless nature and commitment to women and children across our community. On behalf of our community, we are sincerely thankful for your continued service. Congratulations Nicole.

#### **BACK TO SCHOOL**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—As the new school year begins, I want to take a moment to wish all primary and secondary school students in East Hills a happy and successful year ahead. For some, it is just the beginning of your schooling journey, and for others, it's the final stretch before moving on. This is a special year for me with my first grandchild, Connor, starting his first day at school. We have some amazing schools in our local community and I have had the pleasure of meeting so many of our students, teachers and parents. To our teachers and school staff - thank you for your dedication and hard work in guiding and supporting our students. Your role in shaping young minds and preparing them for the future cannot be overstated. To parents and carers - your support and encouragement make a world of difference. Thank you for everything you do to help our students thrive. And to every student - this year is yours to make the most of. Work hard, ask questions, and never be afraid to dream big. I wish you all a fantastic school year filled with learning, growth, and success.

#### **TREVOR HEASLIP**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—Congratulations to Trevor Heaslip who was awarded the NSW Service Medallion for over 40 years of service with the NSW Government last December. Trevor was raised in Revesby, attending Revesby Primary School and East Hills Boys High before entering the field of policing where he served for the NSW Police Force for 23 years, retiring as a Sergeant of Police. His impact in our community of East Hills has been immense as he is also a Life Member of the Revesby Workers' Cricket Club and current President with over 52 years as a player, coach and Executive. Trevor has also had direct involvement with several sporting clubs, served as a P&C President for seven years and was stationed with the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust for 17 years. He is the recipient of the Queens Commendation for Brave Conduct, Royal Humane Society Bravery Medal, National Medal, NSW Police Commissioners Commendation and Police Service Medals. Newly appointed Director of the Revesby Workers Club, Trevor brings with him a wealth of community experience and local knowledge. Congratulations Trevor on this well-deserved recognition and thank you for your service.

#### **PARTERRE QSWWA CHRISTMAS WINDOW COMPETITION HALL OF FAME**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to congratulate Parterre on being inducted into the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association Christmas Window Competition Hall of Fame. Inducted alongside David Stein & Co during the 2024 competition, Parterre now joins Matthew Ely and Victor Churchill in this elite cohort. We are lucky to have businesses such as Parterre that take an active, positive, and uplifting role in our community. Having attended the judging for the competition it was amazing to see the growing number of attractive and creative displays. Congratulations to Parterre and good luck for this year!

**FOREVER VINTAGE QSWWA CHRISTMAS WINDOW COMPETITION WINNER**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to congratulate Forever Vintage on winning the 2024 Queens Street and West Woollahra Association Christmas Window Competition. With their stunning red and white tones, Forever Vintage was able to edge out competition and take this year's top prize. Having attended, I know it was a tough call for the judges with so many attractive and creative displays to choose from and there were many displays who just missed out making the final list. Congratulations to Forever Vintage and good luck to everyone for this year!

**DAVID STEIN AND CO QSWWA CHRISTMAS WINDOW COMPETITION HALL OF FAME**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to congratulate David Stein & Co on being inducted into the Queens Street and West Woollahra Association Christmas Window Competition Hall of Fame. Inducted alongside Parterre during the 2024 competition, David Stein & Co now joins Matthew Ely and Victor Churchill in this elite cohort. We are lucky to have businesses such as Parterre that take an active, positive, and uplifting role in our community. Having attended the judging for the competition it was amazing to see the growing number of attractive and creative displays. Congratulations to David Stein & Co and good luck for this year!

**ST ALOYSIUS' CHOIR PERFORMS IN SPAIN**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker The St Aloysius' College Music Tour Choir had the privilege of spreading Christmas cheer across Spain this past December. The boys were given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to sing in some truly breathtaking locations. Their performances were a testament to their dedication and talent, and their rendition of Carol of the Bells at the Parroquia Del Buen Pastor in Valencia was particularly moving. Throughout the tour, the boys performed both inside and outside of the remarkable Monsterrat Abbey, one of Spain's most iconic landmarks. On the last day of their tour, Music Captain Samuel presented one of the prayers of the faithful at Gaudi's magnificent Sagrada Familia. It is so exciting seeing young people from the North Shore pursuing their passions with such enthusiasm and dedication. The St Aloysius' boys never fail to impress, and their hard work has truly paid off. I want to acknowledge the selfless commitment of the teaching staff, who played a huge role in organising and executing the trip. Their efforts provided students with an enriching and unforgettable experience.

