

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Tuesday 18 February 2025**

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

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

### *Bills*

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

##### **Returned**

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

### *Visitors*

#### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge some guests who have joined us today. I welcome all those who are visitors and guests to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly for question time. It is wonderful that you can be here. I also acknowledge and extend a warm welcome to guests of the member for Fairfield and the member for Strathfield, Paula and Daniel Nicolas. I also welcome guests of the member for Gosford, Anna and Martin Cross. I acknowledge and welcome a guest of the member for Liverpool, Fariha Dean, who the member for Liverpool tried to introduce me to earlier and will perhaps later. I acknowledge some legal studies students from Strathfield Girls High School and The King's School from the Strathfield and Epping electorates respectively. I imagine that would be those in the Cooper gallery. I welcome all those students and I hope they enjoy question time today. Finally, I acknowledge and welcome eight guests of the member for Lake Macquarie who are members of the Cardiff Probus Club.

### *Question Time*

#### **RAIL, TRAM AND BUS UNION INDUSTRIAL ACTION**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (12:05):** My question is directed to the Premier. The rail union has paid many hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Labor Party over the past 10 years. Is that not a hopeless conflict of interest for him in negotiating its pay claim?

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:05):** The last thing I will do is give the money back, particularly at the moment. We are locked in this negotiation. We are not giving in. The truth of the matter is that the New South Wales Government must go to the Fair Work Commission to seek some kind of remedy because the commuters of New South Wales are being absolutely disrupted in their daily work habits. We cannot have a situation where the rail union is able to disrupt the lives of the people of New South Wales.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Despite calls from some people in the community for the Government to give in on this point, we cannot. The claims by the unions are extraordinary: a 32 per cent wage increase over four years and a 35-hour week for those who are in the rail unions in New South Wales.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** At the end of the day, it is not affordable.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I think it would be disrespectful to the scores of unions that the Government has done deals with in the two years we have been in office: teachers, health workers, paramedics, corrections officers, counsellors inside New South Wales public schools, as well as the NSW Police Force. We have made major

changes to industrial arrangements in New South Wales, but there is a limit—and the limit has been well and truly crossed by the Rail, Tram and Bus Union.

### **RAIL, TRAM AND BUS UNION INDUSTRIAL ACTION**

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (12:07):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier please update the House on the Government's response to recent industrial action on the rail network that has disrupted thousands of commuters across Sydney?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:07):** If I could refer to the previous question about a conflict of interest, where has the Government pulled its punches in this dispute? When have we not pursued court action in the Fair Work Commission? Where have we not held the line when it comes to the blank cheque demanded by the union? The Opposition cannot point to a single instance.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The truth is that we have worked incredibly hard over a six-month period to present a fair offer to rail unions in New South Wales to get a reasonable outcome. That includes something like 550 hours of negotiations between the Government and the union over that period.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** An enormous amount of time was spent on negotiating. On 30 occasions rail agencies have engaged with the large bargaining group. That was 50 people jammed into a room. They have met on 30 occasions, totalling 240 hours of negotiations. The New South Wales Government has worked with 26 working groups representing various unions. That accounts for 208 hours—two weeks of meetings with the Premier's Department and the Cabinet Office, Treasury and Transport officials. That is two weeks of intensive negotiations. The idea that a couple more hours around the negotiating table is going to break it is ridiculous. If you look at the wage claim from the rail unions, it includes 32 per cent over four years: in the first year, 8 per cent or inflation, whatever is higher; in the second year, 8 per cent or inflation, whatever is higher; 8 per cent in the third year; and 8 per cent in the fourth year. There is also a 35-hour working week, not including the conditions that have been bargained for and demanded by the union movement over that period.

We have brokered arrangements and negotiated deals with large segments of the public sector unions in New South Wales. We believe, as a result of removing the wages cap for New South Wales employees, it is a fair arrangement. But members must be aware that the wages cap has never applied to rail agencies. Under the previous Government, the last wage agreement that was negotiated was 4½ per cent in year one, 4 per cent in year two, 4½ per cent in back pay, plus \$4,500 in cash. So at the same time as the Liberals and The Nationals were paying 2½ per cent to nurses, teachers, corrections officers and police officers, they effectively paid 7½ per cent to rail workers. No wonder they have come barrelling into this negotiation demanding even more. Is there any explanation for that?

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

**Mr Jason Li:** I seek further information.

**The SPEAKER:** An additional two minutes is granted. The member for Kellyville will come to order and listen to the answer.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I hope he does. Over the six-month period, the unions have implemented 628 different bans that disrupt the working week for commuters in this State. They involve everything from operating trains at 23 kilometres less than the posted speed limit—delaying the journey for thousands of people from the Blue Mountains, the Central Coast and down south—all the way to a ban on changing or removing station bins, moving into air-conditioned spaces when temperatures reach 30 degrees or humidity is above 80 per cent—

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** —banning any work in the rain, a ban on training any new people in signalling or rail operations, a ban on any online training, a ban on working with anyone who is not a NSW Trains employee—so if you are not from NSW Trains or Sydney Trains you will not be worked with—and a ban on answering, get this, two phone calls in a row.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** Fix it.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** That is what we are trying to do; we are in court trying to fix it. The Government made a decision—and this is important—that, if you are not prepared to do your job in the railways, we are not going to pay you. We are not going to pay employees to strike. We do not do that for nurses. We do not do that

for teachers. However, the shadow Treasurer issued a media release yesterday afternoon saying that the Government can guarantee trains run tomorrow by withdrawing its notice to pay declarations. In other words, if the Government gives in and pays the union to strike, you will get a better service. That was from the shadow Treasurer in the past 24 hours. He fronts up and says that the best way to stop industrial action is to pay people when they go on strike. The Government is not going to accept a lecture from members opposite when they completely screwed up negotiations last year. Their advice in this dispute is ridiculous. Even we will draw a line under that intervention.

### REGIONAL RAIL SERVICES

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (12:13):** My question is directed to the Premier.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Tamworth will come to order and listen to the member for Clarence. He does not get many chances to ask a question.

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON:** No, I don't. That is true. From next month, the Government has suspended two daily express passenger train [XPT] services between Grafton and Sydney. The Government's decision will leave XPT workers on the North Coast up to \$753 worse off per fortnight. Will the Premier guarantee those workers will not be left worse off because of those regional transport suspensions?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:13):** I do not know the circumstances of the suspension. Is it related to the industrial action?

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** No. It's because they didn't do it. They didn't build the trains. They have been overdue for 10 years.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I normally do not encourage those kinds of interjections, but the member for Maitland might be onto something. She seems to be indicating that the reason for the suspension is that those opposite did not bother to build the regional fleet.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. The member for Leppington has the call.

### SOUTH-WEST SYDNEY PUBLIC EDUCATION

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (12:14):** 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 ensure children and families across south-west Sydney have access to world-class education opportunities?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (12:15):** I thank the member for Leppington for that important question. I am pleased to inform the House that, since the member's election, teacher vacancies in his electorate have gone down 50 per cent. Only yesterday the member for Leppington and I discussed how much infrastructure work is occurring in his electorate. That goes to show this Government's priority is to build schools where people live and where the population has exploded. I have said many times and will continue to say in this place that it is the priority of our Government to give every child the best start in life. To do that, we have to build schools where the population is growing and make up for the 12 years of neglect by members opposite.

Members opposite cannot escape their past. The truth is black and white. They left office with fewer schools than they started with. That is not a record any government should be proud of. Forget about sod turns—in some of these areas they did not even have the land. How do you enrol a child in a public school if it does not exist or the government does not even plan to build one? Yesterday the member for Leppington, the Premier and I were at a high school where we have invested significant amounts of money in creative ways to increase enrolments and give more opportunities to students in the Macarthur and south-west Sydney area. That is turning Eagle Vale High School into the State's newest sports high school.

Work has already begun. Years 7 and 9 have started enrolments in the Talented Sports Program. The Premier even had a go at playing cricket with some of the talented young people. This is significant investment in capital infrastructure like cricket nets, gymnasiums, halls, physical education labs and running tracks. It is also saying to kids in that part of Sydney, "You can be anything you want to be. You can walk through the doors of the local high school in your area, and we will foster that spark. You could be an athlete of the future." If you look at the long list of people who have attended sports high schools in New South Wales, you are talking about Usman Khawaja, Alanna Kennedy and other great athletes. I am sure that Eagle Vale High School will produce more in the future. [*Extension of time*]

In addition, we are building the new schools in south-western Sydney that the community has cried out for.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** There is no better example than in the communities around Camden.

**Mr Ray Williams:** They are building a lot of temporary schools in my electorate.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Again, members opposite are sensitive about this because communities like those around Gregory Hills in Camden had to fight tooth and nail even to get a primary school started. They never even said a high school was needed. The children are now walking through the doors, receiving a public school education in a growing community, because of the election of this Government. For 12 years, while communities such as Gledswood Hills and Gregory Hills exploded, Minister after Minister—especially the final one—refused to admit the problem. I do not think those Ministers even knew where Gregory Hills or Gledswood Hills are. That is before I even mention communities such as Leppington or Austral in the south-west or north-west of Sydney. I remember the communities of south-western Sydney campaigning for a school at Gregory Hills.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The previous Minister posted a video on social media, stating their Government obviously had a proven track record when it came to delivering school infrastructure. If delivering school infrastructure means promising schools but never building them, yes, they had a proven track record. This Government has and will deliver the schools that are needed where they are needed so our children can get the best education possible.

#### MURRAY-DARLING BASIN

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (12:20):** My question is directed to the Premier. Recently, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese overruled Federal environment Minister Tanya Plibersek on key environmental issues. Given the devastation Minister Plibersek is causing in the Murray-Darling Basin, does the Premier still have faith in her and, if so, why?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:20):** I do have faith in the Federal environment Minister. There are a few instances when the New South Wales Government does not agree with the Commonwealth Government, including on McPhillamys mine. We want to see critical mineral development, particularly in the State's south-west. It is a crucial source of economic development and growth. I do not think there has ever been a case when a State government has agreed with everything a Federal government has done, even if they are of the same political persuasion.

In any event, we know the member for Murray has advocated passionately about the sustainable diversion limits and the impacts of environmental water holdings from the Commonwealth on the economy in the Riverina. We understand that inquiries are taking place. The terms of reference of the committee are important. We have always opposed buybacks. I accept the logic that buying out an individual landholder may or may not be of benefit to the individual farmer, but it is devastating to their communities—the accountants, the bakers, the people who work in schools and the public servants in those regional towns. We need to be very careful and mindful that the benefit of the buyback does not only go to the holder of the water licence. There are flow-on effects from the removal of a productive industry in a community.

I do not have a short answer to the problem. I know we have disagreed with the member for Murray on this matter in the past. It makes no difference whether the State signs up or not. The Commonwealth has the ability to reach in and make changes to environmental water holdings in catchments like the Riverina. We will make the position of New South Wales very clear. I have ensured that the position of the member for Murray has been clearly communicated. I am not sure what the next steps from the Commonwealth will be. This Government will make it very clear that we believe that buying back in the first instance has a big impact on the economy, particularly in regional New South Wales.

#### ANTISEMITISM LEGISLATION

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (12:23):** My question is addressed to the Attorney General. Will the Attorney General update the House on the Government's response to the recent unacceptable incidents of hate speech and antisemitism across New South Wales?

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (12:23):** I thank the member for Coogee for her question. I commend her for the work she has been doing with the police, community groups, elected

representatives and other stakeholders in the Jewish community to make the Jewish community in her area feel safer. I know they value very greatly the work that she is doing. Over the past year, there have been disgusting acts of racial hatred and brazen displays of antisemitism across our community. New South Wales is a vibrant, multicultural society of people drawn from all parts of the globe. Our racial diversity is not a weakness but an enduring source of strength. At our core, we believe that everyone, regardless of race, deserves to live their lives free of hatred. We also acknowledge the dark truth that not everyone in our midst embraces diversity as a strength. There is a small active number of people, who were on the fringes, who are now raising their heads and who seek to stoke hatred and division.

Sickeningly, all too often, there are people in the community who think it is appropriate to intentionally incite hatred against other members of the community on the grounds of race. I thought we were better than that, but, at the moment, we are not. In recent times, there have been appalling intentional acts of antisemitism and open expressions of hatred against Jews in contemporary Sydney. Those acts not only degrade the Jewish people on the receiving end of the bile but also debase all of us as members of a shared community united by common decency and respect. Those acts cannot continue. Collectively, we must not allow them to.

The Premier, the Government and the Parliament have strongly signalled that those who sow hatred and seek to vilify their fellow community members should feel the face of the law. Soon their behaviour will be criminal. While the police have done an exceptional job responding to and investigating the crimes and keeping the community safe, our laws must also be fit for purpose. There is no silver bullet to this complex issue. There needs to be strong policing, strong messaging from community leaders—whether they are elected or not—and strong laws. This afternoon the Government will introduce new laws to be a plank in its response. After question time, a bill will be introduced which will provide that a person who, by a public act, intentionally incites hatred towards another person or a group of persons on the grounds of race commits an offence.

The maximum penalty for an individual will be 100 penalty units, imprisonment for two years, or both; and 500 penalty units for a corporation. In other words, the maximum penalty for an individual will be \$11,000, two years imprisonment, or both; and \$55,000 for a corporation. [*Extension of time*]

Those provisions are strong. Frankly, they need to be. The changes meaningfully shift the boundaries of lawful speech to protect the right to live free of fear and violence while maintaining our common shared freedom of expression. The changes will build on the previous Government's introduction of section 93Z to the Crimes Act in 2018 and this Government's 2023 amendments to streamline the laying of charges. The Premier has been emphatic from day one. Violence does not spring up in isolation. Rather, it begins with the wilful spread of hatred and the wilful vilification and attempted dehumanisation of others. I want to be upfront with the House. These changes have some controversial aspects, but we are facing a crisis of antisemitism and racism right now. This Government cannot sit idly by. This is not an academic exercise. Legislative change is urgent. It is important to note that the changes will apply to anyone intentionally inciting hatred against any person on the basis of race. If a person commits those acts, they will face strong penalties. We make no apology for that.

The new section includes an exception for directly referencing religious texts during religious teachings. I say to those concerned about the protection of other attributes—and my staff and I have had some very fruitful discussions with a number of members of Parliament and community groups—that this is just the beginning of the Government's consideration, not the end. We are acting now because of the dire situation concerning an increase in antisemitic hate speech. But let me be clear: The Government is open to the close consideration of other attributes in the future. I will have more to say about that later on today.

#### **RAIL, TRAM AND BUS UNION INDUSTRIAL ACTION**

**Mr JAMES WALLACE (Hornsby) (12:28):** My question is directed to the Premier. In his inaugural speech, the Premier said the Labor Party should take "steps to reduce union control on the floor of our conference". Is that still the Premier's position?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:29):** No, it is not, but that does not mean the Government will hand a blank cheque over to the Rail, Tram and Bus Union.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** As I said in answer to an earlier question, the Government will not take advice from members opposite on the industrial dispute. Two days ago, on 16 February, *The Daily Telegraph* reported, "Opposition shadow Treasurer Damien Tudehope called on the Government to withdraw"—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The Leader of the Opposition rises on a point of order.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, direct relevance.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will be respectful and listen in silence to the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** The question made no reference to the rail union or the current dispute.

**The SPEAKER:** No, it did not.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** It was a question about union control—

**The SPEAKER:** I have heard enough. It is impossible to rule in favour of the Leader of the Opposition on the point of order because the Premier was directly relevant from the very first word of his answer.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** *The Daily Telegraph* reported:

Opposition shadow Treasurer Damien Tudehope called on the government to withdraw its 471 notices docking worker pay.

He said the union was "now getting away with unbridled industrial action"—

fair enough—

but that the government could better guarantee services on Monday if promised workers who engage in the train "go-slows" would be paid.

So if workers plan a train go-slow, the Government should promise that they get paid in order to end the industrial dispute. This is not a minor member of the Opposition; it is the shadow Treasurer. The member for Manly posted:

So on Friday the NSW Labor state government backed away from cutting the pay of drivers who drove trains slowly or did not show up for work ... what sort of circus is this ...

But the Government is doing that. Even the teddy bear of the Parliament is getting tough, but the shadow Treasurer said, "No, back down and pay them to go on strike." I note that the new member for Hornsby has come to the Parliament and we hope he is an upgrade on his predecessor. As we are talking about train disputes, let us go back in time a little bit—not too far, but all the way back to 15 August 2022. *The Australian* ran the headline "Minister blames rail woes on Matt Kean" and reported, "Transport Minister David Elliott has blamed State Treasurer Matt Kean for the industrial action". He said that it was what happens "when you send a boy to do a man's job".

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

### BARANGAROO FORESHORE

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (12:32):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister update the House on how the Minns Labor Government is supporting Barangaroo to become a dynamic cultural, residential, business and retail hub?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (12:32):** I am happy to answer the question from the member for Fairfield about a task that is finally done. Yesterday I signed a planning approval that means Central Barangaroo can proceed at last. I announced it with my good friend and colleague the Minister for Lands and Property, who has been a tireless advocate to finish the job that the previous Labor Government started in 2003. That is how long the project has been kicking around. Of course it has taken a Labor government to cut through the mess, chaos, confusion, backroom deals and inaction over a decade of the previous Liberal-Nationals Government to get the last piece of the Barangaroo puzzle underway.

My approval will finally enable the transformation of that neglected part of Sydney into a dynamic cultural, residential, business and retail hub. There will be a mix of residential and retail uses, with restaurants, bars, a hotel and a range of community facilities near the new Barangaroo metro station. Importantly, the approval does all that while requiring at least 50 per cent of the area to be public open space—a key feature of the site. The approval also delivers an extra 800 square metres of community floor space and two new public plazas. Together with the splendid Barangaroo Reserve—the vision of former Prime Minister Paul Keating, who was a great advocate for the transformation of that part of Sydney—Central Barangaroo's public open space will become the foreshore parklands that Sydney and the rest of New South Wales deserve.

On the Central Barangaroo foreshore, there are separate plans for a new 1.8-hectare waterfront park, providing recreation and enjoyment as well as offering opportunities for events and entertainment. It is about delivering jobs and business opportunities. It will inject \$2.26 billion of economic value during construction and will directly and indirectly create over 12,300 jobs. Members opposite—and I exclude the member for Lane Cove because he made a sensible decision prior to the election about that part of the world, although he could not get it sorted—could not or would not make the last decision that was needed to complete the puzzle.

It took this Government to listen to all sides, to weigh up the competing interests and stakeholders on land use, and to deliver an approval. This Government threaded the needle through the competing interests flowing

from the constraints imposed on the site by the previous Government's shenanigans and backroom deals. That was exposed by the courts and by the Legislative Council's select committee on sightlines during the last term of Parliament. By contrast, I listened to all the stakeholders. I extended the community exhibition period so that all interested parties could put forward their views and opinions. No-one can credibly assert that they did not have the opportunity to have their say on the proposal before the Government. [*Extension of time*]

Barangaroo is an important part of Sydney, often debated and with many opinions about it. I address one key issue, involving the impacts on the historic views between Observatory Hill and Sydney Harbour. I have taken the differing opinions and insights into account. In approving the modification, I decided to impose conditions requiring the height of the northern part of the block facing Nawi Cove to be reduced from eight storeys to five storeys. That condition will provide continued water views from Observatory Hill, which is an important consideration. In addition, the measures outlined in the heritage impact assessment, together with the design guidelines, will support a design within the building envelope to further minimise impacts on historic views. As part of my approval, view corridors have been established along the northern and southern plazas.

It has taken the Minns Government to make way for the delivery of the vibrant heart of Barangaroo and to make the decisions that will allow for the completion of one of Sydney's most significant urban renewal projects. We can now deliver open public space and foreshore access for the people of Sydney and other areas of New South Wales and for international tourists who visit the best city in the world. The proponent will now submit the relevant development applications and go through a design process. They expect to start building by the end of this year, with completion in 2030.

After years of indecision, chaos, legal action, controversy, shenanigans and inaction by members opposite, the Government saw the crying need for the site to be activated, for the decision to be finalised and for us to get on with the job. It means that generations to follow will be able to access the site and admire the views that have been there forever, which make it a vibrant place to live, work and visit. All it took was a bit of compromise to get a result that will sustain a place for everyone to enjoy.

#### **RAIL, TRAM AND BUS UNION INDUSTRIAL ACTION**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (12:37):** My question is directed to the Premier. Since high rates of sick leave for train guards and drivers were determined not to be industrial action by the Fair Work Commission, will unexplained absences result in disciplinary action?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:37):** Under the enterprise bargaining agreement and the industrial rules—negotiated not by us but by the previous Government—anyone who does not turn up for work must supply a doctor's certificate. That is the rule for the railways as well. As a result of this Government's section 471 notices, an individual in the union may withdraw from work if we say that we will not pay them for partial work. The Government made that decision in the interest of resolving the dispute. Frankly, Government members do not believe it is sustainable for individual workers to be paid to take industrial action. We do not do that for nurses, teachers or corrections officers. Although the rail unions are in the Federal system—among the few corporations in the Federal system that are covered as New South Wales employees—we believe the same rules should apply.

We have made a decision to go to the Fair Work Commission, and we are hoping for relief within 24 hours. At each step along this road, the Government has acted in the interests of commuters and taxpayers in New South Wales. I have listened to advice, including legal advice. Along with the Minister for Industrial Relations, the former Minister for Transport, the Minister for Transport, and the Treasurer, I made a decision to take the shortest distance between where we are today and resolving the dispute, except for giving in to what I regard as unrealistic demands from the union.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will conduct themselves appropriately in the Chamber.

#### **SYDNEY FISH MARKET**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (12:39):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Lands and Property. Will the Minister update the House on how the Minns Labor Government is supporting the delivery of the new Sydney Fish Market?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (12:39):** I thank the member for the question. The member for Granville is a dedicated vegetarian, but I know that, like me, she cannot wait for the new icon of Sydney Harbour to open. The building is nothing short of iconic. Today it reached another milestone, with the final roof panel now installed on top of the 200-metre floating roof canopy. The building will be the next pride of Sydney. Not only has it risen from what was an industrial wasteland of rotting piers and iron beams, but

this iconic building was built by Sydney. The Government has awarded more than \$600 million in construction contracts to local suppliers.

When I say local, I really mean local. SMC Marine, a contractor based near the site at White Bay in Rozelle, is managing marine logistics. It is providing equipment such as barge cranes and installing critical elements of the build such as the promenades and more than 400 marine piles. Traino Group, an Australian family company with its head office in Chipping Norton, is sourcing concrete for the build from across the bay in Bank Street, Pyrmont. Just the basement alone used 14 Olympic swimming pools worth of concrete. Active Steel is supplying steel reinforcement for the concrete slabs, using a 70 per cent recycled steel product sourced in Australia. The new Sydney Fish Market is built by Sydney, for Sydney.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** The new auction room will be visible from Bridge Road, bringing that iconic Sydney tradition into the public view. The new promenade, boardwalks and wharves mean that people will be able to enter from every direction. With over 12,000 square metres of retail space for fishmongers, restaurants, cafes and bars, this will be a major destination for locals and visitors. The Government is determined to make sure that the new Sydney Fish Market will be the pride of Sydney. That is why it has held more than 250 co-design workshops with the new tenants. It is why it has had all the major requirements independently reviewed. Government members want the building to be a success, and we will continue to work with the Sydney Fish Market to ensure that is the case. However, when we took over the project from the former Government, it was in a total state of paralysis.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** I spent plenty of time sorting out the mess left by the former Government. *[Extension of time]*

The budget read more like a mystery novel than a project account. One clue at a time, we were able to piece it together. Members of the former Government announced the project at \$250 million, and then it was \$750 million, and then another \$86 million worth of early works was hidden in a separate budget line.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** To be fair, they always said it was on budget; they just did not know which budget. Their party is the party of alternative facts. If you ask them, they will say it is Labor's teacher shortage crisis, despite vacancies going down by 40 per cent. They will say the wages cap was good for workers, despite families struggling with the cost of living. There are even whispers that the member for Wahroonga is leadership material. It is true: If you ask him, he will tell you. Never mind whether one is the aspiring leader of a party or a general punter, the new Sydney Fish Market will have something for everyone. The member for Ryde, old Snowball, will be able to enjoy some sardines. So will his cat, Jinxy. The Leader of the Opposition will be able to enjoy his fluke in peace. The member for Lane Cove will finally be able to focus on his mussels. And we all know what the member for Wahroonga will be doing: floundering.

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

#### COMMUTER FARE-FREE DAY

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping) (12:44):** My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Government give train commuters a fare-free day to compensate for failing to provide reliable train services on Friday 14 February?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:45):** We will. I want to get the dispute done, but obviously the commuters have been absolutely rag-dolled as a result of the ongoing industrial action. It is important to rebuild confidence in the public transport network. However, the truth of the matter is that a conclusion to the dispute is the best way of providing reliable services to the people of New South Wales; that has to be the focus for the Government. That is our intention.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Mr Speaker, the member for Tweed is trying to say something. What do you want?

**Mr Geoff Provest:** Fifty cent fares.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Tweed to order for the third time. The Premier will not engage with the member for Tweed. Members will come to order.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** If you are that skint, we will flick you a \$5 note. I do not understand the urgency from the member for Tweed, but I do appreciate that commuters have been caught in this dispute. That is the last thing the Government wanted. We want a conclusion to the dispute, and we are hoping to get relief from the Fair Work Commission with the full bench on Wednesday. However, the Government has contingency plans regardless of the outcome of that determination.

### REGIONAL ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (12:46):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. Will the Minister update the House on how the Minns Labor Government is building better regional communities by upgrading road infrastructure to support our transition to renewable energy?

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. It is always good to have the Minister at the dispatch box, but she does not need any encouragement.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (12:46):** It is great to have a question from the member for Cessnock. He is such an advocate for regional communities. For those living, as I do, in a coalmining community, this is a really important issue. The member has been an advocate on this over many years. The Minns Labor Government has taken the issue very seriously. It is powering ahead with its plan for building better communities by transforming the economy with renewables to deliver affordable, reliable and sustainable energy. One of the ways that the Government is doing that started before the election, when members opposite were in government. I remember speaking to the NSW Farmers forum when an issue was raised about the lack of overtaking lanes around Merriwa. Members of the former Government had no answer, as they had no answer on any infrastructure upgrades for renewable energy.

**Mr Paul Scully:** They did not know where Merriwa was.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, we did have to tell them where Merriwa was—I thank the member for Wollongong. We made a small but significant commitment to put in \$12 million for overtaking lanes in that area, because people could not get through the town while long pieces of infrastructure were coming through. Roll forward to being in government and we have delivered \$128.5 million in the budget for port to project transport along the Golden Highway to really uplift that project. Some of the money is for delivery straightaway, and some of it is for planning. That tells a story about the difference between members on this side and members opposite while in government.

While in government, members opposite had no plan and no answers. We went to the election with a \$12 million commitment. In less than two years, we have committed 10 times that amount to actually do the work, because we realised how badly the former Government had failed to do that work. The problem with members opposite is that they are *Field of Dreams* dreamers: Build it and they will come. But tough luck if you cannot get it there. It is a real struggle. They have no idea on infrastructure. The shadow Minister for flip-flops is happy to stand at all of those events where they are putting a shovel in the ground to start a renewable project.

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

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** They love a sod turning. That happened in January last year when the member for Dubbo had Chris Bowen, Twiggy Forrest and the then Mayor of Dubbo with him. He got a bit of blowback for that. Some of The Nationals members might be interested in this, but there actually is a Change.org petition that says "Dugald must go!" for the leadership he failed to show. It only has 97 signatures. I think that is pretty generous because there are only about 80 people who know he is the Leader of The Nationals.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** I seek further information.

**The SPEAKER:** I will grant an additional two minutes. However, I remind the Minister that making such comments so early in her answer means that it is hard to accede to the request for additional information. The Minister will return to the leave of the question.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Normally I do not get through the material in the first three minutes because those opposite interject so much. Obviously, The Nationals are in a rush to defend their leader today. What can I say? Speaking of leadership, on issues like renewables and infrastructure upgrades, the member for Upper Hunter was also part of the previous Government. What did he do to advocate for road upgrades for constituents? And, no, he did not sign the petition.

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

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Upper Hunter will come to order. The Minister will resume her seat. I will hear from the Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. Mr Speaker, you made it very clear that the Minister was to return to the leave of the question. She has not done that. She has continued her attacks.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. I again ask the Minister to return to the leave of the question.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I posed the rhetorical question: What did the member for Upper Hunter do to advocate for road upgrades for his constituents? Absolutely nothing. That is exactly what I said. He watched billions of dollars being diverted to massive infrastructure blowouts in Sydney while in his area, the Upper Hunter, this Government has had to recategorise roads because the previous Government failed to upgrade roads.

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

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

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We are talking about infrastructure. It is entirely relevant.

**The SPEAKER:** The Manager of Opposition Business rises on a point of order.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Will you stop the clock, Mr Speaker?

**The SPEAKER:** No. Members will stop telling the Presiding Officer how to manage the House.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** The Minister is directly flouting the Speaker's ruling and continuing her attack on the member for Upper Hunter.

**The SPEAKER:** The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Minister did not flout my ruling directly. There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** There is a real concern here. This question is about who is preparing for renewables. Who is looking after the road infrastructure to make sure they get it? While Peter Dutton wants to put a nuclear reactor in Muswellbrook, the member for Upper Hunter is silent while he moves his office to Singleton. It is alright for him.

#### REGIONAL YOUTH CRIME

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (12:52):** My question is directed to the Minister for Youth Justice. Given the community concern in my electorate about the impact of youth crime, how is the Government planning to protect public safety in regional New South Wales with a strong, mandated alternative to the criminal justice system for young people and minor offenders?

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (12:53):** I thank the member for Barwon for his question. He is a person with whom I meet regularly to discuss issues around youth engagement and youth crime, and he is a person who comes through with solutions as well. It is something I admire about him. I spent a few days with him in his electorate as we travelled through all parts of the State—I have already told the story about how I changed his tyre—and what I loved more than anything else was that there were not many people who did not know and respect him. There was genuine sincerity in what he was trying to do. I appreciate that he comes at the problem with solutions.

In terms of this specific question, I have talked on many occasions about the impact of youth crime, and I would like to think that all members would agree that every young person deserves an opportunity. That does not mean that they get away with it. That does not mean there are no consequences. But we have to make sure that we find the right consequences and, where possible, we try to find places for intervention along the way. Today's Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research data shows the impact that the Government's stronger temporary bail test is having, and we can see a correlation with the special crimes it refers to. The Attorney General has also foreshadowed where we will be going with that in future.

But the key point for all members is that this is just one of a suite of options. There is not one solution to this problem, and we cannot look at one solution alone. In some cases, there needs to be a sentence that effectively results in a person going to a youth justice centre, bail being refused or the use of the bail accommodation service that we are providing. But we have to do more than that. We have to find an important way to engage and give young people the chance to rebuild their lives. I want to clarify one thing, and I hope nobody in this place thinks along these lines: Diversion is not a soft option. It is not somebody getting away with it. It is about providing an alternative to incarceration in a cell. It is about looking at different methods so that when somebody has offended, the consequence is based on changing behaviour and not on seeking revenge. It is a consequence that is commensurate with what someone has done. There will be a consequence, but we have to be incredibly determined to ensure we change that person's life. [*Extension of time*]

If it does not work the first time, we will try and try again, and maybe it works the third time. It has to eventually work, if we believe it. To that end, over the past couple of weeks the New South Wales Government in partnership with the Federal Government has announced \$6 million specifically to support these different programs. We are matching what the Commonwealth has done. That includes parts of Bourke and Kempsey, as the member for Oxley knows, but also around Moree. That is roughly \$2 million for each place to ensure we engage with young kids and, more importantly, look at what the local solutions are, what the local community is telling us, and what the locals say will and will not work. One really good group that the member for Barwon and I met was the Maranguka group in Bourke. We had a great meeting with them for a couple of hours in which we talked about the different projects they do. That is the Bourke lands council, whose people are absolutely committed to making that community better. They had different solutions and different ways of approaching things. They have an understanding that none of us do, and that understanding needs support.

The funding of \$1.5 million that they will receive will enable them to do all of the programs that they want to do to make those changes. That will be the alternative. No kids are getting away with doing the wrong thing, but we are trying to find a way to ensure that young people go down the right track. That money will go to supporting the Safe Aboriginal Youth program, other programs like Youth on Track and some of the work we have going on in Gilgandra. It is going to all the different regions. I know that in this place we all agree that we have to believe in young people, we have to invest in young people, we have to get them on the right path and, if there are consequences, they need to face the consequences too.

### STATE DISASTER SUPPORT

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (12:58):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Emergency Services. Will the Minister please update the House on the New South Wales Government's response to the severe storms that impacted parts of New South Wales earlier this year, including the Hunter and Hilltops regions?

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (12:58):** I thank the member for Wallsend for her question. She is a terrific local member who stands up for her community, and any of my ministerial colleagues would attest to that. If there is something happening in Wallsend, Ministers can be sure the member for Wallsend will contact them, and if she cannot get a hold of the Minister, she will contact their staff. That is what great local advocacy is about. It is about making sure that the issues are resolved as quickly as possible.

We know that there were some serious storms that ran right across the State in mid-January. They affected everywhere across the entire State, but some parts were hit a lot harder than others. These areas include the Riverina, the Sydney area, the Hunter and the Mid North Coast. We immediately began providing assistance. On the Saturday or the Sunday, I joined my ministerial colleague the member for Port Stephens and we visited around that area, where there had been some serious damage. I spoke to a couple of my colleagues on either side of the Chamber to say what support we were providing. For example, the SES received approximately 3,700 reports of incidents within 48 hours. They completed 70 per cent of those requests in a short period of time.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the amazing efforts of the SES and the volunteers. When I visited one of the local stations with the member for Port Macquarie, it was terrific to see the SES, the RFS and Fire and Rescue, all in different uniforms, all working together to do the jobs that needed to be done. This shows that our emergency services all work together. We also made sure that we got the emergency functional area group stood up because we knew that power outages were causing a major problem, particularly around the areas of Port Stephens and the Hunter. A welfare services functional area was also set up to provide food provisions to people. Thousands of people received assistance on the initial day. When events like this happen, the impact is obviously enormous. We try to deal with things as well as we can. As I said, the SES received 3,700 calls. By 18 January, the first three councils to complete damage assessments lodged an application for support to the Reconstruction Authority. *[Extension of time]*

This is the first step in enabling the activation of the joint Federal and State disaster relief. As many MPs know, a natural disaster declaration is made by the New South Wales Government in partnership with the Federal Government when a disaster reaches a certain threshold. The way this works is that the emergency services work as the initial responders to the incident. Once the area is safe, they start doing their assessment. After that, the council works with them to make sure that they can reach the threshold, and they work with the Reconstruction Authority. Some cases can take a little longer than others depending on the impact of the disaster and on how quickly local government can work.

At the outset, the Reconstruction Authority will try its very best to work with them. It provides support for eligible residents to help meet their immediate needs, including emergency accommodation, which we received a couple of requests for; grants for uninsured low-income residents to replace essential household items and for essential structural repairs; support for local councils; and freight subsidies for primary producers to help transport

feedstock, livestock and fodder. The natural disaster declaration from this event also applies to local government areas which submitted their forms, including the City of Newcastle, Wagga Wagga City Council, Dungog Shire Council, Cessnock City Council and the Upper Hunter Shire Council.

The community of my predecessor as emergency services Minister, the member for Cootamundra, suffered some pretty serious storms, hail and snow last week. To her credit, the member for Cootamundra was straight onto the phone. She is an outstanding local MP. Yesterday, alongside the Federal Minister for Emergency Management, the Hon. Jenny McAllister, I was proud to announce that a natural disaster declaration had also been made for Cootamundra. I thank the House for this. Tomorrow we are hosting an emergency services drop-in centre in the Macquarie Room after question time. The RFS, SES, Fire and Rescue and the Reconstruction Authority will be there. Members can come along to meet some of the people from their local community and ask any questions they may have. I hope to see members there. There might even be some water.

### **SPEED ZONES ENFORCEMENT**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** By leave: Pursuant to Standing Order 131 (7), I table a written response from the Premier to a question asked by the member for Kiama during question time on 11 February 2025.

#### *Documents*

### **INSPECTOR OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES**

#### **Reports**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with the Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2012, I announce receipt of the report of the Inspector of Custodial Services entitled *Inspection of Bathurst Correction Centre 2023*, received on 14 February 2025. I order that the report be printed.

### **OFFICE OF TRANSPORT SAFETY INVESTIGATIONS**

#### **Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with the Passenger Transport Act 1990, I announce receipt of the report of the Office of Transport Safety Investigations entitled *Children overboard at Riverview College Ferry Wharf – 16 February 2023*, dated February 2025, received out of session on 14 February 2025 and authorised to be printed.

#### *Committees*

### **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

#### **Reports**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ:** As Chair: I table the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 25/58*, dated 18 February 2025. I move:

That the report be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION**

#### **Inquiry**

**Dr JOE McGIRR:** As Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission has resolved to conduct an inquiry into the Health Care Complaints Commission's 2023-24 annual report, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

### **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON INVESTMENT, INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Inquiry**

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** As Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development has resolved to conduct an inquiry into the impacts of the Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Act 2023 on regional New South Wales communities, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING****Membership**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** Pursuant to notice, I move:

That Mr James Wallace be appointed to serve on the Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Planning in place of Kellie Sloane, discharged.

**Motion agreed to.**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON REMOTE, RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH****Membership**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** Pursuant to notice, I move:

That Mr Justin Clancy be appointed to serve on the Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Remote, Rural and Regional Health.

**Motion agreed to.**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE AND ETHICS****Membership**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** Pursuant to notice, I move:

That Mr James Griffin be appointed to serve on the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Petitions***PETITIONS RECEIVED**

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

**General Practitioners and Junior Doctors' Pay**

Petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to increase the number of general practitioners and ensure pay equality for junior doctors, received from **Mr Jordan Lane**.

*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 2479 to 2566, general business notice of motion (for bills) No. 1 [Tobacco Licensing Bill 2024] and general business order of the day (for bills) No. 1 [Summary Offences Amendment (War Memorials and Other Protected Places) Bill 2024] and No. 5 [Return of Proceeds of Crime (Gambling Companies) Bill 2024] have lapsed.

[*Notices of motions given.*]

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

*Bills***CRIMES AMENDMENT (INCITING RACIAL HATRED) BILL 2025****First Reading**

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

**Second Reading Speech**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (14:31):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This Government is pleased to introduce the Crimes Amendment (Inciting Racial Hatred) Bill 2025. This bill is the third Government bill this session that responds to the recent instances of antisemitic behaviour that we have seen in Sydney. It does so by creating an offence of intentionally inciting hatred by a public act towards a person

on the ground of race. The Government has been appalled by escalating incidents, including graffiti, property damage and the setting alight of vehicles, that have sought to specifically target the Jewish community and to create division within our multicultural community. Some of those acts occurred in my electorate of Maroubra where we have a strong and vibrant Jewish community.

This is a targeted legislative response to this abhorrent conduct. The Government does not think that these antisemitic attacks begin and end with graffiti and setting fire to buildings and cars. They begin with hateful, racist language that may ultimately inspire an individual to commit a violent act. The new offence introduced by this bill, proposed new section 93ZAA of the Crimes Act 1900, will prohibit the public and intentional incitement of hatred on the ground of race. The maximum penalty will be two years imprisonment and/or a fine of \$11,000 for individuals or \$55,000 for corporations.

Before I turn to the detail of the bill, I address some of the important matters that have been raised with our Government by stakeholders concerning why the new offence applies to race-based hate speech only. Our Government acknowledges that hate speech based on other attributes—such as those we see in section 93Z that include religion, sexual orientation or gender identity—occurs and condemns it. We will continue to look at how laws in New South Wales can be improved to address hate speech based on other attributes and promote social cohesion. Criminalising hate speech on the grounds of all attributes that are protected by civil vilification regimes is challenging and complex. We recognise that there are further issues to work through in this space, but our Government must respond to the immediate and pressing issue of racially based hate speech that faces our community now.

The introduction of this bill does not preclude the Government from bringing forward legislation to address hate speech based on other attributes. To help us consider this further, I am pleased to announce that our Government will establish a review into the criminal law protections against hatred introduced by this bill and, in particular, the sufficiency of protections against hatred for people involved in vulnerable communities in our State. This review will take into account important matters like the interaction between protections against hatred and the implied freedom of political communication and freedom of religion. It will be completed within six months. I take time to recognise and thank Minister Dib for bringing certain community concerns to me and my office and for contributing to the establishment of this review. I also thank the member for Sydney, who is in the Chamber, for his similar and always watchful interactions with the Government. There is also a 12-month statutory review provision in the bill to facilitate further consideration of whether improvements can be made to the legislation.

I turn now to the detail of the bill. Schedule 1 amends the Crimes Act 1900 to insert new division 8A into part 3A. That division will contain two sections: an offence provision at new section 93ZAA and a statutory review provision at new section 93ZAB. New section 93AZZ introduces the offence of publicly and intentionally inciting hatred on the ground of race. There are five elements to the offence under new section 93ZAA (1). First, the conduct must be a public act. The definition of "public act" is taken from the existing definition in section 93Z of the Crimes Act, which includes:

- (a) any form of communication (including speaking, writing, displaying notices, playing of recorded material, broadcasting and communicating through social media and other electronic methods) to the public, and
- (b) any conduct (including actions and gestures and the wearing or display of clothing, signs, flags, emblems and insignia) observable by the public, and
- (c) the distribution or dissemination of any matter to the public.

I note that one of the Government's bills, the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025 will, if passed, amend this definition to put beyond any doubt that graffiti is also a public act.

The second element of this new offence is that the public act must intentionally incite hatred. While there is no current criminal offence directed at inciting hatred, there is a civil action for unlawful racial vilification. Vilification has been defined to include inciting "hatred towards, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of, a person or group of persons on the ground of the race of the person or members of the group". In this sphere, hatred is not simply the hatred of a person because of a particular characteristic, such as race, but must be a public act that could encourage or spur others to harbour such emotions. In this bill "hatred" is given its ordinary English meaning, which is a feeling of hostility or strong aversion towards a person. The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines hatred as "the feeling of someone who hates; intense dislike; detestation". The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines hatred as "a feeling of intense dislike or aversion towards a person or thing; an emotion in which such a feeling is experienced; loathing; hostility; malevolence".

The third element is that the incitement to hatred by the public act must be intentional. This element means that statements or communications that are not intended to incite hatred, or that are reckless as to whether they may incite hatred, are not within the purview of the offence. The fourth element of the offence is that the intentional incitement to hatred by a public act must be on the basis of race. The definition of race is taken from

the existing definition in section 93Z of the Crimes Act and includes "colour, nationality, descent and ethnic, ethno-religious or national origin". The fifth element is that the public act that intentionally incites hatred on the basis of race would:

... cause a reasonable person who was the target of the incitement of hatred, or a reasonable person who was a member of a group of persons that was the target of the incitement of hatred, to—

- (i) fear harassment, intimidation or violence, or
- (ii) fear for the reasonable person's safety. This is an objective test. That is, objectively, would a reasonable person who was the target of the incitement of hatred, or a reasonable person who is a member of the targeted group of persons, fear these things? It does not need to be shown that the targeted person or group actually did fear the outcomes. This fifth element recognises the potential impact of speech that incites racial hatred on targeted communities and members of those communities. It also gives the offence a protective purpose: to protect the public from threats to public order posed by public acts that incite racial hatred and are likely to engender fear of harassment, intimidation or violence, or fear for safety.

New section 93ZAA (3) prescribes it to be irrelevant as to whether the alleged offender's assumptions or beliefs about the race of another person, or a member of a group of persons, were correct or incorrect at the time the offence is alleged to have been committed. This means that spreading hatred based on incorrect assumptions about the race of a person will not be a defence to this offence, so be careful. It will also be irrelevant whether or not, in response to the alleged offender's public act, any person formed an actual state of mind or carried out an act of hatred. This means that it does not need to be shown that another person was in fact incited to feel hatred based upon the first person's public act.

New section 93ZAA (2) provides for a statutory exemption that will apply to acts that consist only of directly quoting from or otherwise referencing a religious text for the purpose of religious teaching. This exemption is intended to protect freedom of religion, and to recognise that some historical religious texts may contain archaic language or historical "calls to arms" that, when part of religious teachings, should not come within the purview of the offence.

New section 93ZAA (4) states that a prosecution can only be commenced by the New South Wales police or by the Director of Public Prosecutions. The result of this provision is that private prosecutions will not be permitted under these provisions. This will protect against potential vexatious prosecutions. This is a novel, but necessary, offence. Our Government will closely monitor its operation. To ensure that the offence is operating as intended, new section 93ZAB introduces a statutory review to be undertaken 12 months after the commencement of the provision. The report of the statutory review must be tabled in both Houses of Parliament as soon as practicable after the end of the 12-month period from commencement.