**MOSMAN HIGH SPORTING ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I recognise the incredible sporting abilities of students at Mosman High School. At the end of 2024, their student athletes were securing medals across the board. It is inspiring to see young athletes achieving outstanding results in their respective fields. I want to acknowledge the Mosman High 15-year boys' basketball team, who proudly secured bronze at the NSW Combined High Schools championships, defeating Tumut High with a final score of 70-48, Westfield Sports High 59-50 and Castle Hill High 64-44. Their impressive performance earned them a spot at the U17 National Championships on the Gold Coast alongside Mosman High's Open Boys team, where a record 216 teams and more than 2000 athletes took to the courts. Well done to all the boys involved. I congratulate Year 8 Student, Tobias, and Year 9 Student, Lorenz, who represented Mosman High in rowing at the NSW All Schools Regatta in Penrith last year. Lorenz achieved a bronze medal in his division. I commend Lorenz and Tobias on their fantastic results. I acknowledge all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes from parents, teachers, and coaches in securing these amazing results. Congratulations boys on your incredible achievements.

**BLAKE HUGHES FOOTBALL ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I am always thrilled to see young women excelling in the sporting arena, and North Shore has fostered many exceptional female talents. I want to acknowledge the undeniable talent and sportsmanship of Mosman High School student Blake Hughes, who has achieved remarkable success at both state and national levels. In August last year, Blake represented NSW Combined High Schools at the secondary football National Championships, which was held in Perth. She played a crucial role in securing the national title for NSW Combined High Schools. New South Wales won all five games, and defeated Western Australia 4-0 in the final, defending their title. Blake was consequently awarded the highly esteemed NSW CHS Blue Award, which recognised her athletic ability, sportsmanship, and contributions to both school and sporting communities. Blake was also selected for the Australian All Schools team, which toured the United States in January this year. I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Blake for her extraordinary achievements. I look forward to watching her continue to shine in future.

**PETER GAINSFORD PSM**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I sincerely congratulate Peter Gainsford PSM on his recognition in the 2025 Australia Day Honours List for outstanding public service to local government in Sydney's

Inner West. Having dedicated over 40 years to public service and local government, Peter is a passionate advocate for the community. As General Manager of Inner West Council, Peter has been instrumental in leading the organisation's Gender Equity and Domestic Violence strategies, environmental and sustainability policies, initiatives that build recognition and reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and has helped shape an economic and cultural revival of the local creative arts industry. I worked with Peter during his time as the General Manager of the City of Canada Bay Council. He is genuine, professional, kind, and hardworking. I sincerely congratulate him on this well-deserved recognition and wish him all the very best always.

#### **WARM TOUCH 2460 COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to congratulate Warm Touch 2460 for receiving the Clarence Valley Community Achievement Award. Founded and coordinated by Jenny Vickery, Warm Touch 2460 is a community-driven, not-for-profit charity that has shown a remarkable commitment to helping people in need. Their dedicated volunteers work tirelessly to ensure they can deliver essential and comfort items when needed. Warm Touch 2460 provide handmade knitted and crocheted items such as rugs, beanies, scarves and mittens, alongside specialised items like dignity bags for catheters, aprons, cushions and twiddle mats for those with dementia or autism. Volunteers keep their homes stocked with these items, sacrificing their own space to ensure prompt provision when the need arises. Warm Touch 2460 create items for all needs and circumstances. They support hospital patients, nursing home residents, individuals with disabilities, the homeless and those affected by natural disasters such as bushfires, droughts and floods, just to name a few. The tireless work of Warm Touch 2460's volunteers ensure people feel cared for and supported during times they need it most. Congratulations and well done to Jenny, Sue and volunteers on your admirable work and commitment to helping others.

#### **ILUKA COMMUNITY AUSTRALIA DAY CELEBRATIONS**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to acknowledge the community of Iluka coming together to celebrate Australia Day at Iluka Community Hall. After a flag raising at 9am, Rotarian Ian Russell welcomed attendees and Councillor Karen Toms delivered a speech highlighting the significance of Australia Day and community bonds. On behalf of the Country Women's Association, Councillor Toms presented the prestigious Citizen of the Year award to well-deserving Margaret Thomas. Mrs Thomas has made outstanding contributions to the community, including decades of volunteer work. She was a founding member of the Junior Cricket Club, has organised countless fundraisers, been involved in tuck-shop duties at Iluka Public School and is involved in the Iluka Ratepayers and Residents Association. Additionally, Mrs Thomas has supported many veterans through her work with the Chatsworth RSL Sub-Branch. She also played a part in the establishment of the Sandpipers Club, organising weekly activities and companionship for seniors of Iluka. The Citizen of the Year presentation was followed with damper and a cuppa while attendees celebrated the day together. Recognition must go to the Rotary Club of Iluka Woombah and the CWA for organising the wonderful celebrations. Congratulations to Mrs Thomas and the Iluka community.