As I said earlier, our Government will also commence a review into protections against hatred for vulnerable communities in New South Wales, which will aid us in consideration of any widening of the offence to any further attributes. Clause 2 provides for the commencement of the offence. The offence will commence on a day appointed by proclamation. This provides flexibility for the necessary time needed for police training, and community education and outreach. This Government will work with impacted agencies to ensure that they and the community are ready and the offence commences as soon as possible. This bill recognises the specific harm caused by hate speech based on race and its potential to escalate into violence. It is just one way that the New South Wales Government will continue to demonstrate its commitment to addressing antisemitic conduct and provide a safe community for all people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS HATRED) BILL 2025**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 11 February 2025.**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (14:43):** I speak on behalf of the Coalition with regard to the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. Last week the Attorney General introduced and read for a second time this bill and the related Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025. I set out some of the background to these pieces of legislation in the second reading speech for my two private member's bills that I delivered last Thursday. As I only had 20 minutes prior to question time on Thursday under the standing orders, I did not set out all of the relevant history that I should set out as necessary background before I turn to the wording of this piece of legislation. Unfortunately, that will require me to repeat myself a little from last week.

Last week I reminded the House that just a little over 16 months ago, on 9 October 2023, the face of multicultural Australia changed. As the son of an immigrant to this country, I think it is incredibly important for

all of us to ensure that multicultural Australia has not changed forever. On that day, before the State of Israel had done anything about the attacks on Israel of two days earlier, an ugly mob was given a police escort to spew racist hatred on the steps of the most internationally recognisable building of our nation—the Sydney Opera House.

The Premier, on 9 October, wanted to do the right thing and light up the Opera House in solidarity with Israel. He wanted to avoid the same mistake that he had made when he refused to light up the Opera House for other events like the King's coronation. But, unfortunately, it was a terribly botched gesture on 9 October. A proper security appraisal of the kind that the Coalition routinely did before the Opera House was lit when it was in government was not conducted. As a consequence, the Minns Government's action inspired protesters, and our Jewish community were told by the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism to stay away from the city so that they were not able to see the lighting of the Opera House agreed to by the Minns Government. Under the premiership of Chris Minns, a mob with flares, shouting chants of a kind against our Jewish community, was able to take over our nation's most iconic building, the Sydney Opera House.

After that terrible protest at the Opera House, protesters started appearing each Saturday in our city saying they supported the Palestinian cause. The protesters, on occasions, carried flags similar to those of terrorist organisations and wore masks obscuring their appearance, making it difficult for police to identify them. This obscuring of appearance in public protests has become commonplace for many different organisations, making policing of those protests difficult. These regular weekend protests made the CBD of our city an uncomfortable place for many people, including a particular segment of our community. Despite the harm to businesses, and the cost to taxpayers from these protests, the New South Wales Government did nothing—even though the Premier in October last year noted that in calendar year 2024, to that point in time, the protests had cost the taxpayer \$5 million in policing costs.

Those protests were sanctioned by the police commissioner responsible to the police Minister. The commissioner had the legal power to give or not to give them a certificate as an authorised assembly under the Summary Offences Act. On the last sitting day of Parliament in November 2023, the Opposition tried to establish a parliamentary upper House inquiry into the incitement of violence crimes under section 93Z of the Crimes Act having regard to the events on the steps of the Opera House. The Minns Government blocked that attempted inquiry. A month later, the Minns Government made a reference to the Law Reform Commission on the very matter that it had blocked Parliament from investigating. When the Law Reform Commission reported back, it recommended no changes and, today, we have for the first time the Attorney General giving a second reading speech for a bill to make changes to section 93Z of the Crimes Act.

Now, 15 months after the Coalition wanted some action, we were presented for the first time last week with this legislation and its related bill. During the past 15 months, protesters have taken over our university campuses, without any leadership of those institutions against the intimidation of a section of our community that was driven away by the protesters, many of whom were not even students at the university and were being funded in part by nefarious foreign players. Incredibly, many of our university institutions have safe rooms for certain groups in our community, but they seemed uninterested in creating a safe environment for their Jewish students and faculty members.

Although our universities are governed by legislation passed by this Parliament, and overseen by a member of Chris Minns' Cabinet, the New South Wales Government also did nothing about the terrible situation on our university campuses—including the university campus that you, Mr Acting Speaker, are affiliated with. As I said last week, the Premier is a good talker and has said a lot about his support for our Jewish community. But, until last week, he had not brought any legislation in the past 15 months to deal with the crisis of racism and antisemitism in our community so as to protect the cohesion of our multicultural community.

That is in part because of internal Labor politics. We know that the left faction of the Labor Party are anti-Jewish and anti-Israel. Apparently 18 members, or about one-third of the Labor MPs in this Parliament, opposed in the Labor caucus the very legislation that we are debating today. As a consequence, the belated legislation is weak. The Coalition will bring amendments to try to significantly strengthen it. We hope that the Minns Labor Government will do the right thing by supporting those changes, ensuring that the words of the Premier are backed up by real and strong action. Our private member's bill, which was read for the second time last week, and is reflected in the amendments to government legislation, has been broadly supported by the Jewish community and other stakeholders. We hope the Government listens to them.

Although the racist actions that I have outlined were against a section of our community of Jewish heritage, it could have been against any of the many multicultural groups in our community. That is why an attack on one group is an attack upon the concept of multiculturalism. It is an attack on our community cohesion. We like to call ourselves the greatest multicultural success in the world, but New South Wales has looked like a dismal failure in recent months because of the void of leadership that I have referred to. With all the inaction by this Government, was it really a surprise that antisemitic violence has become rampant in our city in recent months? It is important

to set out in the *Hansard* of this Parliament the extraordinary events of recent months to fully understand the background to this Government's legislation and the reasons for the Coalition's proposed amendments.

This is the chronology that I had to truncate last week in the second reading speech of my private member's bill: In September of last year, a caravan was left on the side of the road near Dural. The caravan contained explosives and a plan to target Jewish locations. The caravan was not opened until January of this year when the police were alerted to its contents. The Premier said the caravan's contents could have caused a mass-casualty event, but he failed to contact the Prime Minister, under whom our national security bodies are responsible. The people ultimately behind the caravan's contents are still not known, although two people are linked to it but have not been charged with a crime relating to the caravan and its contents. Whether it was a terrorist mass-casualty event has now been questioned in the media, although Jewish groups point out that the issue is still unclear.

On 17 October 2024, the Curly Lewis Brewing Co. of Bondi was set on fire. The intended target of the two men alleged to have lit the fire was a Jewish kosher deli called Lewis' Continental Kitchen, which was torched a few days later. The men were taking instructions from somebody who called himself James Bond. The mastermind, James Bond, has not been identified or found, although three men have been charged. No change in the law was necessary to severely punish those antisemitic-inspired crimes. Under part 4AD division 2 of the Crimes Act, offences involving fire to damage or destroy property in company have maximum sentences from 11 to 25 years imprisonment, depending upon the circumstances. The sentence is much greater than the two years maximum for any offence created under the Minns Government's bill that is now before this Parliament for debate. Without the bill being debated today, it is already an aggravating factor in sentencing under section 21A (2) (h) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999, which states:

- (h) the offence was motivated by hatred for or prejudice against a group of people to which the offender believed the victim belonged (such as people of a particular religion, racial or ethnic origin ...

The fear and trauma suffered by the eastern suburbs community, together with the aggravating factors that I have referred to, suggested strongly that those crimes were in the serious range of offences and should be tried in the District Court, where the maximum penalties could be considered. But were they? Was the police Minister and Attorney General monitoring how those offences were being assessed and prosecuted by those under their responsibility? Not at all. Incredibly, decisions were made by the prosecutors to pursue those matters as low-level offences in the Local Court, which has a jurisdictional limit of only two years imprisonment. That decision gave the alleged perpetrators of the crimes more than an 80 per cent reduction in their possible maximum sentences under the Crimes Act before they were even brought before the court.

Why, given the seriousness of the offences, did the people who are administering prosecutions on behalf of New South Wales do that? How did the Attorney General and police Minister not monitor what was going on and allow them to do that? When Guy Finnegan, who was guilty of this firebombing event, was sentenced to only 10 months imprisonment, or less than 10 per cent of the maximum sentence under the Crimes Act, the Premier bellowed to the media that the sentence of 10 months was the wrong message to send. Allowing the prosecution to be conducted in the Local Court was the wrong message. The horse had already bolted because of the ineptitude of the Government that Chris Minns leads.

The community deserves to be saved from the after-event crocodile tears of the Premier about the inadequacy of the sentence. If the co-accused is found guilty then, under the principles of parity in sentencing, his sentence will have to be similar to the Finnegan sentence of only 10 months imprisonment. That is a terrible start to the justice response to the high levels of corrosive racism in our community, and the two Government bills that members are debating today will not do anything about that. There have been many other terrible crimes committed since those firebombings in October last year that I was not able to detail to Parliament last week.

On 21 November 2024, one motor vehicle in Woollahra was the subject of arson and nine motor vehicles were graffitied. Two men have been charged. Without the changes by the Minns Government before Parliament today, the arson offence already had an 11-year maximum sentence if tried in the District Court. Each of the nine motor vehicle offences have a five-year maximum prison sentence available, and the same aggravating factors are present. Has the prosecution allowed those offences to be tried in the District Court, or are they going to be conducted in the Local Court again? Does the fact that the legislation before the House today is limited to only two-year imprisonment penalties suggest that the Premier considers that antisemitic arson and property damage cases are low-level offences to be conducted in the Local Court rather than in the District Court, where existing offences already have much greater penalties? If the Premier and his Government think that, the Coalition certainly does not.

Two houses in Woollahra were graffitied with antisemitic words on 11 December 2024 and the getaway car was torched. Without this bill, the offence of causing damage to each of those houses could attract sentences of five years each under the Crimes Act. The same aggravating factors are present, suggesting they are serious

offences. Again, the Premier and Attorney General should explain whether those offences are being pursued in the District Court or the Local Court. If they are not being pursued in the District Court, then the Attorney General should give an explanation. On 6 January this year, a vehicle in Queens Park was sprayed with antisemitic graffiti. Under existing law, the damage to the vehicle could attract a maximum sentence of five years under the Crimes Act. The same aggravating factors are present, suggesting it is a serious offence.

Nothing in the bill would appear to make those actions criminal which were not already criminal, or increase the penalty for the criminal actions. On 7 January this year, a man made a gesture towards people outside a synagogue in St Ives. A 20-year-old man was charged in the Local Court with stalking/intimidating, intending fear and physical harm. Nothing in this bill would appear to make his actions criminal which were not already criminal or increase the penalty for his actions. The same aggravating factors can be taken into account in his sentencing. On 10 January this year, a synagogue in the Premier's own electorate of Kogarah was vandalised with antisemitic words. The damage to the synagogue could have a maximum sentence of at least five years under the Crimes Act. The same aggravating factors are present, suggesting it is a serious offence. Nothing in this bill would appear to make the actions criminal which were not already criminal or increase the penalty for his actions. The police believe this incident was related to the firebombing of Only About Children day care centre in Maroubra.

On 11 January this year, a synagogue in Newtown was vandalised with antisemitic words and fire implements were discovered. Police believe an arson attempt was made. Nazi symbols were sprayed on the building. The damage to the synagogue could have a maximum sentence of at least five years under the Crimes Act. Under section 344A of the Crimes Act, attempting arson is the same as committing arson. If an attempt at arson was established, it could attract a maximum penalty of between 10 and 25 years imprisonment. The same aggravating factors are present, suggesting it is a serious offence. Two men have been charged with destroying property in company by using fire and destroying and damaging the property in company. One of the men has been charged with knowingly displaying, by public act, a Nazi symbol without excuse. Nothing in this bill would make their actions criminal which were not already criminal or increase the penalties for their actions. The Coalition amendments would make the offences more serious, with more serious penalties.

On 12 January this year a pharmacy in Hamilton, a suburb of Newcastle in New South Wales, was graffitied with antisemitic material. A 47-year-old man has been charged with intentionally marking premises without prescribed consent and knowingly displaying, by public act, a Nazi symbol without excuse. It is unclear whether he has been charged with damaging property under section 195 of the Crimes Act, which has a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment. The Nazi symbol offence would be unchanged by the Government bill. Under the Coalition's proposed amendments, it would be treated as a District Court offence with stronger penalties.

On 14 January this year, antisemitic graffiti was painted on a footpath near Sydenham railway station. On 17 January this year, the former home of the co-chief executive of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Alex Ryvchin, in Dover Heights was firebombed and graffitied. Four cars were damaged, one car was graffitied and one car was set alight. The fire damage to the house and car could each have a maximum sentence of between 10 and 25 years, depending on the circumstances under the Crimes Act. In addition, the damage to each of the four vehicles could have a maximum sentence of five years per vehicle under the Crimes Act. The same aggravating factors are present, suggesting they are very serious offences, with a large cumulative sentence when the perpetrators are brought to justice. Nothing in this bill would make their actions criminal which were not already criminal, or increase the penalties for their actions.

On 21 January this year, the Only About Children day care centre in Maroubra in the electorate of the Attorney General was set alight and graffitied. The centre was previously owned by a Jewish family and is situated near the Maroubra Synagogue and Mount Sinai College, an Orthodox Jewish school. No arrests have been made. Without the bill before the Parliament, the fire damage to the centre has a maximum sentence of 10 to 25 years under the Crimes Act, depending on the circumstances. The graffiti offences have a further maximum sentence of five years under the Crimes Act. The same aggravating factors are present, suggesting the arson and graffiti are very serious offences, with a large cumulative sentence when the perpetrators are brought to justice. Nothing in this bill would appear to make the fire actions criminal which were not already criminal, or increase the penalties for these actions.

On 30 January, Mount Sinai College and a property next door in Maroubra were spray-painted with antisemitic graffiti. On the same day, the Eastgardens shopping centre and a house in Eastlakes were also covered in antisemitic graffiti. On 2 February, antisemitic graffiti was sprayed on a number of vehicles, houses and garage doors in Kingsford and Randwick. It is important to set out the detail and extent of the antisemitic attacks that have occurred in recent months and note that almost all of them will be untouched by this legislation or the other piece of legislation introduced by the Government that will be debated this afternoon. The Coalition's proposed amendments will implement significantly stronger penalties for many of the offences related to Nazi symbols.

On Thursday last week, the Government announced that it would bring forward legislation this week in Parliament. It issued a press release without any draft legislation. During a time of heightened community friction, a bipartisan approach with the Opposition was desirable, particularly given that it is a minority government that did not secure a majority of seats in the Legislative Assembly, the people's House of Parliament. That bipartisan approach did not happen. In fact, there was only limited consultation with community groups and no consultation at all with the Opposition. Today the Government announced its incitement of racial hatred bill. Again there was no consultation with the Opposition.

The first time we saw any draft legislation for this bill was during the second reading speech last week. By that time, we had already supplied to the Government and crossbench the Coalition's proposed private member's legislation, which I introduced last week, the Crimes Amendment (Display of Nazi and Terrorist Symbols) Bill 2025 and the Summary Offences Amendment (Public Assemblies) Bill 2025. Those bills form the basis of the amendments the Opposition intends to introduce to the Government's bills today, the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025 and the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025. The Premier has not been responsible by failing to consult the Opposition on its legislation. It is not the correct attitude to adopt on such important legislation, especially with the Government's hapless management of the past 16 months of racism in our community.

I wish to make some observations about the two Government antisemitism bills to be debated in the House today. It seems there are no offences that will be punished by more than two years imprisonment. Therefore all provisions will be heard in the Local Court. It appears that there has been no attempt to create a terrorism symbols offence and match the much higher penalties for Nazi and terrorism offences introduced by the Federal Parliament less than two weeks ago when Peter Dutton and the Labor Prime Minister acted in unity and agreed on the new offences and changes to the existing offences. It appears that there has been no attempt to do anything about the repeat protests occurring in our city every week, despite the great cost and great disruption to businesses and the community, and despite the criticism of those repeated protests by none other than the Premier himself in October last year.

It appears there has been no attempt to assist the police to identify protestors who incite racial hatred as an offence in section 93Z, which is altered by this bill. How is that offence to be policed if protestors disguise their appearance? It appears that there are no changes to the prosecution process or the policies that have allowed serious racist arson cases to be treated as low-level offences to be tried in the Local Court, with substantial discounts to the maximum penalties that occur by reason of prosecutorial decision. It appears there has been no attempt to introduce anything like the bill passed by the Federal Parliament last week that provides mandatory minimum sentences for Nazi symbol offences. The Coalition will move amendments to deal with most of the deficiencies in the bills, which I will detail later in my contribution to this debate and during debate on the other bill to do with places of public worship.

I turn to the detail of the bill. The Coalition is happy to support the provision in item [1] of schedule 1 to the bill to make it clear that graffiti is a public act within the definition in section 93Z of the Crimes Act. The Coalition believes it was already included in the definition but does not oppose an amendment to make that abundantly clear. Regarding the changes to section 93ZA of the Crimes Act in items [2] to [5] of schedule 1 to the bill, the Coalition supports the notion that there should be stronger penalties for the display of Nazi symbols. However, it supports much higher penalties than those in the bill.

Instead of a two-tiered approach where the most serious penalty for the display of Nazi symbols is a \$22,000 fine, two years imprisonment, or both, for individuals, or a \$110,000 fine for corporations, the Coalition instead proposes much higher penalties for the public display of Nazi symbols anywhere. The Coalition proposes five years imprisonment, a \$44,000 fine, or both, for individuals, and a \$110,000 fine for corporations. The five-year term of imprisonment proposed by the Coalition for the display of Nazi or terrorist symbols is the same as the penalty under sections 80.2H and 80.2HA of the Commonwealth Criminal Code. It is not reasonable for the Minns Government and the Attorney General to amend the law to impose a lesser penalty than the Commonwealth imposes for the same or similar offences.

In addition, the Coalition believes that terrorist symbols should be added to the New South Wales criminal offence of displaying Nazi symbols, as should symbols that are similar to Nazi and terrorist symbols and that a reasonable person would take to be shown in support of Nazi or terrorist ideology. That would meet the situation that occurred in October last year when protestors slightly altered a terrorist symbol to replace an Islamic State of Iraq and Syria fighter with Ned Kelly to avoid committing an offence under the Commonwealth Criminal Code, while they were clearly conveying to the community that they supported that terrorist organisation.

The Coalition believes that the offences should not be summary offences heard in the Local Court but should be treated more seriously and heard only on indictment in the District Court. Finally, the Coalition will move an amendment to establish that the offences have a standard non-parole period of 18 months imprisonment.

Those significant changes will strengthen the existing approach to section 93ZA of the Crimes Act in schedule 1 to the bill. We hope the Government will support that strengthening, which also brings the offences into conformity with Commonwealth law. It is undesirable that there not be conformity in legislation on such important matters. The Coalition supports item [6] of schedule 1 to the bill.

The Coalition supports schedule 2 to the bill, which amends section 21A (2) (h) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 to provide that the offence may be "partially or wholly" motivated by hatred or prejudice. A standard non-parole period of 18 months for convictions under section 93ZA of the Crimes Act will be added to the bill under the foreshadowed Coalition amendments. That is consistent with sections 80.2H and 80.2HA of the Commonwealth Criminal Code, which specify a one-year mandatory minimum sentence for convictions for the public display of Nazi or terrorist symbols. The Coalition also supports the changes to the Graffiti Control Act 2008 in schedule 3 to the bill.

Coalition members believe this is an important time for members in this Parliament to show that they can work together to address a significant community issue, which is the violence, antisemitism and racism that we are seeing in our streets, and the need for greater social cohesion. The Parliament can certainly lead by example in that regard. We ask the Government to indicate its support for the Coalition's foreshadowed amendments to the bill. We look forward to working constructively to deal with this sustained period of many months of racist acts and the terrible impact they have had on social cohesion within our community.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (15:15):** A khanda, a Star of David or a cross carry a deep significance for millions. They are a repository and incarnation of an immense history and a far-reaching system of values; a foundation of community and belonging; and the essence of an ideology, an identity and a core belief. Today we reflect on not just the unifying power of symbols but also the division and pain that a symbol of evil can harbour. I speak in support of the Crimes Legislation (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. It is one part of a suite of reforms that our Government is introducing to tackle antisemitism, protect places of worship and stand against hatred and prejudice. Firstly, I thank the Attorney General and his office, the Department of Communities and Justice, the Premier, the Cabinet Office and the Minister for Multiculturalism for their work in preparing the bill and for their extensive collaboration with a range of stakeholders in a short time. In particular, I acknowledge the contributions from the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, Jillian Segal, AO, to help ensure that the bill is considered and fit for purpose.

The bill is an important and timely law reform to protect the people of New South Wales, particularly our brothers and sisters in the Jewish community. The bill demonstrates the Government's firm response to the deplorable acts of antisemitism that have occurred in New South Wales this summer. It responds to the shameful incidents of antisemitic graffiti that we have seen at synagogues, homes, businesses and Jewish schools, and other such criminal acts of antisemitism that have plagued our State. The bill seeks to strengthen section 93ZA of the Crimes Act by introducing an aggravated version of the offence with a higher maximum penalty. The aggravated offence will apply when a Nazi symbol is displayed on or near a synagogue, a Jewish school or the Sydney Jewish Museum. The bill is one of the many steps the Minns Labor Government is taking to respond to rising tensions in our community. By enacting the amendments, we will better protect people from violence and send a clear message that people in New South Wales expect to live in a safe, harmonious and accepting society.

As it currently stands, section 93ZA of the Crimes Act makes it an offence to knowingly display, by public act and without reasonable excuse, a Nazi symbol. It is punishable by a fine of up to 100 penalty units, up to 12 months imprisonment, or both. The bill seeks to strengthen section 93ZA by introducing an aggravated offence with a higher penalty. The display of a Nazi symbol on or near those types of premises is distinctly violent, threatening and offensive to our Jewish community. Creating an aggravated offence recognises that fact.

I now address the key amendments of the bill. Schedule 1 [2] to the bill creates the aggravated offence by introducing new section 93ZA (1AA), which prohibits a person from knowingly displaying, by public act and without reasonable excuse, a Nazi symbol on or near a synagogue, Jewish school or the Sydney Jewish Museum. That offence is punishable by a fine of up to 200 penalty units or two years imprisonment, or both, for an individual, and a fine of up to 1,000 penalty units for a corporation. That doubles the maximum penalty available for the existing offence of display of a Nazi symbol, and demonstrates that that kind of action is not acceptable in our community.

To assist with interpreting the new offence, schedule 1 [5] defines "Jewish school" as a Hebrew school, an independent Jewish school or a yeshiva. It will apply to infant, primary and high schools that are Jewish schools. To support application of the aggravated offence under section 93ZA, the bill also amends the Crimes Act to expand the definition of "public act". Under section 93Z (5) of the Crimes Act, a public act includes any form of communication to the public, including speaking, writing, displaying notices, playing of recorded material, broadcasting and communicating through social media or other electronic methods. The bill expands that definition to also recognise graffiti as a public act.

Provisions were brought in to criminalise the public display of Nazi symbols under the Crimes Amendment (Prohibition on Display of Nazi Symbols) Act 2022. Whilst existing measures are in place, those do not reflect the gravity of displaying such symbols in spaces reserved for the Jewish community. To display such a symbol at a museum, synagogue or school designated to teach and share Jewish culture, faith and history is absolutely abhorrent. It illustrates the depravity that the Government is committed to stamping out in New South Wales.

On 16 September 2024 three men were arrested after they performed a Nazi salute outside the Jewish museum in Darlinghurst. The men alleged that it was just a joke. The joke defence has been used before by antisemites. It was used recently by the nurses who glorified the killing of Jews in their hospital. They also claimed it was just a joke. Magistrate Jennifer Atkinson of Downing Centre Local Court questioned the men and asked them why they performed the Nazi gesture at that location, near the museum. The weight of such a symbol of hate is exacerbated when displayed in such special locations.

On 7 February New South Wales police were called to Darlinghurst again, this time to the Darlo Bar, an iconic Sydney pub near the Jewish museum. Police attended following reports of a man displaying a Nazi flag across his table on the footpath, in full view of the public. Magistrate Grogan of the Downing Centre Local Court remarked that "the incident was disgraceful, disgusting and abhorrent. Displaying such symbols can and does create fear." Both those matters are awaiting final judgement and sentencing. With the new aggravated offence, our law enforcement and judiciary will be better equipped to recognise and punish the severity of those matters.

Schedule 2 to the bill amends the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 to clarify factors to be considered by a sentencing court. Schedule 2 [1] amends section 21A (2) (h) to put beyond any doubt that hatred for or prejudice against a group of people to which the victim belonged is considered as an aggravating factor, whether the offence was wholly or partially motivated by hatred or prejudice. Simply put, a person's motivation need not be driven wholly by hate. Where that was one motivating factor, the provision will apply. That corrects confusion in the legislation and confirms that where it can be proved beyond reasonable doubt that hatred or prejudice is one of the offender's motivations, the offence becomes aggravated.

The amendment is widely supported by similar international and domestic legislation. It considers the examples set by the Sentencing Act 2020 in the United Kingdom and the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021, which provide that an offence can be aggravated if partly or wholly motivated by hostility. It follows section 11B of the Tasmanian Sentencing Act 1997, whereby the factor can be proved if offending was motivated "to any degree" by hatred or prejudice. [*Extension of time*]

I thank the House. A Nazi symbol was repeated over and over on the walls of the Allawah and Newtown synagogues. A family home was splashed with red paint and the cars set alight just because it was the former residence of a Jewish community leader. A Nazi symbol was visible among the burnt remains of a childcare centre. A Nazi symbol was spray-painted over the door of Mount Sinai College in Maroubra. We all know the history associated with that symbol. We know the devastation it and its extremist followers have caused: ripping families apart, brandishing hate, genocide, the Holocaust, carrying generations of pain for the Jewish community and many others.

The New South Wales Government condemns conduct that is violent or incites violence to hurt people or make people feel unsafe because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status or because they are living with HIV or AIDS. Nazi symbols are an example of such conduct. The amendments within the bill are one of the many steps the Government is taking to stamp that out. There is no place for antisemitism in New South Wales. Antisemites must be confronted. Their ideology must be destroyed and removed from our community.

In New South Wales, we respect each other's values and beliefs and champion what unites us, not what divides us. We respect everyone's right to share their opinions, but there is a line. When hate symbols are splashed across a place of worship, a home, a business or a school to express an opinion or an ideology, that line is crossed. Public incitements of hate, even non-verbal ones, create fear and distrust in our communities. Voices across New South Wales inciting hate are making our community feel unsafe. Whilst those voices have painted a loud message, it is important to remember that they represent the few, not the many. Symbols have the power to unite or divide, to inspire or provoke. They carry emotional and cultural weight that can influence public opinion. Those Nazi symbols were designed to intimidate and create division and to sow hatred but they will not work. In New South Wales, we stand in solidarity with our Jewish community, and there is no stronger symbol than that.

I thank the NSW Police Force for its work to fight antisemitism. The Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command is leading Strike Force Pearl in response to multiple antisemitic arson and graffiti incidents across Sydney. Additional resources have been deployed to that team, with an extra 40 dedicated investigators joining the strike force. To date, 11 people have been arrested under Strike Force Pearl. This bill is one of the many

reforms being implemented to combat those deplorable acts. With these amendments, we are acting to strengthen our tools and support the NSW Police Force in its work.

With this bill, the Government is sending a clear message: This conduct is abhorrent and not welcome in our community. We are taking strong action to ensure our laws are equipped to address graffiti on places of worship, the display of Nazi symbols on or near places of importance to our Jewish community and offences motivated by hatred, and to treat them with the seriousness they deserve. The conduct we have seen over the past four months is not only unacceptable; it is criminal. There is no place for it in our harmonious New South Wales community. I hope the perpetrators of those offences hear us loud and clear today: That conduct will not be tolerated, and those found responsible for such vile acts of hate will face the full force of the law. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (15:30):** I speak in debate on the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025 and support the amendments foreshadowed by the shadow Attorney General to necessarily strengthen the bill. At the outset, I acknowledge the incredible hard work of the NSW Police Force; David Ossip and the Jewish Board of Deputies; the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, Jillian Segal; and Community Security Group, among many other community groups, and their tireless efforts to keep the Jewish community safe and informed during an incredibly distressing time. I speak as the elected member representing a community with a large number of Jewish constituents. According to the census, about 20 per cent of my electorate is Jewish—although that is expected to be an undercount. Why is that? It is because Jewish constituents have long been reluctant to put their names on government forms.

That distrust dates back to their parents' and grandparents' generations—to the Holocaust. Unfortunately, even last week that distrust was almost verified when we saw two New South Wales nurses almost bragging about killing Jewish patients in Bankstown Hospital. That was a disgrace. Since then, many members of my community have said to me that, once again, they will not put their names on hospital forms. That is a deep shame. It is a shame for our community, our State and our country. We are here today and this week debating legislation, and it is incumbent upon us to give that community the service it deserves. I represent a community of great Australians. They are community makers and business leaders. They are people who have fought in our wars and who want to go about their everyday lives peacefully. But it is a community that has not had that service returned. It is a community that has been under attack over summer.

There have been at least 16 significant antisemitic attacks on the community across the eastern suburbs since December. It is frightening. We owe that community its safety, and we owe its neighbours their safety. The neighbours are saying, "How do we protect our friends?" We do that by strengthening our laws and getting this legislation right today. The legislation we are debating today and this week does not go far enough, and I hope this House will consider the sensible amendments being brought by the Opposition. Those amendments have been described by the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies as sensible and warranted to rebuild community safety because, since the October 7 attacks, we have witnessed an alarming surge in antisemitism.

What began with disgraceful scenes at the Opera House has escalated into a wave of hate, including graffiti, vandalism of synagogues, arson attacks on cars and a childcare centre, attacks on people's homes and even, as I mentioned, nurses proclaiming that they would kill Israeli patients. There is nowhere in the Western world that is experiencing an antisemitic surge as severe as the one gripping Sydney. Police helicopters hover low over our community, scanning the streets with heat sensors and infrared cameras just to keep us safe at night. Police patrols have doubled, and armed guards stand watch at our schools. Many parents tell me they are too afraid to let their children wear their school uniforms in public, for fear of being identified as Jewish. This is not the Sydney we know; it is not the Sydney we love. We all share a responsibility to stand up, take action and fight for a peaceful, socially cohesive State.

Turning to the contents of the bill, the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025 seeks to create an aggravated version of the offence of publicly displaying a Nazi symbol. The Government has proposed a penalty for that offence of two years imprisonment or a \$22,000 fine, or both, for individuals and a \$110,000 fine for corporations. The Opposition says that does not go far enough. We need to increase the penalty to five years imprisonment. That reflects the seriousness of this offence and the importance of having the strongest possible deterrent. While the display of Nazi symbols is prohibited, it is currently not an offence under New South Wales law to display the symbols of a terrorist organisation. That is why the Opposition is also proposing amendments to criminalise the display of terrorism symbols and symbols that a reasonable person would consider convey support for Nazi or terrorist organisations, making that an indictable offence with a standard non-parole period of 18 months imprisonment.

As the shadow Attorney General said last week, we have a situation where people are making minor alterations to things like Hamas flags and facing no consequences. This bill says that when a crime is partially or wholly motivated by hate or prejudice against a group of people to which the victim belongs, that motivation is

an aggravating factor to be taken into account when determining the offender's sentence. The Opposition supports that provision. The bill also increases graffiti protections for all places of worship by providing that, when a person graffiti's a place of worship, it will be considered a circumstance of aggravation. This amendment means that a sentence of imprisonment will be available in some circumstances for offences involving graffiti on places of worship, regardless of the manner in which that graffiti is applied. That is also supported, along with the proposal for a statutory review after two years of the commencement of the bill.

These new laws will not stop antisemitism and they will not stop hate speech, but they will act, along with the Opposition amendments, as a deterrent to ensure that those who commit those heinous crimes will be held to account. There is much more we need to do. Laws are a starting point, but we need to address culture. We need more education. As leaders, we need to clearly express the values that we are fighting for in Parliament, such as compassion; understanding that our worldviews might be different and that we grieve in different ways for different sides in different wars, but that does not mean we cannot be good neighbours here at home; safety for our places of worship like our temples, our mosques, our churches and, especially right now, our synagogues; and the principles of religious freedom that are fundamental to our rights in this country and are essential in maintaining our democratic values.

I support the bill, especially for the residents in my community who once again, as their grandparents did, fear revealing their Jewish identity. I support the neighbours of our Jewish friends, who also want solutions. I support strong laws. Today's proposed laws will only be strong if we welcome and support the amendments foreshadowed by the Opposition. The laws do not yet go far enough but, if members work together, we can make a real difference. I commend the bill to the House, and I encourage the Government and the crossbench to support the sensible and constructive amendments brought by the shadow Attorney General.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (15:38):** Normally in this place I say that I am delighted to make a brief contribution, but on this occasion I am not delighted, because I would prefer that the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025 was not before us today. But let me be very clear: This legislation is before us today because of the atrocious behaviour of an overwhelming minority of people in the community. I love my country. I love New South Wales. I love Campbelltown and my home. The things I love about it most are our people, culture and nature.

Generations have fought on foreign shores to preserve and conserve the values and principles that embody us as Australians. The actions of a few individuals are not consistent with those of the good people of our country. I am disgusted with some of the footage in the media of these grossly inappropriate acts, which will soon be—rightfully—criminal acts. It is unfortunate that this legislation is before us, but it is necessary. I note that the Opposition will put forward amendments, and I look forward to those amendments being substantiated during the debate. I am sure the Attorney General is also following with interest.

I reflect on the very tragic circumstances which erupted in Gaza. Ultimately a lot of this began in relation to a foreign conflict over which we have no control. I was speaking to ABC Radio in my electorate about the importance of urban planning and development for the preservation of koalas and, at the end of the interview, the journalist asked for my view on Gaza. I said, "I believe it is tragic. I stand against and oppose all forms of oppression and aggression. I will be focusing my energy on those who I am privileged to serve who are touched by this." Many of those people live in Campbelltown and came to Australia to escape that kind of tyranny. That is why they are proud Australians and they call Australia home, and we welcome them.

Our service men and women have fought in all sorts of theatres with pride and dignity. The reputation of Australian service personnel is beyond reproach. They are happy to fight for the freedoms which we enjoy today. One of these freedoms is welcoming new people to our country, where they assimilate and become Australians. The behaviour and conduct that we have seen on the streets around Australia and here in our home, Sydney, is grossly inconsistent with that fact. I commend the Premier for his steadfast and solid position on this, and not just because I am a member of the Government.

I also commend the Attorney General, all of his staff and the departmental staff who have worked to bring this important piece of legislation to the House. The purpose of the bill is ultimately to amend the Crimes Act 1900 in relation to offences about the display of Nazi symbols and Nazi symbol graffiti; the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 to clarify the application of an aggravating factor relating to hatred or prejudice; and the Graffiti Control Act 2008 regarding a new circumstance of aggravation relating to graffiti on places of worship. These are things which have no place in the civilised society we enjoy in Australia. The bill is part of a suite of reforms the Government is progressing to address recent antisemitic conduct in the community, antisemitic graffiti and graffiti involving the posting of Nazi symbols on places, including synagogues and Jewish schools. It provides a more detailed criminal law response to recent antisemitic conduct and clarifies existing legislation.

It will also allow higher sentences to be imposed for offences relating to the public display of Nazi symbols on or near synagogues, Jewish schools and the Sydney Jewish Museum, and for defacing places of worship. It will ensure that general conduct motivated partially by hatred or prejudice is considered aggravated on sentence by that fact. The definition of a "public act" and the "display of Nazi symbols" is a very important piece of this legislation. Section 93Z of the Crimes Act 1900 provides that a person who "by a public act, intentionally or recklessly threatens or incites violence towards another person or a group of persons" based on a protected attribute is guilty of an offence. Section 93Z (5) of the Crimes Act 1900 defines a "public act" to include:

- (a) any form of communication (including speaking, writing, displaying notices, playing of recorded material, broadcasting and communicating through social media and other electronic methods) to the public, and—

I will very briefly come back to social media during my contribution to this debate—

- (b) any conduct (including actions and gestures and the wearing or display of clothing, signs, flags, emblems and insignia) observable by the public, and
- (c) the distribution or dissemination of any matter to the public.

Coming back to the topic of social media, one thing I find interesting is keyboard warriors. Most members presumably have social media pages, except for the member for Lane Cove, because he does not know how to type.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** I've got someone for that.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** The days when you could get on social media and write whatever you like are gone. It is very important to have a specific reference in this piece of legislation, because it is too easy for some of these Neanderthals to pull out their iPhones and slander or defame someone. Those days are gone, and so they should be. Under this bill, that type of bullying and harassment would also be a crime when it relates to all the things referenced in the bill. When I turn on my television at night, I find it deeply offensive when I see people who are clearly unhappy with something in our society, in our community or in Australia more broadly. No-one is being forced to stay if they think it is that bad, whether they were born here or not. If it is at the level where you do not like something or someone so much, including the very home in which you live, no-one has got you chained here. There are options other than hurting the very people who enjoy a good and common society and good community.

As I draw to the close of my contribution, I acknowledge the NSW Police Force and our frontline workers who have been working diligently in response to these matters. We would simply be less safe without them. I want to make specific reference to our Jewish community, some of whom I met with when they came to Parliament last week. They have been bearing the brunt of this. I am opposed to the kind of conduct they have faced, no matter which group or body in our community it is focused on. In this particular circumstance it is being focused on the Jewish community. I also acknowledge the community members and groups of other religious faiths who have been targeted. I stand against this behaviour, whether you are Jewish, Catholic, Anglican or in the faith of Islam. We are a good, free and democratic society that was built by generations of service. Do not offend them; do not ruin our community. This must stop. It will not be tolerated, and that is why this legislation is before the House today.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) (15:48):** It is with no pleasure and, indeed, with great sadness that I feel the need to speak on the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. In my 22 years in this House, I never thought we would need to bring this type of legislation. It has been introduced to this House due to the appalling rise in antisemitism in New South Wales—particularly in Sydney—which is, quite frankly, unprecedented. It requires some serious soul-searching in our community as to the cause. Antisemitism is simply a cancer. Its existence eats away at and fatally attacks any nation it exists in. It leads to terrible consequences, not just social but also cultural and moral.

In the modern historical context, antisemitism has traditionally been associated with the ravings of the adherents of national socialism and its mindless fanatics. Despite some desperate and pathetic attention seeking by balaclava-clad neo-Nazis, the current spate of antisemitism seems, to many in our community, sadly more of a sign-of-the-times phenomenon, imported from conflict overseas. It does not seem even remotely homegrown, let alone reflective of the genuine attitudes and opinions of our Australian community and society. Whilst the strong arm of the law and the State must always be used cautiously when reacting to circumstances and passing new laws, or amendments to them, it is clear that the display, or creation via graffiti, of Nazi symbols is meant to outright intimidate Jewish members of community and remind them of their people's darkest hour. That cannot be allowed to stand.

The New South Wales Government must do all in its power to fight the foul tendrils of antisemitism. However, it is not doing so. Whilst the New South Wales Premier has been unequivocal in his opposition to

antisemitism and must be commended for it, the bill is not fit for purpose in dealing with antisemitism. The bill is similar to the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025 and is meant to translate governmental and political words into reality to fight antisemitism, whilst hopefully making life safer for our Jewish community. But that is only for those who attend a synagogue, a Jewish school or preserve history at the Sydney Jewish Museum. Does this Government feel that the residents of the Montefiore nursing home in my electorate, which cares for many Holocaust survivors, is undeserving of the same attention and protection? Similarly, are the Hakoah and Maccabi sporting facilities, utilised by many Jews from my community, not worthy of that protection? If the Government is serious about safeguarding our Jewish community, why has it not included those facilities as well?

The urgency of this bill has never been clearer. I find I am having the same conversations, again and again, after yet another incident, whether it be death threats to healthcare workers, multiple firebombings or Nazi graffiti. My community is sick and tired of the frequency of those discussions with me and with one another. They want the issue solved. Those acts are a direct affront to the Jewish community and are meant to menace. Community leaders such as Alex Ryvchin and David Ossip have suffered death threats and attempted firebombings. I commend them for their continued bravery and thank them for their leadership. However, like many of us in this House, I lament the necessity for such bravery.

The daily attacks, threats and assaults on our Jewish brothers and sisters are a direct attack on every single Australian. They are an attack on our freedoms, a threat to our democracy and an assault on our core values. As a Parliament and a State, we must show true commitment to eradicating antisemitism, for not only our Jewish community but also each and every Australian. We must refuse to allow others to be targeted, ostracised and vilified based on their God-given identity. I strongly urge the Government and appeal to the Attorney General to consider the expansion of the protection provided by the bill to fully assure the protection of Jewish peoples and organisations. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (15:53):** I make a contribution to debate on the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. The bill represents our Government's firm commitment to combating antisemitism, protecting places of worship and ensuring that offences motivated by hatred are treated with the gravity they deserve. The recent and repeated incidents of antisemitic graffiti and other criminal acts targeting Jewish places of worship, schools and institutions are completely unacceptable. Those actions are an affront to not only our Jewish community but also our values as a society.

The Government is taking decisive steps to strengthen our laws and send a clear message: Hate has no place in New South Wales. The bill makes critical amendments to three key Acts. It introduces into the Crimes Act 1900 a new offence prohibiting the display of Nazi symbols on or near synagogues, Jewish schools or the Sydney Jewish Museum. That is an aggravated offence with a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment—twice the penalty for the general display of Nazi symbols. The bill also clarifies that graffiti is a "public act" for the purposes of existing hate-related offences in sections 93Z and 93ZA. The amendments to the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 ensure that offences partially motivated by hatred or prejudice are treated as aggravated offences, ensuring that courts consider hate motivation as an aggravating factor during sentencing. Through amendments to the Graffiti Control Act 2008, the bill introduces a new circumstance of aggravation for graffiti offences committed on places of worship, allowing for harsher penalties, including potential imprisonment in certain circumstances.

Section 93ZA of the Crimes Act 1900 already makes it an offence to knowingly display a Nazi symbol by public act and without reasonable excuse. The current penalty is a fine of up to 100 penalty units or 12 months imprisonment. However, recent incidents have shown that additional protections are needed. The bill strengthens those laws by introducing an aggravated offence where Nazi symbols are displayed on or near Jewish places of worship, schools or cultural institutions. The penalty for that offence will be doubled to two years imprisonment or a fine of up to 200 penalty units. Additionally, the bill clarifies that graffiti is a public act under sections 93Z and 93ZA of the Crimes Act 1900, ensuring that those who use graffiti to spread hate are held accountable. The amendments ensure that our laws provide explicit protection against the defacement of places of worship and cultural significance.

Another critical amendment in the bill is to section 21A (2) (h) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. Currently, it is unclear whether an offence must be wholly motivated by hatred for it to be considered an aggravating factor in sentencing. The amendment makes it clear that even partial motivation by hatred or prejudice will be considered an aggravating factor in sentencing. That aligns New South Wales with best practice in jurisdictions such as Victoria and New Zealand, which recognise that offences may have multiple motivations but should still be treated with the appropriate level of severity when hatred or prejudice is a factor. The amendment ensures that our justice system appropriately recognises and punishes offences motivated by racial or religious hatred, sending a strong message that New South Wales will not tolerate hate-fuelled crimes.

Houses of worship are sacred spaces where communities gather in peace and faith. Defacing those places with hateful graffiti is an attack on the fundamental values of religious freedom and respect. The bill amends the Graffiti Control Act 2008 to introduce a new circumstance of aggravation for graffiti offences committed against places of worship. The amendment ensures that offenders may face imprisonment in certain circumstances, reflecting the seriousness of desecrating places of worship. The bill also ensures that graffiti resulting in significant property damage may be prosecuted under section 195 (1) (a) of the Crimes Act 1900, which carries a penalty of up to five years imprisonment. Those amendments provide clear protections against the defacement of places of worship, ensuring that acts of hatred are met with appropriate consequences.

In addition to the substantive legal changes, the bill provides for a statutory review of the amendments two years after they commence. The review will ensure that the new laws are effective in addressing antisemitic acts and other forms of religious and racial hatred. Furthermore, the bill includes savings and transitional provisions to ensure that the amendments to the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 apply to offences committed before and after the bill's commencement, providing continuity and clarity in sentencing. The Minns Government is committed to ensuring that New South Wales remains a place of respect, tolerance and inclusion. The Government will continue to work closely with communities to strengthen our legal protections against hate crimes and safeguard the dignity of all individuals, regardless of their faith or background. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (16:00):** I contribute to debate on the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. New South Wales is a State that accepts and celebrates the many differences within our community and strives to be a place where people can live safely and be themselves. Sadly, there are people in the community who are intentionally spreading hate and intimidating others, purely because of where they are from, what religion they practise, how they identify or who they love. Unfortunately, their hate is becoming louder and brasher, emboldened by a rise in far-right, populist politics and supported by growing social media networks.