#### **JENNY VICKERY LOCAL HERO AWARD**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—My congratulations go to Jenny Vickery on receiving the Clarence Valley Local Hero Award on Australia Day for her generous charitable efforts that have greatly impacted vulnerable individuals in the area. Jenny is a founder and coordinator of the Warm Touch 2460 charity, which provides knitted and crocheted gifts to people in need, from farmers battling adverse weather events to aged care residents, hospital patients and individuals with disabilities. Jenny often speaks with community groups to rally support for Warm Touch and Knitted Knockers, who coordinate the creation and distribution of breast prosthetics for women who have undergone mastectomies. In addition to her charity work, Jenny is a long-time member of the Grafton District Services Club swimming club. Jenny takes care of the club's swimwear, organises their social events and helps swimmers of all ages to improve their skills. Jenny's warmth, dedication and leadership skills have brought together many volunteers to ensure there is help for the vulnerable within the community. Jenny's ability to unite others has had a great impact on the community and I'm sure she will continue to play an important role in bringing comfort to those when they need it most.

#### **MUSTARD SEED UNITING CHURCH LIVE NATIVITY**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House the wonderful live nativity event held by Mustard Seed Uniting Church in Ultimo. Every year the Mustard Seed Church hosts their fantastic event to celebrate the story of Christmas, with live performances that includes a donkey, sheep and three camels, an array of wonderful people in the nativity. It creates such a lovely festive atmosphere for local families, friends and neighbours, with many participants staying back to share in the Christmas cheer for many hours after the show. The local kids are also thrilled to meet Santa. I've been so pleased to attend with family and friends these past few years, it is such a wonderful way to finish off a big year. I'd like to thank Reverend David Gore, Oscar

Sanchez and everyone at Mustard Seed Uniting Church and Harris Centre for hosting your live nativity and Christmas carols event, especially all of the volunteers who made this year's event another huge success. I urge everyone to get down and check it out when it comes around again this year.

#### **SYDNEY FOOD SHARE AND THE WELL STORE**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the house the important community work of Sydney Food Share and the Well Store in bringing together their Christmas hamper food drive. Sydney Food Share is a grassroots organisation that delivers food to those doing it tough with kindness and without judgment. Through their partnerships with other community organisations like the Glebe PCYC, and food pantry initiatives, they do vital work reaching out and supporting the most vulnerable members of the Balmain community. Last year, the Well Store, a local Rozelle business, participated in their Christmas food drive, assembling hampers of pudding, ham, and pantry staples to put on the Christmas tables of families in the Inner West and across Sydney. I was delighted to be able to support this invaluable community effort and spread a bit of Christmas cheer. Thank you to Frény and JB, the many volunteers that comprise Sydney Food Share, and to the director of the Well Store, Mariana Boulos. I look forward to being able to support your efforts again next year.

#### **HAMPERS OF HOPE AT ADDI ROAD**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I'd like to acknowledge Addi Road's contribution to Hampers of Hope in 2024. 2024 was one of the busiest years yet for Addi Road's Food Justice Program as cost-of-living pressures saw a huge increase in people doing it tough. There has been surging demand for affordable groceries and the need for free emergency food relief went up by 180% in just a few months. Addi Road is now feeding about 425,000 people each year, including 10,000 school breakfasts for kids, with minimal government funding. They rescue around 460,000 kgs of edible food from going into landfill each year but most of their food is purchased from food service providers thanks to generous donations from the community. It was so good to get down to Addison Road, Marrickville early on 13 December to help pack Hampers of Hope for people doing it tough at Christmas. Thank you to CEO Roseanna Barbero, Michelle Flemming, Lara Foster, Craig Foster and all at Addi Road for your important work. Of course, thanks to all your wonderful volunteers and donors as well.