I support the bill, which will create new offences for the display of Nazi symbols on or near synagogues, Jewish schools and the Sydney Jewish Museum, clarify that graffiti is a public act that can incite violence and make graffiti on a place of worship an aggravated graffiti offence. The bill also clarifies that an aggravated sentence for crimes motivated by hatred for a group will apply whether the crime was wholly or partially motivated by hate. It has been deeply distressing to see hate targeted at Jewish communities escalate in the past year. There has been a wave of appalling public acts of antisemitism across the city, with hate graffiti sprayed across synagogues, homes, schools and cars. A list of Jewish places found in a van filled with explosives left on the side of the road included the Sydney Jewish Museum and the Great Synagogue in my electorate of Sydney.

Understandably, the Jewish community feels under threat. Parents are worried about their children going to school, people are not wearing signs of Jewry like the kippah or the Star of David in public and many fear antisemitism is becoming mainstream. We should never ignore or tolerate antisemitism nor any form of prejudicial hatred. A long history of hatred of Jews empowered the Nazis to instigate the horrors of the Holocaust. Even before the war in the Middle East, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry concluded that antisemitism was increasing across the country, reporting 495 incidents of anti-Jewish hatred between October 2022 and September 2023. Synagogues, schools and the Sydney Jewish Museum—an institution dedicated to educating Sydney about the history of antisemitism—should be safe places for Jewish people. Vandalising them with Nazi symbols is a clear act of intimidation aimed at causing fear of violence. There has also been an increase in Islamophobia reported by the Australian National Imams Council and Islamophobia Register Australia. An article in *The Guardian* on 15 December 2024 stated that it had increased by 600 percent in the past year.

All religions will be covered, with graffiti incurring an aggravated offence at all places of worship. I am concerned that the graffiti offence will capture some forms of protest such as tying ribbons to the fences of churches, which is an important public act undertaken by victims of institutionalised child sex abuse. I ask the Attorney General to clarify that such acts of protest will not be captured. I welcome clarification that aggravated sentencing for crimes motivated by hatred for a particular minority group include instances of both whole and partial motivation. The clarification could help prosecute cases of abuse against people with disability or intersectional hatred, such as of Muslim women or people who are gay or trans.

Many people in the community are feeling targeted. I hope that those who are feeling under attack, including the Jewish community, will find some comfort in knowing there are pathways for recourse if their synagogue, school, museum or place of worship is subject to hateful and intimidating vandalism. I thank the Government, and the Attorney General and his office, for working with me to ensure institutions like the Sydney Jewish Museum and Jewish schools are included in the bill. I thank the Government also for its strong action against the horrifying increase in antisemitism. I support the bill.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:05):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. The bill comes at an incredibly important and distressing

time for the wider community. Over the past year there has been an upsurge in antisemitism and Islamophobia, with particularly abhorrent and very serious antisemitic acts being committed in the past few months. The bill proposes to amend the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 to provide that partial motivation by hatred or prejudice can be taken into account as an aggravating sentencing factor. It amends the Graffiti Control Act 2008 to provide that graffiti on a place of worship will be considered a circumstance of aggravation that attracts a higher maximum penalty. It amends the Crimes Act 1900 to introduce a new offence prohibiting the display of Nazi symbols on or near synagogues, Jewish schools or the Sydney Jewish Museum. It also clarifies that graffiti is a public act for the purpose of offences in the new offence, as well as in sections 93Z and 93ZA of the Crimes Act.

I turn to the detail of the bill. The bill amends section 21A (2) (h) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act to clarify that partial motivation by hatred or prejudice against a group of people is an aggravating factor to be taken into account when a person is sentenced. It is currently unclear if the aggravating factor only applies when an offender was wholly motivated by hatred or prejudice. The bill amends the Graffiti Control Act to add a circumstance of aggravation to the offence of marking premises or property, which applies if the premises or property was a place of worship. That enables a sentence of imprisonment to be given in some circumstances where graffiti is marked on a place of worship, regardless of the manner in which the graffiti is marked.

The bill amends the Crimes Act to clarify that a public act includes graffiti and adds a new offence of knowingly displaying, by public act or without reasonable excuse, a Nazi symbol on or near a synagogue, Jewish school or the Sydney Jewish Museum, with a maximum of two years imprisonment. That is double the maximum term of imprisonment for the existing offence in section 93ZA, which prohibits the display of Nazi symbols generally. These important reforms go to the heart of a lot of the problems that have occurred in the past few months. Time and again, we have seen absolutely horrifying antisemitic crimes that are beyond comprehension. Multiple offences have been committed, including graffiti on synagogues, the firebombing of a childcare centre in Maroubra, swastikas painted on a synagogue in Newtown, as well as the arson of Jewish businesses. Those crimes are absolutely abhorrent and were obviously very terrifying for the Jewish community and their neighbours.

Alongside that, we have seen some really disgusting Islamophobic crimes committed in the past few months. There was an attempt in my electorate to run down the school chaplain outside the Granville Boys High School. There has been some really repugnant graffiti that has been reported in the past couple of days in Sefton. A woman has been charged for an alleged seven-month crime spree of graffiti in Westfield in Hornsby and the Parramatta stadium where she has been writing the most repugnant things about Muslims. There have been a number of other incidents. But even going back before 7 October 2023, on my street the BAPS Mandir was vandalised around the time of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Australia. Nobody has yet been charged for that offence, but that was extremely distressing for that community.

When people attack or graffiti a place of worship, they strike fear into that entire community. When people spray graffiti, if it is something that is unintelligible, it does not really upset a lot of people, but when they use somebody's property as a billboard for hate, they strike fear into a wider community, which is far worse than something unintelligible. We must consider how much impact these crimes have on the victims, particularly when people spray graffiti all over a house of worship or the graffiti takes the form of a swastika on a synagogue. For those who practise in a synagogue, nothing compares to the impact of putting a swastika, a symbol that signifies genocide, on that place of worship. I absolutely support these reforms because they are incredibly important.

Pursuant to the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act, in determining an appropriate sentence for an offence, a court must take into account aggravating and mitigating factors. It is not clear whether hate-based motivation in combination with other factors can be considered to include hatred. It absolutely should be included, even if someone has a secondary motivation. Section 21A of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act provides for aggravating factors to be taken into account. The hate-based or prejudicial motivations that may be taken into account include, but are not limited to, religion, racial or ethnic origin, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, or having particular variations of sex characteristics or a particular disability. Those must be considered, but currently the legislation is unclear about whether the offence must be entirely motivated by hate or prejudice. This amending bill clarifies that that does not matter: An offence will be aggravated where it can be proved beyond reasonable doubt that hatred or prejudice is one of the offender's motivations.

In terms of amendments relating to graffiti and places of worship, section 4 of the Graffiti Control Act provides that it is an offence to intentionally mark premises or property of another person without consent and without reasonable excuse, with a maximum penalty of four penalty units. The maximum penalty for this offence increases to 20 penalty units, or 12 months imprisonment, if the offence is committed in circumstances of aggravation. This is incredibly important in the context of the legislation being debated today. The bill will amend the Graffiti Control Act to add graffiti to places of worship as an aggravating factor for the purpose of the offence. It establishes a sentence of imprisonment to be given in some circumstances where graffiti is marked on a place

of worship, regardless of the manner in which the graffiti is marked. Importantly, this amendment will increase graffiti protections for all places of worship. It recognises that places of worship are of particular importance to all faith communities and that it is serious for people to mark them with graffiti.

I have listened to some of the comments made by other members. I take particular exception to those made by the member for Wairoonga earlier. He commented quite appropriately that we can work together in responding to these issues, but that was after suggesting that I and everyone else in the Labor left hate Israel and hate Jews, which is an absolutely repugnant comment. It says more about him than it says about us. It is just not true. He also accused the Premier of shedding crocodile tears.

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

**Ms JULIA FINN:** The Premier has shown the highest degree of compassion and concern for the Jewish community previously. To suggest they are crocodile tears is really very offensive. It says more about the member for Wairoonga than it does about the Premier.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** It was in the context of a sentence that he was complaining about. Why don't you properly give the context?

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

**Ms JULIA FINN:** Why don't you, ever? We are talking about somebody who cannot tell the difference between a yellow flag and a black flag and who complains about the context in which he referred to crocodile tears. He ascribed crocodile tears to the Premier, which is a disgrace. Ascribing a hatred or a disdain for Jewish people because someone objects to what the Israeli Government has done in Gaza is a ridiculous conflation of two issues. It is a gross insult and it absolutely should be withdrawn. It says far more about the member for Wairoonga than it says about any member of the Labor left.

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (16:15):** I join in debate on the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. The purpose of this bill is to strengthen crime laws to address antisemitic graffiti on or near places of worship, including on or near synagogues, Jewish schools and the Sydney Jewish Museum, as well as other criminal acts of antisemitism in our State. As the member for Davidson, I am very proud to represent a vibrant Jewish community that includes the wonderful Masada College in St Ives and three synagogues: Kehillat Masada Synagogue in St Ives, Chabad North Shore in St Ives and North Shore Synagogue in Lindfield. I also note the nearby Chatswood North Shore Temple Emanuel represented by the member for Willoughby.

Our local synagogues are places that bring our vibrant Jewish community together to share faith and to worship, and for prayer. They are safe spaces of love, peace and inclusion. The antisemitic language, graffiti, vandalism, violence and terror that we are tragically witnessing are acts of hate, evil and exclusion. Our Jewish community justifiably feels unsafe, and this is heartbreaking to see. As legislators, we need to do everything we can, and this bill is one such measure. Antisemitism goes against everything we stand for as Australians and the values that we hold dear. Antisemitism has been on the rise since Hamas terrorised, kidnapped and murdered innocent Israelis on 7 October 2023. Data released to this Parliament shows the NSW Police Force received reports of 130 incidents of antisemitism in the financial year before October 2023. In the following year there were 425 incidents, representing a shocking 227 per cent increase. We cannot, under any circumstance, allow antisemitism to become normalised in our community, in our State.

The bill makes the following amendments. Firstly, it will strengthen section 93ZA of the Crimes Act by introducing an aggravated offence with a higher maximum penalty that applies when a Nazi symbol is displayed on or near a synagogue, a Jewish school or the Sydney Jewish Museum. The bill also clarifies that a "public act" in section 93Z of the Crimes Act 1900 includes graffiti. Secondly, the bill amends section 21A (2) (h) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 to make sure that when a crime is partially or wholly motivated by hate or prejudice against a group of people to which the victim belongs, such as our Jewish community, that motivation is an aggravating factor to be taken into account when determining an offender's sentence. Thirdly, the bill increases graffiti protections for all places of worship by amending the Graffiti Control Act 2008. I note that the shadow Attorney General and member for Wairoonga will move amendments to further strengthen the bill.

I have said in my speeches and writing in the past few weeks, months and years that we need to do everything we can to combat antisemitism and that all of us have a role to play in doing that. First and foremost, it always begins by calling it out in all its forms, whether that is an antisemitic comment from a colleague, friend or family member, or serious acts of antisemitic vandalism, graffiti, violence or terrorism. We as a society can no longer stay silent when we see and hear antisemitism. The bill helps strengthen the law on or near synagogues, Jewish schools and the Sydney Jewish Museum.

In addition, we need to educate our children and young people that antisemitism is simply not acceptable. In my Davidson electorate community, Jewish students told me that they have been bullied by antisemitic language and graffiti, whether it be hate speech or graffiti of Nazi symbols. I have personally been told that, given the high number of Jewish and Israeli students who attend Davidson electorate public schools, this has impacted and is impacting many people. It has been and is deeply distressing for students and parents, so much so that students are scared to attend school. I note the bill applies on or near synagogues, Jewish schools and museums. But, under section 93ZA of the Crimes Amendment (Prohibition on Display of Nazi Symbols) Act 2022, we will make sure that:

A person who knowingly displays, by public act and without reasonable excuse, a Nazi symbol commits an offence.

Our schools and campuses should be safe, welcoming and inclusive places for learning. In New South Wales, I am pleased that the new education curriculum for year 7 and 8 students includes mandatory learning about the Holocaust and post-war experiences of Jewish survivors in Australia. I thank the ongoing work of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, including president David Ossip and CEO Michele Goldman. I end on a small reflection. On 27 January, we marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day. In 2025 it was 80 years since the Red Army liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest concentration camp of World War II, in 1945. On that day we reflected on and remembered the six million innocent Jews who lost their lives in the Holocaust. In 2012, I visited the concentration camp. It is a silent place, and a place to reflect deeply. On a wall there is a quote from George Santayana: "The one who does not remember history is bound to live through it again." Those words are more pertinent today than ever. That is why the bill is required, and I commend it to the House.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (16:21):** On behalf of The Greens, I contribute to debate on the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. I put on record that, while we are opposing the bill on the basis of law, we categorically and absolutely do not support any antisemitic graffiti, actions, words or public acts in our communities. As the member for Ballina, I also say to my local Jewish community how appalled I am—and we all are—to see the unbelievably chilling and disturbing rise of antisemitism in our communities. The Greens are in lockstep with that condemnation and, in 2022, supported the law that bans Nazi symbols in public for obvious reasons. We absolutely want to put that on record and not detract from it in any way in raising concerns about the speed with which the current bill has been cobbled together. There are parts which strengthen the law that we would be happy to support, but there are also parts that make it very problematic. We have received similar advice from the Human Rights Law Centre's Democratic Freedoms team and the NSW Council for Civil Liberties, so we think more work needs to be done.

We are certainly in no way suggesting that we should be going soft on these acts of hate and the banality of evil that we are seeing in our communities. The bill seeks to make changes to the Crimes Act 1900. It creates a new offence under section 93ZA for knowingly displaying Nazi symbols on or near a synagogue, a Jewish school or the Sydney Jewish Museum, and seeks to classify graffiti as a public act for the purposes of this new offence. The penalty for this new offence is twice that of the existing offence, under 93ZA, being 200 penalty units, a \$22,000 fine, two years in prison, or both. The changes to the Crimes Act require that a review must be commenced within two years and a report tabled as soon as practicable after two years. It also amends the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. It provides greater discretion to the courts when sentencing by inserting "partially" or "wholly" when considering whether the offence was aggravated—that is, where the displaying of symbols is partially motivated by hatred or prejudice and can be considered an aggravated factor on sentencing.

Under the changes to the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act, it also means that the law will apply retrospectively to offences and proceedings before the commencement of the new bill. It also amends the Graffiti Control Act 2008 to add whether a graffitied building is a place of worship as an aggravating circumstance. It also makes provisions with regard to retrospectivity under that Act. The Greens do not support the bill for a number of reasons. We heard some back-and-forth politicisation of racism, which is absolutely appalling to me. We make very clear that we in no way condone the display of Nazi symbols anywhere, least of all on synagogues, Jewish schools or the Sydney Jewish Museum. It is horrendous for me to hear from members of my own community who are really frightened. We must address that, but we believe the criminalisation of racism is not necessarily an effective tool. We agree that the display of Nazi symbols needs to be a crime, but we oppose the bill because it was rushed and not considered in detail. We believe the existing law is adequate.

We believe there is scant evidence that criminalising racism and acts of hate makes a difference. We believe we should focus our attention and resources on tackling racism and improving social cohesion, including investing in communities and organisations that are working on the ground to address all forms of racism including online hate and early detection, intervention and rehabilitation of individuals at risk of radicalisation. Of course, in schools, education is key. We certainly saw this week that students' knowledge of civics and how the law works is low. I would argue that, given the downgrading of the study of the arts and the various rewritings of history,

there is a place for looking at the history of the Holocaust, all the horrendous acts of banality that led to it and the overt rise of Nazism. All of that needs to be compulsory for every student.

We also oppose the bill because of the perverse outcome of the changes to the Graffiti Control Act. We have amendments in the other place that I speak to briefly with regard to the review provision and the retrospectivity. The Human Rights Law Centre's Democratic Freedoms team made a very pertinent point with regard to this series of bills. Quoting from the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, it notes that under international human rights law:

All governments have an obligation to protect the right to expression of religious beliefs without interference, including an obligation to take proactive steps to protect people of faith from hate crime and discrimination.

We are not in any way downplaying the role that government has. However, it is disputed and there is no evidence to suggest that:

... criminalising acts of hate and racism has an impact on reducing rising racism and hatred, or curbing radicalisation. Issues of systemic racism within policing systems, as well as that many racialised communities do not have trust in criminal legal approaches, mean that criminalisation responses are likely to have unequal impacts on different marginalised communities. There is also no evidence that current criminal laws have been insufficient to appropriately investigate and apprehend the perpetrators of recent antisemitic incidents.

Today I remarked to someone that during the decade I have been a member of this place, I have not seen signalling that is so overtly about politics, rather than the temerity and the ability of the law to prevent what we are seeing. There is a real danger that we will think that this will fix the problem, when there is so much more at stake.

I turn now to the amendment to the Graffiti Control Act. There are smarter people in this room than me, including the shadow Attorney General, the Attorney General and all the Crown solicitors and barristers at their disposal. It was remiss of me not to mention The Greens justice spokesperson in the other place, Ms Sue Higginson. We need this to be figured out. Under the schedule 3 amendment to the Graffiti Control Act, circumstances of aggravation could well apply to a person who is unwittingly painting with chalk on an alleyway wall that is at the back of a mosque or church. It has no relationship to intent. The reading of this schedule is that regardless of what the person drew—it could be a Banksy—the act would fall under the circumstances of aggravation. It does not follow. There is no threshold to meet for the circumstances of aggravation to kick in. The Minister must look at that issue. That is my crude version of it, because I am pushed for time.

The Greens proposed amendments will require that a Legislative Assembly review of the operation of this bill commences as soon as possible after a period of 12 months. The Greens will also move an amendment to omit the retrospective application, so it is only related to offences and proceedings that take place after the Act commences. The Greens oppose the bill, but we will not be dividing.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (16:31):** I speak in support of the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025, which reinforces the community's fundamental values of respect, justice and inclusivity. This legislation is about not only penalising those who spread racial and religious hatred, but also sending a strong, united message that such acts have no place in New South Wales. Hate crimes, whether in the form of offensive symbols, racial vilification or targeted attacks on places of worship, are an attack on the very fabric of our multicultural society. We cannot afford to be passive in the face of rising instances of racial and religious hatred. This bill ensures that the perpetrators who engage in such acts face serious consequences. The member for Wahroonga has indicated the Opposition will move amendments to the bill, which I will speak to.

This bill amends three critical laws to strengthen our response to racial and religious hatred. There is one amendment to the Crimes Act, two amendments to the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act, and some amendments to the Graffiti Control Act. The bill increases the penalties for displaying Nazi symbols in public, including instances where they are used in graffiti. It classifies acts of public inciting of violence based on race, religion, gender identity and so forth. It also requires courts to treat racial and religious hatred as an aggravating factor when determining sentences. The bill ensures that perpetrators face stronger legal consequences when their crimes are motivated by hatred. It establishes that graffiti targeting places of worship will now be treated as an aggravated offence, leading to harsher penalties.

Since the conflict in Gaza began in October 2023, there has been untold devastation, violence and loss of life in the Middle East. Let us be clear: Calling for peace and calling for an end to conflict across the globe is an important aspect of a modern, tolerant democratic society. Our rules-based world order means that we should expect all nations to conduct themselves in accordance with international law. However, as Australians and citizens of one of the most successful multicultural societies in the world, we have a responsibility to ensure we do not import conflict, violence or division from abroad into our streets and communities. Australia works. Our nation and its history are built upon the successes of migrants and refugees who brought to this country their cultures, histories and diverse perspectives. One of the reasons so many people who are fleeing conflict choose

Australia as their home is because we are supposed to be a safe and welcoming environment for all. Yet, sadly, since the conflict began, Australia and New South Wales have been crippled by the division and cultural conflicts that we avoided until now.

Antisemitism and, indeed, Islamophobia have exploded since the start of the conflict overseas. From the racist scenes of an ugly mob taking over the Opera House steps to the continual, almost-daily racist attacks on the streets of Sydney, our society is facing a significant challenge to our cherished social cohesion. Since the start of the conflict, there have been firebombings, criminal damage, arson attacks and vandalism to the offices of MPs, synagogues, private homes, businesses and a childcare centre. Offensive graffiti has been sprayed on homes, vehicles and buildings, including an Allawah synagogue close to my electorate. There have been death threats on social media. Those acts do not reflect the tolerant society that I know and love.

As the shadow Minister for Multiculturalism and a MP who represents a very diverse local community, I know we need action now to stop the violence and fear. Unfortunately and sadly, this Government has been all talk but no action on antisemitism. This Government's reforms are weaker than the Federal Coalition and Federal Labor reforms, which have increased the maximum sentence for the public display of Nazi and terrorism symbols to up to five years imprisonment. They are weaker than provisions that are already on the statute books of New South Wales. The Government's law changes are not necessary to bring the perpetrators of the firebombings and graffiti to justice. They are already offences in New South Wales criminal law and have penalties with much greater impact than the Minns Government reforms.

Our communities should not be traumatised and forced to live in fear because of weak laws in New South Wales. The Coalition supports the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025 amendments to section 93Z of the Act to include a display of public graffiti under existing legislation. However, the Opposition demands tougher actions and penalties on the books than what the Government is proposing. I thank the member for Wahroonga for the Opposition's proposed amendments. We believe recent acts should be punished appropriately. Therefore, we propose a penalty of five years of imprisonment, a \$22,000 fine, or both, for individuals, and a \$110,000 for corporations for the public display of Nazi symbols. We are also seeking to introduce the criminalisation of terrorism symbols and similar symbols that a reasonable person would consider convey support of Nazi or terrorist organisations and make their display an indictable offence, with a standard non-parole period of 18 months imprisonment.

These crimes are unacceptable in our society. As a Parliament, we must stand strongly against these criminal acts. We must ensure that those who commit and are convicted of these crimes have the book thrown at them. As elected representatives, we must ensure that the book is a lot tougher. Sensible, law-abiding citizens expect us to act. They expect their Government to do better. The first responsibility of any good government is to keep its citizens safe. This Government and the Federal Government have failed in that key task. In January a plot was uncovered—thanks to the work of the NSW Police Force—that involved a caravan filled with explosives and a plan to target Jewish locations. Considering the seriousness of the situation and the potential for a mass-casualty event, the Premier chose to not share knowledge or information of the plot with the Prime Minister. He failed to take advantage of the Commonwealth's significant counterterrorism and national security apparatus.

On 10 January closer to my home, as I mentioned before, an Allawah synagogue was vandalised with antisemitic words. The act struck a significant blow to my local Jewish community and communities across the St George area. A place where they should feel safe to practise their faith in peace was targeted in a violent attack. So many other examples of antisemitic attacks have occurred across the State. They cannot be allowed to continue. We support the amendments that the member for Wahroonga will move to strengthen the Act moving forward. Legislation will define a place of worship as a building or other structure used for worship, including a church, a mosque, a synagogue or a temple. The penalty is a maximum of two years imprisonment, a \$22,000 fine, or both. The Coalition believes the amendments that will be moved will make the laws stronger. We want to give clarity around the factors that must be taken into account for a public assembly to be authorised. We also want payment for the cost of policing made a condition of approval after three repeated protests, and we want to increase police powers for dealing with protesters who hide their appearance.