#### **WHALE BEACH SURF CLUB'S BIG SWIM**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—Whale Beach Surf Club's 51st annual "Big Swim" took place on Australia Day this year, showcasing the true spirit of being Australian and a Pittwater resident. A thousand swimmers braved the ocean, swimming from Palm Beach to Whale Beach. It was a beautiful day, with the sun, sea, and fit participants highlighting the Northern Beaches' active lifestyle. But beyond the picturesque scene, what stood out was the deep community connection. There was a pride in our place and people, and a selfless desire to share it with others. The event raises funds for beach safety and couldn't happen without the local community's dedication. It's a 50-year tradition involving a collaboration between Palm and Whale Beach Surf Clubs, led this year by Race Director Simon Morgan, with support from Steph Darley and WBSLC Club Captain Olivia Rees-Ewen. A heartfelt thank you to all the volunteers who gave up their public holiday to help. Celebrating nature, fitness, challenge, collaboration, service, healthy competition, inclusiveness and fun is a great way to honour what it means to be both Australian and an active member of the Pittwater Community. Cheers to all you Aussie legends!

#### **KIMBRIKI**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—Kimbriki has been a cornerstone of environmental sustainability and community service since its inception in 1974. Late last year it celebrated its 50th anniversary, a remarkable commitment to the community and the environment. Originally established as a waste management facility, Kimbriki has evolved into a key player in promoting resource recovery, waste diversion, and the circular economy. By providing local solutions for recycling and waste disposal, Kimbriki has significantly reduced landfill contributions, ensuring that valuable resources are repurposed and reused. Its innovative programs, including composting, organic recycling, and the processing of construction and demolition materials, have made a tangible difference in supporting the environment. In addition to its environmental initiatives, Kimbriki has fostered a sense of community engagement through education and collaboration. By offering resources and guidance on waste reduction, sustainability practices, and green business solutions, Kimbriki has empowered residents and businesses to make positive, impactful changes. Kimbriki's sustained dedication over 50 years makes it a vital asset, helping to build a more sustainable future for all.

#### **TILLY COOPER**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—I want to acknowledge the inspirational work of one of my younger constituents, 13-year-old Tilly Cooper. Tilly started a swimwear drive for communities in Fiji and collected

20 large boxes of swimwear donations from surf clubs and community organisations across the upper Northern Beaches. This initiative was inspired by Tilly's family holiday to Fiji when she noticed that local children were often swimming in normal clothes that were a drowning hazard. Tilly is an active member Mona Vale Surf Life Saving Club and was Northern Beaches Nipper of the Year in 2024. Not only did she arrange the box collections, but also ran a publicity campaign and negotiated with sponsors Aramex Australia to help transport the donations to Fiji. This is a remarkable achievement for someone of Tilly's age and illustrates the power of a good idea coupled with enthusiasm. She inspires our community and is making a difference far beyond our community. It is my pleasure to thank Tilly for her achievement.

#### **TERRY O'HARA OAM**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I recognise Terry O'Hara of Kareela on being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to the community through a range of organisations. Of particular note is Terry's nearly 36 years' service as a member of the St Vincent de Paul Society's Oyster Bay Conference, where he has helped to assist those in our community in need of assistance through regular home visits. During his time with the St Vincent de Paul Society, Terry has served in several executive positions including President and Vice President of the Oyster Bay Conference, President of the regional council and also as a member of the disaster advisory committee. Additionally, Terry is an active member of Touring Old Farts Incorporated [TOFS] which organises outings for retired and semi-retired men in Greater Sydney. Through hosting regular activities, TOFS provides opportunities for fellowship, education and reduces social isolation. I congratulate Terry O'Hara for receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia and thank him for his incredible work in our local community.

#### **RHONDA DANIELS**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge Rhonda Daniels of Sutherland on being named Environmental Citizen of the Year at Sutherland Shire Council's 2025 Australia Day Awards. Rhonda has volunteered with Bushcare since 2004 during which time she has become a familiar face to many in our community having worked at several reserves, the community nursery and Joseph Banks Gardens. As a Bushcare volunteer, Rhonda spends her time leading tours, attending seed collections and assisting new volunteers to learn new skills and educating them on new and unusual species and undertaking her own research. Additionally, Rhonda has been a member of the Australian Plants Society since 1993, where she has held a number of positions at all levels including as editor of the quarterly publications of Native Plants and Australia Plants journals. Rhonda has also co-authored several submissions to local and state governments on issues relating to the conservation of native plants. I congratulate Rhonda on being named Sutherland Shire's Environmental Citizen of the Year and thank her for her incredible work in protecting and preserving our native environment.

---