Whilst we respect the fundamental right of people to protest, we also know that in our fast-paced, modern society taxpayers should not be on the hook for repeated disruptive and sometimes violent protests. The people of New South Wales demand action from this Government to ensure that they feel safe when they go to pray or when they practise their religion. It is a fundamental right that must be upheld, but the Minns Labor Government is failing our faith communities. These laws are a late, weak attempt to correct its past mistakes. Law and order needs to be restored and our communities need to feel safe once again.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (16:41):** As a former Minister for Multiculturalism, I support the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. I think no-one had a better rapport across the cultural divide than I did during my time as Minister. That is simply because I was raised with the appropriate

attitude of respecting everybody regardless of the colour of their skin, their background, their race, their religion or their gender. I live by that and instil that in my own children and grandchildren.

It may have been as far back as 2007 or 2008 when I first met a gentleman by the name of Vic Alhadeff. He came to visit me in opposition, and many other members at that time, to raise the importance of ensuring that we do everything we can as a Parliament to stamp out racial and religious hate speech within our community. Vic went on to form a committee within Multicultural NSW involving leaders of over 30 different religious and cultural backgrounds, who worked together to agree that everyone was on the same page and that we needed stronger penalties against racial hate speech that incited violence. Originally, the crimes were contained in the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977, yet the punishments were not being used or were unable to be used. The committee's view was that the provisions be removed from the Anti-Discrimination Act and placed within the Crimes Act to give this Parliament the ability to enforce the law and appropriately punish people who did anything racially motivated that may incite violence or vilify people from diverse cultural backgrounds. That was always supported by me.

We got into government in 2011. I am sad to say it still took a number of years, but when I became Minister I was able to support the then Attorney General—our current Leader of the Opposition—to move the provisions from the Anti-Discrimination Act to the Crimes Act. It was always intended that the Parliament could strengthen the Crimes Act if the laws were not adequate and send a clear message that every member of this Parliament will never tolerate hate speech or racial abuse of anybody from a diverse cultural background. Today we have a bill before us and foreshadowed amendments, which I also support. I particularly support the five-year sentence for anybody who racially abuses another person or engages in antisemitic behaviour or abusive behaviour against a person from a diverse cultural background. That sends a very clear message.

I support the amendment our shadow Attorney General will move because the majority of laws, especially laws pertaining to punishment, that we implement through this Chamber are usually directed at the smallest minority in this State, which is people who break the law. The majority of people in this country do the right thing. This is a great multicultural country that I believe in. We harbour people from over 300 countries, who speak hundreds of languages and practise hundreds of religions. We support that. The only thing we ask is that they do so peacefully and harmoniously. By and large, that is exactly what they do.

During my time as Minister for Multiculturalism, I was visited in my office by presidents, ambassadors and consuls general who would ask me questions about the ways we dealt with cultural diversity in this country. I said it was very simple. We respected everybody equally. They were free to practise their religion. They were free to build their houses of worship. They were free to engage in cultural activities within and across their communities. Anybody who knows this great city of Sydney, and indeed New South Wales, knows that many cultural activities and festivities are held every weekend. Being the Minister for Multiculturalism can be a tiring pursuit, because it involves long nights and weekends attending cultural events, but it is incredibly rewarding. If people undertake cultural activities peacefully and harmoniously, they are welcomed here.

It was incredible to meet leaders from around the world who marvelled at how we dealt with cultural diversity. They told me that they could not allow those freedoms to exist in their own country. That is incredibly sad. I met people from many countries, and I was proud to do so. I was never more proud than to meet and dine together in the parliamentary dining room with Beryl Rose Sisulu, the daughter of Walter Sisulu. I spoke about this in Parliament when I was Minister. Walter had encouraged Nelson Mandela into politics all those years ago. Indeed, whilst Nelson Mandela may have spent nearly 30 years in jail on Robben Island, Walter Sisulu spent 26 years in prison. Beryl said that she did not meet her father until she was 16 years of age. I listened to her stories, and when we parted, Beryl said that South Africa would never forget the way Australia treated it throughout those dreadful times. I was incredibly touched by that, and I thought what a proud moment it is for everyone in this country when we show such equal support, respect and courtesy for every person. Not only are they welcome to this country, but we show that respect better than probably any other country. But we are debating this bill at a very sad moment.

When I took on the multiculturalism portfolio in 2017, there was a rise in antisemitic behaviour in this city, largely fostered by social media. That rise has continued. The antisemitism is now in a more obstructive, abusive and confronting form, and it needs to be stamped out swiftly and harshly. The one way to do that is to send a very clear message to any perpetrators who choose to break the law by punishing them severely. Acting swiftly and severely will quickly nip the problem in the bud.

It is sad that we have to do that, because we are a wonderful and harmonious State in a wonderful and harmonious country, but at this point that harmony is unfortunately being disrupted. The bill addresses antisemitic behaviour to protect and maintain the great freedoms, including freedom of speech, of every culturally diverse person in this great State of New South Wales. As the old saying goes, where New South Wales goes, Australia

follows. I hope that other parliaments across this country will embrace these reforms and that this wonderful multicultural State can get back to showing every person the respect that they deserve.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (16:51):** I contribute to debate on the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. I put on record that when criminals target a group based on ethnicity, religion or political belief, those crimes become crimes of terror. It is about time that they were treated as such. In the past 16 months we have seen a notable escalation in antisemitism, leading to targeted and extreme attacks and incitement to violence in our communities. Needless to say, Jewish Australians have been watching with a sense of fear and horror. Everyday Australians are shocked to see what is happening on the streets of Sydney and across New South Wales.

The recent public displays of Nazi symbols, hate speech and attacks on Jewish communities and property have been abhorrent and have shone a light on the worst parts of our society. I make it clear that any form of racial or religious hatred is not accepted or tolerated here in New South Wales. Our diverse, multicultural society should be able to live harmoniously together, yet some individuals are spreading hatred and causing fear amongst our communities. It all started on 9 October 2023, which was almost 500 days ago. The Government cannot pat itself on the back and say that it is dealing with this issue, which has escalated out of control in New South Wales. Shame on the Government for not dealing with it a lot earlier. The only reason we are debating this legislation today is that the Government has been dragged to the table to do something about it.

I will give a couple of examples of what communities have been facing. A bus at Katoomba was graffitied with the words "Death to the Jews" in November 2023. In January 2024 "No Jews" was graffitied on the rocks at Watsons Bay. In March 2024 graffiti at Malabar read, "No Jews allowed". In May 2024 a Glebe home was graffitied with "Jew scum". In November 2024 a number of cars in Woollahra were vandalised with profane words. In December 2024 two cars and a home were vandalised in Woollahra. They are examples of things that have occurred time and again across the State, and the issue should have been dealt with a long time ago. It became an issue for the Jewish community and for the people of New South Wales 500 days ago, but legislation has only just been brought to the Parliament by the Labor Government. Everyone in our community is saying that enough is enough and that we need tougher penalties to deal with all forms of racial or religious hatred.

The bill increases penalties for the public display of Nazi symbols, especially when such acts occur near Jewish places of worship, schools or museums. The Coalition foreshadows amendments to strengthen those laws. I thank the shadow Attorney General, because those amendments are the laws that the community is asking for. If Government members do not support the amendments, then they are just tinkering around the edges. They need to listen to their communities as to how they can protect the people in those neighbourhoods that have seen continual attacks for far too long. I remind members it has been 16 months—500 days. The proposed changes need to include heavy fines and imprisonment for individuals or corporations engaging in such hate-fuelled behaviour. The legislation also needs to tackle hate-motivated crimes by recognising prejudice and hatred as aggravating factors in sentencing. We can no longer be soft on this topic. Hate of this nature needs to be stamped out of our society once and for all.

New South Wales has witnessed increasing instances of antisemitic graffiti targeting Jewish community spaces, and I will say more on that in debate on the next bill. The rise in antisemitic acts is not only a local issue but part of a broader global trend, reflecting a concerning uptick in hate crimes targeting Jewish communities worldwide. The racism that has infiltrated New South Wales began with the protest on the Opera House steps, which Labor should never have allowed to occur. It should never have been allowed to happen, and those protests have continued almost weekly on the streets of Sydney.

Those incidents have dragged the Labor Government to the table to try to strengthen its legislative response, with a focus on deterring further acts of antisemitism and holding perpetrators accountable. Those measures highlight the seriousness with which authorities are addressing the problem and aiming to protect vulnerable religious communities. I thank our New South Wales police, who are working around the clock to ensure that anyone expressing hate or support for extremist ideologies, such as those symbolised by Nazi emblems, is investigated and caught. I thank our police, who have been doing all they can to protect the Jewish community and ensure that acts of hate are met with swift justice.

The Coalition's foreshadowed amendments propose a penalty of five years imprisonment, a \$22,000 fine, or both, for individuals, or a \$110,000 fine for corporations, for the public display anywhere of Nazi symbols. They also criminalise the display of terrorist symbols and similar symbols that a reasonable person would consider to convey support for Nazi or terrorist organisations, making it an indictable offence with a standard non-parole period of 18 months imprisonment. I support those foreshadowed amendments.

The display of Nazi symbols is an act of terrorism that incites hate and racist ideologies. There is no reason for an individual or organisation in this State to be displaying such symbols. It is simply vile and unnecessary,

and it should be punishable. Our Jewish communities should not be traumatised and forced to live in fear because of the weaknesses of the Labor Government. Those communities are scared. They are hiring their own security. They are terrified to leave their homes, and that is no way to live in what should be considered the lucky country.

Let us be clear. Nazism or terrorism is not welcome in New South Wales. The Coalition's foreshadowed amendments will toughen the penalties for displaying the symbols of Nazi ideology and terrorist organisations. The Coalition will continue to hold the Government to account. People in New South Wales should be able to live without fear. In summary, I support the Coalition's amendments as foreshadowed by the shadow Attorney General and encourage members to support them. The foreshadowed amendments will ensure that acts of racism or religious hatred are stamped out in this State.

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

Before I call the member for Leppington, I acknowledge some of our wonderful visitors and guests. I apologise, but I will not attempt to pronounce their surnames. I welcome Paul from Sudan, Emmanuel from Nigeria, and Maurice and Alan from Uganda.

*Public Interest Debate*

**WESTERN SYDNEY INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (17:01):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that the New South Wales Government has doubled Western Sydney road investment compared with the former Liberal-Nationals Government, delivering \$5.2 billion in the budget for road infrastructure and a further \$1 billion with the Federal Government for Fifteenth Avenue to service the new Western Sydney airport.
- (2) Notes the New South Wales Government is investing over \$21 billion for public transport infrastructure in Western Sydney, including \$2.1 billion for Parramatta Light Rail Stage 2, which the former Liberal-Nationals Government failed to fund.
- (3) Notes the record \$3.6 billion investment by the New South Wales Government to deliver new and upgraded schools in Western Sydney, including building new schools in growth suburbs such as Gledswood Hills and Marsden Park that the former Liberal-Nationals Government failed to deliver.
- (4) Notes the New South Wales Government is investing \$3.6 billion on new and upgraded hospitals in Western Sydney, including \$700 million for Rouse Hill Hospital that the former Government promised since 2015 but failed to deliver.

Government members were elected just shy of two years ago with a mandate to invest in roads, repair public transport, rebuild our education system and fix our health system. Within that short time, the Government has hit the ground running. The record shows that it is doing its bit. Thousands upon thousands of homes were built in the Leppington electorate over the past decade. Despite the fact that the former Government was happy to collect infrastructure contributions and stamp duty, there was an abject failure to deliver critical infrastructure to my community—most notably at Fifteenth Avenue.

Fifteenth Avenue is a 14-kilometre carriageway that runs in a straight line between the new Western Sydney airport and the Liverpool CBD. Yesterday, the Premier described it as a goat track. In 1904 a visitor to the area described it as "absolutely the worst road in the country". For 120 years that road remained a goat track, as the Premier described it. However, I have some very good news.

**Mrs Sally Quinell:** What is it?

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** That is about to change. Fifteenth Avenue is going from a goat track to possibly the best road we have ever seen in this State, guaranteed. That is due to a joint \$1 billion investment—50 per cent from the Federal Government and 50 per cent from the fantastic Minns Labor Government—that will relieve congestion. Each morning about 22,000 commuters travel down that road. At times the traffic can stretch for three or four kilometres. We are fixing that problem. During the election campaign I got a commitment for an initial \$50 million to start the job, and now we have \$1 billion to finish it.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** How much?

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** That is \$1 billion—a billion with a "b". Opposition members have been jumping up and down, carrying on and asking questions during budget estimates. In particular, the shadow Minister for Roads, Natalie Ward, has asked a few questions. Guess what position she held in the former Government?

**Ms Charishma Kaliyanda:** The roads Minister?

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** She was the roads Minister. Guess how many times she mentioned Fifteenth Avenue as the roads Minister?

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** How many?

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** Duck egg. Zero. Zilch. Nada. While in Government, the only thing members opposite did with Fifteenth Avenue was ignore it. I have a media release from former Minister Toole dated 21 September 2021. Who remembers the lead-up to the 2019 election when members opposite said, "We're going to look at a whole bunch of roads and we're going to classify them"? They appointed an independent commission. Its expert panel took a look at it and then listed about 30 roads that it believed should be reclassified from local roads to State roads. They handed that list to the Minister. What did the Minister say?

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** What?

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** He said, "That's a fantastic idea, but there are a couple of roads we don't want to reclassify." Guess which roads they were? There was Moorebank Avenue in Liverpool. What is the member for Holsworthy doing about that? There was also Devonshire Avenue in my electorate. The last one was Fifteenth Avenue. Not only did members opposite put no money towards that road, but they actively ignored it and went against their own recommendation. The issue is not only with roads. I could speak for hours about Fifteenth Avenue, but I will not. I will change the topic to another passion of mine, which is public education.

As a proud product of public education, I know that this Government is rebuilding public education, especially in my part of the world. Austral, Leppington and Denham Court are three suburbs that have received their fair share of new housing over the past seven years, especially in the south-west growth corridor. One would think that when building a whole bunch of new houses for families with young kids it would be a good idea to build a high school. This Government is building a high school; the former Government did not. For 12 long years the former Government ignored education in my neck of the woods. However, I have some very good news. We are building a public high school in Leppington, and people are happy. We are building roads and fixing education and the health system. There is \$550 million for the Fairfield Hospital redevelopment. It is the first major upgrade since—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Willoughby will come to order. The member for Terrigal will come to order. The member for Leppington will be heard in silence.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** The Fairfield Hospital redevelopment is the first major upgrade since 1989. That hospital has a special place in my heart, and the heart of the member for Prospect, because my two beautiful children were born there. I know the staff at that hospital work hard day in and day out. They are fantastic. Now they will have expanded bed capacity and improved emergency and critical care. As I said, I could speak for hours, but I only have seven minutes. The Government is rebuilding Western Sydney, where the former Government locked it down.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! The member for Prospect will remain silent. If the member for Willoughby continues to interject, he will be placed on a call to order. Members will act with decorum in the Chamber. I call the member for Hawkesbury.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (17:08):** I am in total astonishment at the public interest debate brought to the House by the member for Leppington. It says:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that the New South Wales Government has doubled Western Sydney road investment compared to the former Liberal-Nationals Government, delivering \$5.2 billion in the budget for road infrastructure and a further \$1 billion with the Federal Government for Fifteenth Avenue to service Western Sydney airport.

It fails to mention the massive injection of infrastructure funding for The Northern Road. It continues:

- (2) Notes the New South Wales Government is investing over \$21 billion for public transport infrastructure in Western Sydney ...

Is the Government catching up on the "Bob Carr built nothing" days that ran for 16 years? It further states:

- (3) Notes the record \$3.6 billion investment by the New South Wales Government—

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

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not want to have to raise my voice to compete with those opposite. I am in absolute astonishment because, as I said, back in the "Bob Carr built nothing" days, we had 16 years of building no infrastructure at all. There were lots of announcements. In fact, from 1995

to 2011, Labor had a habit of promising railway lines and not delivering them. I know that because the Sydney Metro Northwest was announced by Bob Carr, and Morris Iemma announced it again, but nothing was delivered. It took the O'Farrell, Berejiklian and Perrottet governments to deliver the Sydney Metro Northwest. I was on its maiden journey in 2019 when the then Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, proudly opened that metro. In fact, I saw the boring machines coming through Castle Hill. It was absolutely amazing.

People love metros. The public loves metros. We had to remind this Government that the Coalition backed, built and delivered those metros. Even though this Government wanted to cut the ribbons and take the kudos, the Coalition actually delivered the entire Sydney Metro Northwest. I know the member for Kellyville is here, and that was a very proud moment for his constituents as well. They have embraced it ever since. In fact, people in the Sydney metropolitan area want more of the metro, so we will have driverless trains in the Bankstown area, with drivers in them. Taxpayers will fund drivers on driverless trains.

Look at the record of the previous Coalition Government. The member for Londonderry said that the previous Government never built any schools. I am sorry, but it delivered 180 new or upgraded hospitals and 200 new or upgraded schools across New South Wales—a record-breaking position and a fantastic offering. How can Government members say the Coalition built no schools while in government? They cannot count. I will repeat it—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Terrigal is ominously close to being called to order. The member for Camden will not overreact.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** We have the beautiful airport being built at the moment. I go to Narellan to visit my brother, who has been having health issues, and it is amazing to drive on The Northern Road. I see him every week because he is going through cancer treatment, and that road is a lifesaver for me. It is a great run, and every time I get on that road I think, "That is something the Coalition built." I thank them for it every time I am on that journey. That road will benefit people visiting the airport, and we need a lot of infrastructure going forward. That road is a start but look at where we came from. We inherited \$35 million in infrastructure backlog when the O'Farrell Government was elected. I remind members of that. Finally, I move an amendment to this public interest debate. I move:

That the motion be amended by inserting the following:

- (5) Calls on the New South Wales Government to publish the expected commencement and completion quarters for:
- (a) the Liverpool to Airport transit corridor;
  - (b) Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport line;
  - (c) Gledswood High School; and
  - (d) Rouse Hill Hospital.

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (17:14):** I speak in support of the member for Leppington, Western Sydney infrastructure and the Minns Labor Government's astounding and comprehensive plan to build a better New South Wales. The population of Western Sydney is forecast to swell from two million to three million people over the next two decades. We are planning to meet that growth and address the service gaps left behind by the former Government that neglected Western Sydney for 12 years. It slugged the people of Western Sydney with the most tolls on earth, it allowed Western Sydney to grow like Topsy, and it failed to build the roads, schools, hospitals and transport infrastructure our communities need. The key to building a better New South Wales is ensuring the residents of Western Sydney are receiving their fair share of infrastructure to support our growing communities—something the former Liberal-Nationals Government failed to do, over and over again. In contrast to those opposite, this Government is focused on building better communities with the roads, transport infrastructure, reliable and secure energy, and housing we need to improve the lives of people in Western Sydney.

Parramatta is the gateway to Western Sydney. It is a major employment centre, the hub of tertiary education and the research sector for Western Sydney, and a perfect location for a convenient lifestyle. Given all of that, it would be right to think that a government with its eye on the ball would have provided all of the infrastructure necessary to support the biggest city in the west. Think again, because the reason Parramatta is now represented by Labor is because the Coalition failed. The former Liberal-Nationals Government failed to deliver a public park in Wentworth Point. The former Liberal-Nationals Government failed to build new public preschools across Western Sydney. The former Liberal-Nationals Government failed to deliver an upgrade to Parramatta East Public School, which the P&C had been campaigning for since 2019. The former Liberal-Nationals Government failed to deliver a high school for Melrose Park, choosing instead to close a perfectly good high school across the road and relocate it to the heart of the Ryde electorate, all for 50 votes. The former Liberal-Nationals Government failed to put money in the budget for stage two of the Parramatta Light Rail.

By stark comparison, I bring to the attention of the House the action taken by the Minns Labor Government. The Minns Labor Government is investing over \$21 billion for public transport infrastructure in Western Sydney. Did members hear that? It has invested over \$21 billion. This Government has set aside \$2.1 billion to connect the Parramatta CBD to Sydney Olympic Park via Camellia, Rydalmere, Ermington, Melrose Park and Wentworth Point. That vital project will support housing growth and connect communities in the Greater Parramatta and Olympic Peninsula. Let's talk about Wentworth Point. It is the most densely populated suburb in Western Sydney and one of the most densely populated in this country. Couple that with the growth of the Carter Street Precinct, another urban activation precinct brought to us by the former Liberal-Nationals Government, and with just one road in and out and no local train station, the need for public transport and road infrastructure has reached breaking point.

This Government has responded. In December contracts were signed for a \$140 million upgrade to Hill Road, including new traffic signals at John Ian Wing Parade. Couple that with \$10 million for flood mitigation. The Government has invested \$48 million to build seven new Parramatta River-class ferries to service the Olympic Peninsula. Not only are we building the ferries; we are building them in Australia, and we have increased ferry services. There is now \$2.1 billion to deliver Parramatta Light Rail connecting Wentworth Point to the Parramatta CBD. It will have a 10-kilometre, two-way track and 14 stops, with travel times of around 31 minutes from the Carter Street Precinct to Camellia, and a further seven minutes to the Parramatta CBD. The 2024-25 New South Wales budget committed \$475.1 million over four years to 2027-28, including \$91.9 million in 2024-25 to deliver enabling work. The work started in January of this year. This will be a game changer for the people of Wentworth Point, Sydney Olympic Park and Western Sydney. It will create jobs now and into the future. Our Government is committed to building a better Western Sydney.

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (17:19):** I thank the member for Leppington for raising the important subject of infrastructure in Western Sydney. The former Liberal-Nationals Government had a formidable track record of delivering infrastructure in Western Sydney. Our Government did not just make promises; it built roads, railways and essential infrastructure that improved the lives of the millions that call Western Sydney home. I will start with roads. WestConnex was the largest transport infrastructure project in Australia. It was designed to reduce congestion and improve connectivity. The M4 widening, the M4 east extension and the M8 motorway have slashed travel times and eased traffic. The final stage was the M4-M8 Link, which was completed in 2023 and provided a much-needed alternative to congested city routes. It did not stop there.

The former Liberal-Nationals Government embarked on the Sydney Metro project, which provides driverless trains that operate regardless of whether train drivers are on strike or not. Sydney Metro North West opened in May 2019. It is a 36-kilometre line connecting Rouse Hill and Chatswood. Sydney Metro City and Southwest is scheduled for completion next year. It will link Chatswood to Bankstown via the CBD. Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport line will connect St Marys and Bradfield. Sydney Metro West will link Westmead to the Sydney CBD. It is due for completion in 2032. While the former Liberal-Nationals Government got on with delivering these vital public transport links, the Minns Labor Government stalled the progress of building metros in west and south-west Sydney.

The Government ummed and ahed about scrapping the Sydney Metro West, and it is still unclear whether it will go ahead. At the 2023 election, the Liberal-Nationals Government had a clear vision to expand the metro network. It committed to business cases for new lines from Tallawong to St Marys, from Westmead to the aerotropolis, from Bankstown to Glenfield via Liverpool and from Macarthur to the aerotropolis. These expansions would have boosted connectivity, supported economic growth and ensured that Western Sydney residents had world-class transport options. Labor, on the other hand, had no concrete commitments; it only made vague promises to "investigate extensions". We have not heard anything since.

While the Coalition had a plan to deliver real metro expansion and had the track record to back it up, Labor stalled and prioritised reviews over progress. The stakes could not be higher for Western Sydney commuters. Every time train drivers go on strike, it is the hardworking people of Western Sydney who suffer the most. They are forced to endure delays, overcrowded replacement buses and chaos just to get to work or school. The Liberal Party and The Nationals had a plan to reduce the influence of the unions that have taken our city hostage and to guarantee reliable, strike-free public transport. I draw the attention of the House to the former WestInvest program which was launched by the former Liberal-Nationals Government. It was a \$2 billion program to fund transformational infrastructure projects.

Beneficiaries included the Camden, Campbelltown, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool, Parramatta, Penrith and Wollondilly local government areas. WestInvest is building better communities for Western Sydney residents with fantastic projects that I know the member for Leppington is very well acquainted with, including the Carnes Hill Aquatic Centre and upgrades to Woodward Park and Light Horse Park. The former Liberal-Nationals Government had a clear plan to futureproof transport, build better

communities and create opportunities for families, workers and businesses in Western Sydney. Labor, on the other hand, has stalled progress. It has failed to commit to metro expansions and has left Western Sydney vulnerable to union strikes and transport chaos. I thank the House.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (17:24):** I speak in support of this motion and thank the member for Leppington for bringing it before the House. This public interest debate is particularly pertinent for my electorate of Riverstone. Prior to the election of the former Liberal-Nationals Government, the areas of Tallawong, Schofields, Rouse Hill and Grantham Farm were all market gardens and acreage blocks with very little housing. Over the time the Liberal Party and The Nationals were in government, there was an explosion of housing. Most of that housing was geared towards young families and people wanting to start young families. I would have thought that, with the introduction of tens of thousands of homes and literally hundreds of thousands of people, some infrastructure would be built to support that. Sadly, this was not the case.

Our Government is getting on with trying to address this problem. The Minns Labor Government, in partnership with the Albanese Government, has doubled funding for road infrastructure across Western Sydney since coming to office. Garfield Road East was promised over and over again. We have an investment of \$276.3 million to upgrade Garfield Road East and make it a road that can actually be used by the local residents. It is an example of what can be done when we work collaboratively with the Federal Government. In Riverstone there is also Bandon Road. When I first came to government, I discovered that upgrades to Bandon Road had been shelved completely despite it being an integral road for the North West Growth Area roads strategy. I saw multiple press releases talking about advancement with Bandon Road, but it turns out that the road itself not only had never been funded but also had been completely shelved by the previous Government.

We have added another \$316.6 million to widen Richmond Road between the M7 Motorway and Townson Road. Anybody in the local area who tries to commute using Richmond Road knows what an absolute and unmitigated disaster that road is. We have also committed another \$156.5 million to widen Richmond Road further down at Elara Boulevard. This issue affects not only the Riverstone electorate but also the neighbouring electorates of Londonderry and Hawkesbury. Suburbs like Box Hill, Gables, Marsden Park and Melonba are going up with no public transport, no major road infrastructure and no schools. I am pleased to see the member for Hawkesbury in the Chamber today. She was asked about the Box Hill high school, and her response was "It's a really good question. I don't have an all-in-one answer."

This is a community of about 65 people that has exploded to a population of over 30,000 people with not a single school in the area. We have funded three schools in the area, including a temporary school that was built in the course of seven weeks after the development application was approved. Last year, I attended the tenth anniversary of the most recent high school to be built in my electorate, The Ponds High School, which has more than doubled the capacity it was intended to have. The Ponds primary school has almost tripled its capacity. At the same time, the site which a Schofields high school was supposed to be built on was sold. The site for a Stanhope high school was also sold under the previous Government under the pretence that it was "simply not needed". Those schools were absolutely needed.

The simple fact that almost every single school in my electorate is significantly over capacity underlines the fact that the former Government was either misled by the numbers coming out of the area or was wilfully ignorant of them. Some might even say it was criminally negligent when it comes to supporting the people of Western Sydney. I remember very clearly walking into the office of the former member for Riverstone and pointing out that by 2036 the catchment area of Riverstone High School would be looking down the barrel of 20,000 high-school-aged students. His response was "The catchment will change with new schools," without funding new schools. The epitome of false promises is Rouse Hill hospital. The member for Kellyville announced the Rouse Hill hospital in 2015. He then announced it again in 2019 and 2021. The member for Hawkesbury announced the Rouse Hill hospital in 2019 and again in 2021.

I give the previous Government credit for procuring the Rouse Hill hospital site, but no money was ever allocated for construction of the hospital. It allocated funding for the shovels to do a false media release about a sod turning, without a single development application to build that hospital.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** There is one more speaker in this debate after the member for Camden. That will be a crossbench member, and the member for Leppington will then speak in reply.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (17:29):** I would never get in the way of the member for Wollondilly having her say about Western Sydney infrastructure, because we share a region. I make a brief contribution to the public interest debate today in support of the motion. The New South Wales Government has doubled Western Sydney road investment compared with the former Liberal-Nationals Government, delivering \$5.2 billion in the budget for road infrastructure and a further \$1 billion with the Federal Government for Fifteenth Avenue. In some parts of New South Wales and Sydney, there was no building and no growth over the past

12 years. But in the areas of Leppington, Camden, Liverpool, Riverstone, Parramatta and Wollondilly there was a huge amount of growth. In fact, the populations of Leppington and Camden grew so much and so quickly that a new electorate needed to be created, and the creation of another new electorate is being considered.

At the moment, the Camden local government area is taking in 100 new residents per week. The communities of Gregory Hills and Gledswood Hills got together and said, "In our local area, we have two private schools." Those schools are great. I am not dissing private schools; I used to work at them. But the only public school option was Oran Park Public School. Again, that is a fantastic school, but it had so many kindergarten classes and demountables that parents were not allowed onsite because it breached the Geneva Convention. On the first day of kindergarten, parents had to kiss their children goodbye at the gates and wish them luck. That is school crowding at a massive level.

The communities of Leppington, Gregory Hills and Gledswood Hills said to the former Government, "Please, we need a new primary school." To its credit, the former Liberal-Nationals Government said, "Okay, we'll deliver it in 2027." The cynic in me would say, "What's happening in 2027? It's an election year. That's why it's being delivered then." We said, "That's not good enough." In 13 months, we managed to not only get Gregory Hills Public School up and running but also complete the permanent building. There is a full school running at its permanent site. There is a weird fact about children: When they finish year 6, by law, they have to go to year 7. The children needed a high school. They were told to go to Mount Annan High School. For anyone who does not know south-west Sydney—and I make no judgement; it is amazing and, if members came, they would not leave—it is a 20- to 40-minute bus ride from Gregory Hills to Mount Annan. The people who lived in Mount Annan were told to go to Campbelltown for high school, and there was a knock-on effect.

Then the community said to the former Government, "We need a high school." The people of Leppington said, "We need a high school too." The former Liberal-Nationals education Minister said, "How about we give you a high school to share?" Our community said, "That would mean five massive primary schools to one high school. That is not good enough." Last week, the temporary high school at Gledswood Hills was opened. Students were able to go to high school at the same premises as their siblings at the primary school. When we talk about rebuilding public education, it is not just words. It is not just sod turning. When we talk about rebuilding New South Wales, especially in Western Sydney, the Minns Labor Government means it.

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (17:34):** I understand the function of public interest debates, but seemingly they get used as a competition, with team blue on this side of the Chamber and team red on that side. We only need to look at the way motions are worded and the contributions from both sides. Although I welcome any money that comes to Western Sydney, public interest debates should be used to talk about pressing, current issues in New South Wales, such as antisemitism, the public transport debacle, the lack of infrastructure in growth areas and how to take action to reverse it, the crime plaguing our youth in the regions, water usage rights—or even the lack of specialists in our State. Instead, we have to debate Western Sydney infrastructure.

I hear members talk about all the different areas, but they fail to remember that my electorate of Wollondilly probably makes up 50 per cent of Western Sydney. We need infrastructure, and both parties have failed to deliver it. It is achieved by getting things like the Picton bypass on the budget paper and working with the Government. There is no debate to be had, and certainly no political party should be claiming a victory. Developments are pre-existing for decades, and they still await development. Take Wilton, for example. It started development prior to much of northern Camden, now known as the electorate of Leppington. What do the Labor and Liberal parties have to say to those people who have waited not for 10 years but for 20 or 30 years for the promised jobs and connectivity? What do members think those people would think of this debate? The more members go on like this, the more reason there is to vote Independent.

I simply cannot vote for or against these issues, and I cannot say that one party has done better than the other. The way I see it, there is no debate at all. It could be a statement: There is a lack of infrastructure in Western Sydney—full stop. Members do not even need to choose what it is about. They talk about hospitals, high schools, freeways, certain streets, police command, TAFE—anything. To be honest, in my electorate it is all missing. There is nothing to debate. I look forward to abstaining from this attempt at a debate. I hope that, in the future, more public interest debates are actually in the interest of the public and that, instead of this backwards and forwards, we see an outcome we can all hang our hats on.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (17:37):** In reply: I thank all members who contributed to debate: members representing the electorates of Hawkesbury, Parramatta, Holsworthy, Riverstone, Camden and Wollondilly. It is fantastic that today members opposite have been able to round up some Western Sydney MPs to make a contribution. It has been a very robust debate. I thank the member for Hawkesbury for her amendment. Unfortunately, I will have to give that the thumbs down. On this side of the Chamber, we will be going with my well-worded motion, which speaks to the failure of the previous Liberal-Nationals Government to invest in

Western Sydney. The Deputy Speaker used the word "ominous" as her word of the day. My word for the day is "arrogant". Members opposite should look that one up, as a bit of homework.

In particular, I thank the member for Parramatta, the member for Riverstone, the member for Camden and the member for Wollondilly. They were elected to this place with me in March 2023, riding a wave. The people of New South Wales, especially in Western Sydney, said, "We have had enough of those opposite. We're going with a fresh start and fresh ideas, and we're going to get on with rebuilding this State." As we have seen over the past 23 months—whether it is in education, roads, public transport or health—this Government is getting on with the job. I know that public interest debates can be a bit of fun, but what is being discussed today has serious consequences. My colleagues and I get phone calls every day about kids who have to catch a bus, a train, a bus and then another bus just to get to their local public school. That is because the school catchments have been drawn up in such a way that it forces them to travel far distances to get to school.

As I said, this Government is getting on with the job of investing in existing schools and building new ones. Labor is ensuring that when people move to a new community, they have access to the social and public infrastructure that they deserve. They are not asking for anything extra; they are just asking for basic services. The communities in Western Sydney will have that soon, as evidenced by the statement made by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Premier Chris Minns when they announced the \$1 billion upgrade to Fifteenth Avenue. That is a symbol of what this Government is doing in this State, particularly in Western Sydney. I thank all members for their contributions.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....32  
Noes .....49  
Majority.....17

**AYES**

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

**NOES**

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

## PAIRS

Cooke, S  
Di Pasqua, S  
Thompson, T

Watson, A  
Harrison, J  
Minns, C

**Amendment negatived.**

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills***CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS HATRED) BILL 2025****Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (17:48):** I contribute to debate on the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. I was not going to participate in the debate on this bill because, as the only Jewish member of the Government and this House and the child of a Holocaust survivor, I considered that any view I expressed would not be seen to be objective. During all these antisemitic attacks I have, effectively, relied on the Premier to speak on behalf of the Government in relation to a response to them, and left it to the leaders of the Jewish community to speak for all Jews, including me.

However, after I heard the contribution from the member for Bathurst—which surprised me, because I go back quite some time with the member for Bathurst—I thought I needed to respond and say something. My mother was liberated, having been incarcerated in a number of concentration camps during World War II. Her parents were murdered at Kalevi-Liiva in Estonia. I have stood on those sand dunes in the middle of the forest in Kalevi-Liiva, Estonia, knowing that my grandparents' remains lay under my feet together with thousands of other Jews shot, naked, into trenches. Nearly all of my mother's family and extended family, when they were taken, firstly, from Mährisch Schönberg to Prostějov and then to Theresienstadt, ended up in Auschwitz, where they were murdered in the gas chambers.

My father was sent out of Austria just before the Anschluss. He was fortunate to escape Austria, at his own father's instigation, before the Anschluss to what was then known as Palestine. My mother and father met in Prostějov in Czechoslovakia after the war, and they married. They left in 1947 and came to Australia in 1948 as the Communists took control of Czechoslovakia. They came to Australia for a number of reasons. The most important reason they came to Australia was that it was a country that had a liberal democracy, a country that welcomed immigrants, a country that gave a go to immigrants, a country that was free and had free speech, and a country where Australians had an in-built feeling of egalitarianism and an in-built notion that gave everybody a fair go.

My parents kept from me the horrors that they faced during the Holocaust. During my lifetime my mother gave an interview to the Spielberg Foundation. I came towards the end of it. If anyone is interested, they will see her interview. I have uploaded it onto YouTube. It is something that I found only after she had passed away. That gives some indication of the horrors that she underwent, something that she kept from me and my sister. Growing up in Sydney, in the area in which I still live, like all minorities, often there were remarks made that might be regarded as antisemitic, but all minorities face them. Whether somebody made some reference to the size or shape of my nose, which seems to be consistent with much of the Jews in the world, or whether or not your spending patterns related to your religion, those comments were often made. But, as those sorts of comments were often made from other ethnic groups, it just seemed to have been, usually, in the sixties, seventies and eighties, the Australian way. You never took offence, or you learnt to live with it.

In my lifetime, I have never seen or witnessed the extent of the antisemitism and the antisemitic attacks that have been so concentrated since 7 October, nearly 18 months ago. Never has that occurred. The response to these antisemitic attacks by the Premier, the Government and the Leader of the Opposition and the statement of their views have been swift. Bear in mind that, for 30 centuries, various sections of human history have tried to exterminate Jews; for 30 centuries, they have faced persecution and extermination, but they are still here. Jews believe they are still here because of God, but we are still here. If you look through human history and the persecution of the Jews, it always starts with the conduct that this bill addresses and it starts with hate speech, before it then progresses to blaming the Jews as a minority, which ultimately impacts on a variety of government decisions and a loss of human rights. It is consistent throughout the history of humanity.

With this conduct—and, of course, frighteningly, what the Attorney General happens to tell us from information that the police provide in relation to intelligence—there are a number of reasons to be concerned. It is important that the Parliament responds and governments respond. But what is so fundamental is that that response is on a bipartisan, single basis. Australia has never faced this before. New South Wales and Sydney have never faced this before to this extent and at this level of threat, and it requires a bipartisan response. It does not require, nor can it possibly require, any member of any political party to seek to obtain a political benefit out of this behaviour, which human history tells us easily continues and gets worse. I know that oppositions, particularly in a first term, are struggling for relevance, but there is a time for leadership, there is a time for community leadership and there is a time for statesmanship.

The member for Bathurst is the former Deputy Premier of this State. He should know better than to come into this House on this bill and launch an attack over matters he knows absolutely nothing about. He should know better than to assert that the Government has failed a vulnerable religious community, when most Jews are not religious. Most Jews are secular but, as you can tell from these antisemitic attacks, there is no distinguishing whether they are religious or not. He said that they are forced to hire security. Somebody like me, who regularly goes to a synagogue and whose kids went to a Jewish school, can tell him there has always been security to protect synagogues, parishioners and Jewish schools. At every single function, and members of the House would have accepted invitations to a variety of Jewish functions, there was always extensive security as people entered those functions, well before those attacks.

For the member for Bathurst to demonstrate his ignorance for political purposes is extremely disappointing. Do Jewish people live in fear? They do live in fear. I have been told that I should not be walking to the synagogue on Shabbat, that I should not be walking down the street. I have been told that I should be dropped off right in the presence of security and collected right in the presence of security, something that I do not like to do. But I can tell the member for Bathurst that during his 12 years in government, when he was a Minister of the Crown, there were a variety of antisemitic attacks. He comes into the House and wants to distil the dates of antisemitic attacks that have occurred during the Minns Government in office. What about those that occurred when he was a Minister of the Crown? What did he do about it? What did he do about it when I would be abused walking to the synagogue on Yom Kippur? He did nothing. He would not have even known about it. [*Extension of time*]

When the former Rabbi of Maroubra was told by a neighbour, "More of you people should have been gassed", what did the member for Bathurst, as Deputy Premier or as Minister for Local Government, do about it? He was too busy merging councils, contrary to his own written promise. I can list all the antisemitic abuse that has been suffered by people who are walking to Maroubra synagogue on shabbat. For many years they have not been able to walk to shabbat with a kippah on; they are wearing baseball caps to cover them because of abuse. So for the member for Bathurst—I quite like Tooley—to attack this Government rather than offering a bipartisan approach is just a bloody disgrace.

Quite frankly, the Opposition could have come to the Government on a bipartisan, co-operative basis and made suggestions at any time. These responses are not easy because of the implied constitutional requirements of freedom of political communication. The third bill that the Attorney General gave notice of today is even more difficult than these two. Why is it that members of this House cannot demonstrate some constructive leadership? Do we think the Jewish community, who are looking for a response to these antisemitic attacks, are really going to appreciate this behaviour? Opposition members have come to Government members before without fanfare on matters concerning the Jewish community. Last year the member for Vaucluse came to me for financial support on behalf of the Rabbinical Council of NSW. With the Minister for Multiculturalism, I quietly organised a grant for the Rabbinical Council of NSW without shouting, shepherding or arguing in the House.

This issue required a bipartisan response. The Government always has an open-door policy. If Opposition members wanted the Government to take quicker action or do something particular during these attacks, they could have said so. Members on the other side of the House know that every Minister of the Minns Government has an open-door policy to members of Parliament irrespective of their political persuasion or whether they are a member of the crossbench. On an issue like this, which calls out for a bipartisan approach, I have to say certain Opposition members—not all of them—have failed. This problem does not require a political response; it requires a bipartisan, unified response from both political parties to send out the message that antisemitic acts will not be tolerated by the Parliament of New South Wales. That is what it needs to do.

Before we can build community harmony with a variety of other organisations, faith groups or people with diverse views about a conflict on the other side of the planet, we have to indicate what our views are about this behaviour. If the cause of organised antisemitic behaviour is as police intelligence suggests, then this State and this nation have a significant problem. The only way for this Parliament to address it is by a unified approach. I have to say, not as a member of the Minns Government, not as the member for Heffron, but as a Jew and the only Jew in the House, that I find the approach of some Opposition members, including my friend the Manager

of Opposition Business, to be quite disappointing. I think the world of the member for Bathurst, but his approach has been an absolute disgrace.

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater) (18:03):** I make a contribution to debate on the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. As we know, Australians value a strong, cohesive and accepting society where everybody feels safe and free. It is indeed our identity and something my Pittwater community also holds dear. However, recently we have seen targeted acts of hate that threaten the very fabric of that cohesion. In particular, the Jewish community has been the target of distressing and aggressive antisemitic attacks. These attacks have been ongoing and increasing. In just recent weeks we have seen a troubling rise in incidents across Sydney as they have escalated from the spreading of hateful graffiti to attacks on synagogues.

In my neighbouring electorate of Davidson, three synagogues and the Jewish school Masada serve a thriving Jewish community as well as members of my community of Pittwater. I know these attacks have been deeply felt. Earlier this year a man was charged after allegedly pointing a gun at a synagogue in St Ives. That is not the type of behaviour any of us should ever tolerate in our communities. My community is horrified that these incidents are creeping into Pittwater and surrounding areas. In Pittwater we have a thriving Jewish community and the vibrant Queen Ester restaurants which serve Israeli food and are run by a group of friends who grew up in the same town in Israel. But my community has also been the target of race-driven attacks and they are terrifying. There have also been disturbing reports of antisemitic graffiti along our beaches and at our bus stops.

In August 2024 two 16-year-old boys in the neighbouring electorate of Wakehurst were caught defacing a public building in Dee Why with a Nazi symbol. We also have had graffiti attacks in Avalon in my Pittwater electorate. With issues escalating recently, Pittwater constituents have reached out to me on social media. They have sent the consistent message that they are afraid for their safety, the safety of their children, and for the very identity of this community. They have contacted me to share their concerns because they know events have escalated in recent weeks. I know of families who feel so threatened that they do not want to wear a Star of David or are considering removing the mezuzah from their doors for fear of becoming targets. Some have expressed fear about sending their children to school.

I have raised these issues with the Attorney General, and I thank the Government for listening to the personal stories from members of my community. We will work together with the Government, Opposition and crossbench to develop an approach that addresses these attacks, including the bill before members today. I have spoken to my local area command and local council. I am confident that this legislation not only will ensure that these acts be punished but also will boost the actions that we are taking in Pittwater. Today we send a clear message that we will not tolerate hate-driven, racial crime in New South Wales. But that message must go beyond just catching and prosecuting perpetrators. Legislation is just the beginning. We must ensure that we are acting to accurately report antisemitic crimes so that the Attorney General has a full understanding of what is happening on the ground in our communities. Not one racial crime should slip through being reported or being identified as such. Every act of graffiti and every hate crime must be tracked and reported.

That action is crucial in helping us to prevent future attacks, in protecting vulnerable communities including the Jewish community, and in providing observation to ensure that if stronger legislation is needed it is brought before this Parliament. The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025 aims to address those concerns. I support its intent to protect people, particularly the Jewish community. My Pittwater electorate is home to a wide range of faith communities, including Jewish families, and the bill represents an important step towards ensuring their safety and security, and alleviating some of the fear felt by our Jewish community. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (18:08):** I make a contribution to the debate on the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. Like many members, it saddens me to have to speak to the bill because of the rise in racism and antisemitism in our State. I am saddened that the fabric of our tolerant and peaceful community is shaken by the events that have occurred over the past 16 months. I also note that antisemitism was rife in our community even prior to the 7 October 2023 attack. The shadow Attorney General and Manager of Opposition Business in the Legislative Assembly will move amendments to the bill. The Opposition will ask the House to support those amendments.

The purpose of this bill—as well as the bill brought to this House last week by the shadow Attorney General—is to enhance the legislative framework and penalty provisions to combat the increased violence and social unrest that has plagued our society over the past 16 months. The rise of antisemitic violence in our State has escalated since the events that occurred a few years ago. Let me make it clear that the incitement of violence in our society and any subsequent violence that results from it can never be acceptable or tolerated. The citizens of our State and, might I add, our nation are entitled to go about their own business without fear of harassment, intimidation or violence from those who might not share the same religious or cultural beliefs.

I am sure that all members of this House agreed with the sentiment of the Attorney General when he said in his second reading speech that the conduct that we have witnessed is "abhorrent and not welcome in our community". This morning during question time, the Attorney General also spoke about the abhorrent escalation in antisemitism and the racially motivated behaviour of a small number of groups within our society. On 11 February 2025, the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition spoke about the rise of antisemitism. In his speech, the Leader of the Opposition correctly stated, "These attacks are a stain on our State and a blight on our nation, and they must be unequivocally condemned in this Parliament, the heart of democracy in New South Wales." I agree with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition that we must condemn the conduct of those who propagate hate and violence against others within our society.

Our society is built on a fabric of peace and tolerance for different cultures, different skin colours and different religious beliefs and, for that matter, no religious beliefs. Over the years since Captain Arthur Phillip first sailed into Sydney Harbour, we have built a nation founded on the principles of equality, tolerance and a fair go for everyone. As a former police officer and a former solicitor, I have had the opportunity to engage with many members of our society. I have engaged with people who have migrated to this country from different parts of the world, and I have engaged with those who have different religious beliefs. It is fair to say that those who have engaged in racist and antisemitic behaviour over the past 16 months represent a small section of our community. We must ensure those views are not tolerated.

I am pleased that the Government has introduced the bills that we are debating today. On 12 December *The Daily Telegraph* provided a very detailed timeline of the various antisemitic and racist incidents over the past 16 months. I am certain that most members of our community are very pleased that the Government is now taking some action to send a message that racist and antisemitic behaviour will not be tolerated. As part of a Master of Criminology that I undertook at the University of Sydney in about 2008, I completed a post-graduate subject on hate crimes. I drew on my studies and my own experience as a former member of the NSW Police Force and former lawyer when I considered the bill. When hate is directed at racial and religious minorities, the extent of the problem and the need for some sort of legal intervention is well recognised. The full spectrum of racist behaviour is experienced by Australians.

Legislation, particularly for hate crimes, can have three distinct benefits. First, properly and strongly drafted legislation will send a symbolic and educational message to members of society. The bill will act as a further deterrent to would-be offenders. Second, the bill will send a message to victims that they are not alone. It will send a message that we stand in solidarity with all members of society who have been subjected to racist or antisemitic behaviour. Third, it will enable the courts to understand that Parliament requires those who commit or continue to commit racist or antisemitic conduct to be punished to the full extent of the law, including, where appropriate, with imprisonment.

Schedule 1 to the bill amends the Crimes Act 1900. The amendment to section 93Z inserts the word "graffiti" after the words "displaying notices" in section 93Z (5). The word "writing" already appears in section 93Z (5) under the definition of a "public act". In my view, the amendment does not strengthen the legislation to any great degree. However, it will clarify the legislation and should, therefore, be supported. The amendment to insert new section 93ZA (1AA) creates the offence of knowingly displaying, by public act and without reasonable excuse, a Nazi symbol on or near a synagogue, a Jewish school or the Sydney Jewish Museum. The offence has a penalty of 200 penalty units or imprisonment for two years. Instead of the penalty that is put forward in the bill, the Coalition proposes much stronger penalties. The Coalition will put forward the amendments outlined by the shadow Attorney General.

I believe that stronger penalties will send a message to the community and would-be offenders. The Coalition's proposed amendment will increase the penalty to 200 penalty units, imprisonment for five years, or both. The Coalition's proposed amendment will send the appropriate message to members of society. Strong penalties also send a message to the victim groups who suffer from the behaviour that we stand with them. The Coalition's proposed amendments will also ensure that the offence of displaying a Nazi symbol under section 93ZA will be dealt with on indictment. That will send a very strong message to would-be offenders. The Coalition also proposes that a standard non-parole period of 18 months be provided for in the legislation. I support the inclusion of a standard non-parole period.

Schedule 2 to the bill amends section 21A (2) (h) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 to include the words "partially or wholly". I had a look at case law on section 21A (2) (h) and did not find the section referred to as being deficient in any case at all. However, the amendment will make the legislation clear. As such, it should be supported. Finally, the bill proposes amendments to the Graffiti Control Act 2008. I support those amendments. During a later stage, the Opposition will move the amendments set out on sheet c2025-012E. Those amendments should be supported by all members. As I said at the outset, this House must send the strongest message to would-be offenders that behaviour that is intended to publicly threaten or incite violence on the grounds set out

in the bill will not be tolerated. The Coalition's proposed amendments should be supported by all members of this House. We are a free and tolerant society, and we must take appropriate action. I ask all members to support the Opposition's amendments.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (18:16):** I support the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. At the outset, I make a couple of declarations. First, I was the honorary vice-president of the Australasian Union of Jewish Students [AUJS] at Wollongong University. That came about because I was secretary of the student council, and a Jewish student came to me because he had been the subject of vilification and hate speech on campus by members of a certain political group, which made him feel uncomfortable. I had a conversation with Doron about what we could do to address that. We decided to form a chapter of AUJS. I was elected the honorary vice-president at the first meeting.

Later, I had the enormous privilege of travelling to both Israel and Palestine on two occasions—they were both self-funded trips. On the first occasion, I led a delegation of young political leaders. On the second occasion, I joined a trip to the site of the Battle of Beersheba to celebrate and commemorate the contribution of the Australian Light Horse. When I visited that part of the world and met people from both sides, I overwhelmingly found that most people just want to get on with their lives. They do not want the conflict to invade their personal and family lives. They just want to live their lives, see their children grow up and be successful.

I found many elements of the contribution of the Minister for Local Government, and member for Heffron, incredibly moving. It was an incredible speech. Whilst I disagreed with a few of his points, overwhelmingly, it was an incredibly insightful speech—one of the most insightful speeches I have heard in this place in 14 years. One of the points the member made that I cannot remonstrate with is how he must have felt when he was subjected to some of the acts that he spoke of, considering the enormity of the history and the road that he has travelled. One thing I can share is that I know what it is like to be the subject of vilification, harassment and bullying because of things that I cannot help and are outside of my control. It is a terrible feeling. I hope that most members of the House have not had that experience. I have.

As someone with a disability, I can understand how the member for Heffron might feel and how other members of the Jewish community might feel. But nothing could prepare me to arrive at my place of worship or home to find that because of who I am—because of my antecedents—I have been subjected to threats of violence. That is unacceptable. I often struggle with limitations on free speech. My general position is that the antidote to poor speech is more free speech, but there is a line where speech turns into incitement of violence, vilification and hatred. That crosses a boundary in my philosophical liberalism because that then intrudes on someone else's rights. The bill seeks to amend the law to protect the freedoms and privileges of individuals who have absolutely every right to them.

It is incredibly hard to be a Jew in any part of the world today. Their history is extraordinary—the intifadas, the Six-Day War, the Yom Kippur War, the Holocaust and, of course, most recently, the extraordinary and horrific events of October 7. With that comes the need for governments to respond. It is not acceptable to present symbols and slogans of hatred at people's places of worship, to graffiti people's homes or to threaten violence because of somebody's heritage. That is entirely unacceptable, and it is entirely appropriate that the Government responds with not just legislation but also a statement of our values as a Parliament—what our communities expect us to believe in, to represent and to stand up for and against. The Attorney General has rightfully done that and I commend him for his work on the bill.

Other comments have been made about how other members have handled this issue, but I know the Attorney General comes from a very decent and good place. He has a history of standing up against this sort of stuff and his electorate has a very large Jewish population. Equally, I commend the shadow Attorney General, who has a similar record. I indicate that I will support his foreshadowed amendments. I am disappointed that The Greens oppose the amendments. It is a shame that, for whatever reason, they cannot bring themselves to support something that should really be bipartisan in this Parliament. I know that elements of The Greens have attended rallies that have been less than peaceful, where Hezbollah flags have been flown. I certainly do not attribute those reasons and motivations to the member for Ballina, but there are members of her party who have extreme views and do not believe in the sorts of freedoms and liberties that others in the mainstream parties or on the crossbench would appreciate.

It is a very sad reflection on a small group of individuals that we have to actually pass these laws. Some people in the media try to write those acts up as coming from one particular community or segment of society. But from what I have seen, the truth is that most of the people doing them are just ratbags—pieces of trash who simply want to cause alarm or offence. They want to incite violence and I think it is really disgusting that people would do that. It is equally disgusting for certain elements of certain media organisations to try to tag certain cultural groups as being responsible for that. The Jewish community has been very strong on those points and we should call out racism no matter what its brand, culture or creed. We can call these acts antisemitism, but what

has been happening in those communities is just out-and-out racism. These nuanced laws have needed to come before the Parliament in order to deal with that.

While I am very much and will always be a defender of free speech, these laws are necessary to address behaviour that crosses that Rubicon, that extraordinary boundary, that unacceptable line, where a community is vulnerable and needs our defence and protection. People should not have the right to commit those acts, nor should others be encouraged to replicate them in a copycat way. New South Wales should be the safest place not just for Jewish communities but for any other vulnerable community or person. From my point of view, that is what the Attorney General seeks to do. The foreshadowed Opposition amendments certainly assist in strengthening the bill, and I support those amendments as well.

My community is not renowned for having a big Jewish community, although it does have Jews of the Shoalhaven—and I note that the member for South Coast is sitting opposite—which is a small but resolute group of people who are committed to their people and to their faith. Having spoken to many of their members over the past couple of years, following October 7, I know how difficult they have found those events, how they have struggled and how they have had many views on the reaction of the Israeli Government. I wish people would not conflate the actions or the positions of the Israeli Government with the Jewish people. They are two totally different things.

This has nothing to do with the position of the Government in the Knesset; it has everything to do with saying no and calling out atrocious acts of vilification, appalling violence and abhorrent behaviour, none of which is acceptable in a civilised society like New South Wales. I want this State to be the safest place for Jews and for anybody else who is vulnerable. While it is sad that this legislation needs to come forth, it is necessary and I hope it is successful. From the moment it passes the Parliament, I hope the book is thrown at anyone who continues to contravene these laws and I hope they feel the full force of the Attorney General's law.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (18:25):** In reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Wahroonga, Prospect, Vacluse, Campbelltown, Lane Cove, Mount Druitt, Sydney, Granville, Davidson, Ballina, Oatley, Kellyville, Bathurst, Pittwater, Kiama and Castle Hill for their contributions to debate. I particularly call out the Minister for Local Government, and member for Heffron, for his contribution, which was one of the most powerful contributions I have heard in my time in this place. It shall go down as a contribution for the ages. I had some well-considered but forceful comments to make in relation to some of the comments that I have heard and some of the conduct I have witnessed in this debate. But given how they were addressed in the contribution of the member for Heffron, I will let the criticisms that he made—particularly of the member for Bathurst—stand as the Government's response.

I take a moment to respond to some of the objectionable comments made at the beginning of the contribution by the shadow Attorney General. The Government has worked quickly to develop a comprehensive suite of reforms to tackle the abhorrent antisemitic conduct we have seen in this State. We have not delayed and we are united in our opposition to that reprehensible behaviour. Following consultation and representations from stakeholders, we have brought forward a thorough and well-considered package of reforms that will actually work. I find the suggestion from the shadow Attorney General that a large segment of our party does not support the Jewish community or the protection of the members of that community from hatred wholly objectionable, baseless and typically sloppy. At a time when we seek productive and respectful contributions to debate on what should be a unifying subject, those comments were gratuitous and untrue.

I clarify some of the issues that were raised with my office in the lead-up to debate on the bill. Firstly, I stress that the amendments to the Graffiti Control Act in schedule 3 to the bill do not prohibit conduct that is not already prohibited. If conduct is not currently captured by the offence of intentionally marking premises without consent under section 4 of the Graffiti Control Act, that conduct will not be captured by the offence following the passage of the bill. That includes actions that are sometimes undertaken by victim-survivors, which the member for Sydney sought clarification on. Section 4 (5) of the Graffiti Control Act provides that the offence of intentionally marking premises does not apply to the marking of any public footpath or public pavement with chalk, including but not limited to marking out a hopscotch or handball court with chalk. That means that drawing a rainbow with chalk on a public footpath or public pavement outside a church is not currently an offence. The bill does not change that. Similarly, the tying of ribbons to church fences by victim-survivors would not currently fall within the scope of section 4 of the Graffiti Control Act because the tying of ribbons does not mark the premises. The bill does not change that.

I also address an important issue raised with my office by the member for Pittwater in relation to the protection of the homes of members of our Jewish community and, in particular, residential homes displaying a mezuzah. Everyone has a right to feel safe in their home and to express their faith. Let me be clear. It is an offence in this State to publicly display a Nazi symbol anywhere, including on residential homes. I will ensure that the statutory review of the bill takes into account the adequacy of the protections it introduces, including those relating

to the public display of Nazi symbols and graffiti, and the protections available to members of the community who display a mezuzah on their homes.

I also address some of the other issues that were raised during debate. The member for Wahroonga asked the Government to indicate its position on the Opposition's foreshadowed amendments to the bill. The Government will not be supporting the Opposition amendments. I will address each of the amendments and outline why they are not supported when the amendments are considered during consideration in detail. The member for Vaucluse noted that the bill alone will not stop antisemitism. She also noted that laws are a starting point but that more needs to be done to ensure cultural change. The Government agrees with that sentiment. In fact, before the member even made that contribution, I said this is a complex issue and there is no magic silver bullet that can cure it.

That is why the Government is taking a multifaceted approach to dealing with recent incidents of antisemitism. The bill is part of a suite of legislative reforms. The Government is also implementing non-legislative measures such as increased funding to support the crucial work of the NSW Police Force Engagement and Hate Crime unit, an increase to the Local Government Social Cohesion Grants program, training to support local governments to address the rising prevalence of hate crimes, and supporting the incredible work of the Police Force, including through Operation Shelter.

The member for Lane Cove suggested that the bill did not go far enough and that the new aggravated offence relating to displaying Nazi symbols should extend to other types of premises, such as nursing homes that house Jewish persons. The Government accepts that the display of those symbols anywhere is extremely distressing and offensive to the Jewish community, and that is why the public display of Nazi symbols anywhere is already an offence. The aggravated offence in the bill recognises that the targeting of places that our Jewish community attends for the purposes of worship, or where children go to school, or where people go to learn about the Holocaust, is particularly reprehensible and is distinctly threatening and offensive to the Jewish community.

There have been examples of antisemitic graffiti targeting synagogues and Jewish schools, along with the display of a flag with a swastika near the Sydney Jewish Museum. The Government is responding to that conduct by introducing this provision, but it acknowledges that, as time passes, there may be other places that should be included. For that reason, the Government will monitor the operation of the new offence in section 93ZA. The required statutory review that will occur two years after the commencement of the amendment Act will provide an opportunity to consider whether further changes are needed.

The member for Ballina noted that The Greens do not support the bill because it has been rushed, the existing law is adequate and it will capture children using chalk to make markings outside places of worship. The Government rejects the assertions that the bill was rushed and the changes are not required. We consulted with the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, as well as the various New South Wales government agencies, including the NSW Police Force, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and Legal Aid. This is a well-considered piece of legislation, and I thank all stakeholders for their valuable contributions.

The New South Wales Government considers that displaying Nazi symbols on or near a synagogue, a Jewish school or the Sydney Jewish Museum is particularly reprehensible conduct that deserves to be treated in the form of an aggravated offence. Additionally, as I previously noted, the offence of marking premises in the Graffiti Control Act does not apply to the marking of chalk on public footpaths or public pavements. The bill does not change that. The bill does not prohibit graffiti that is not already prohibited; the bill makes it more serious if that graffiti is on a place of worship. The rise in antisemitic graffiti is very troubling, particularly graffiti that involves displaying Nazi symbols near synagogues, Jewish schools and the Sydney Jewish Museum.

The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025 sends a clear message that that behaviour is not acceptable. It puts in place important protections for places of worship against hatred and prejudice. It is part of a suite of reforms that the Government is introducing to tackle antisemitism in New South Wales. I urge members to support it, and I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Alister Henskens.**

#### **Consideration in Detail**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** By leave: I will deal with the bill in groups of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 3 be agreed to.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (18:36):** By leave: I move Opposition amendments Nos 1 and 2 on sheet c2025-012E in globo:

**No. 1 Display of Nazi and terrorist organisation symbols**

Page 3, Schedule 1[2]–[4], lines 6–19. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead—

**[2] Part 3A, Division 9, heading**

Omit the heading. Insert instead—

**Division 9 Display of Nazi and terrorist organisation symbols**

**[3] Section 93ZA, heading**

Omit the heading. Insert instead—

**93ZA Offence of displaying Nazi and terrorist organisation symbols**

**[4] Section 93ZA(1)**

Omit the following—

a Nazi symbol commits an offence.

Maximum penalty—

- (a) for an individual—100 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months, or both, or
- (b) for a corporation—500 penalty units.

Insert instead—

the following commits an offence—

- (a) a Nazi symbol,
- (b) a terrorist organisation symbol,
- (c) a symbol that—
  - (i) resembles a Nazi symbol or terrorist organisation symbol, and
  - (ii) a reasonable person is likely to believe is displayed to show support for Nazi ideology or the terrorist organisation, respectively.

Maximum penalty—

- (a) for an individual—200 penalty units or imprisonment for 5 years, or both, or
- (b) otherwise—1,000 penalty units.

**[4A] Section 93ZA(2) and (3)**

Insert "or a symbol that resembles a Nazi symbol" after "Nazi symbol" wherever occurring.

**No. 2 Display of Nazi and terrorist organisation symbols**

Page 3, Schedule 1[5], lines 22 and 23. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

***Commonwealth Criminal Code*** means the Criminal Code set out in the Schedule to the *Criminal Code Act 1995* of the Commonwealth.

***terrorist organisation*** has the same meaning as in the Commonwealth Criminal Code, section 102.1.

The amendments relate to section 93ZA, which currently only deals with an offence with regard to the display of Nazi symbols. Amendment No. 1 changes the headings so that the amendments in the bill concern the display of both Nazi and terrorist organisation symbols. The amendment adds two other types of symbols to the Nazi symbols that are currently the subject of the offence. It adds a terrorist organisation symbol, and also a symbol that resembles a Nazi symbol or terrorist organisation symbol, and that a reasonable person is likely to believe is displayed to show support for Nazi ideology or the terrorist organisation, respectively.

The reasons for those changes are as follows. Firstly, unlike the Commonwealth, New South Wales does not currently have a law prohibiting the public display of a terrorist organisation symbol. In the context of recent events, particularly events that occurred in Hyde Park in October of last year, the Coalition believes it is important that terrorism symbols be outlawed in New South Wales as they are outlawed and criminalised under the Commonwealth Criminal Code. Secondly, the offence in (c) in amendment No. 1 deals with a situation that occurred last year when people had signs that looked like a terrorism symbol but were slightly altered. In the context in which they were being publicly displayed, a reasonable person would have believed that they were displayed to show support for a terrorist organisation. We believe that this should be criminalised. People should

not be able to flout the law regarding the display of terrorism symbols by slightly altering them to still show support for terrorist ideology.

The amendment further proposes that under section 93ZA, which currently exists, the maximum penalty of only one year imprisonment be increased to five years, which is the maximum penalty that exists under Commonwealth law. The monetary penalty is to be increased to \$22,000, and the penalty for corporations is to be increased to \$110,000. Other parts of subsections (2) and (3) of existing section 93ZA, which relate to exemptions for the display of swastikas in connection with Buddhism, Hinduism or Jainism, and subsection (3), which deals with defences of displaying good faith for academic, artistic and educational purposes, or for any other purpose in the public interest, are retained but slightly altered to take into account the new offence of a symbol that resembles a Nazi symbol. Currently, the subsections only apply to Nazi symbols.

Amendment No. 2 introduces definitions to make sense of these amendments. The first proposes that a terrorist organisation will have the same meaning as under the Commonwealth Criminal Code in section 102.1. Obviously, the Commonwealth Criminal Code is also defined. As I said, it is unlawful under the Commonwealth Criminal Code to display either a Nazi symbol or a terrorist symbol, and it is important that this Parliament shows that it also considers the public display of both of those types of symbols to be a serious criminal offence. Under Commonwealth law, the offence has a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment.

It is important that this Parliament matches that penalty, rather than accepts the much lower penalty for the aggravated offence proposed by the Attorney General of only two years imprisonment. This will send a strong message that this Parliament will not tolerate this sort of behaviour. I inform the House that these amendments, which were part of the private member's bill that was distributed seven days ago, has the support of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies. It has said publicly that the Opposition has proposed constructive reforms to criminalise the display of terrorist symbols and increase jail time for those who display Nazi or terrorist symbols and said that these proposed changes are sensible and warranted and would help to rebuild communal safety and cohesion.

I make two other points in relation to matters that fell from the member for Heffron and the Attorney General this afternoon and this evening. First of all, the member for Heffron said that there is always an open door policy and a non-political approach taken by the Government to these matters. Tuesday morning of last week, I asked the Attorney General for a copy of the bill that was referred to in the press release that was issued last week, the bill that we are now debating. He would not provide me with a copy in the morning. I had to wait until 2.30 in the afternoon last Tuesday to get a copy of the bill, which was already in the possession of the Attorney General and could have been provided to me. That does not correspond with an open door policy or the sort of cooperation that the member for Heffron suggested was the Government's approach to dealing with these matters.

I also indicate that although our private member's bill, which is the basis for the amendments now being brought before the House, was supplied at 2.00 last Tuesday to the Attorney General, it was only when he got up in his reply speech about 15 minutes ago that he first indicated to the Opposition that the Government would not support the Opposition's amendments to the bill. A lot of politics is being played. There is not much bipartisanship and no open door policy. When members suggest otherwise and make those sorts of statements, it is important to correct the public record.

Opposition members are never provided with copies of bills that are the subject of press releases by the Government until the second reading speech is given in this House. The only exception was this morning when my office was provided with a copy of the bill for incitement of racial hatred that was released today. Prior to that, we have never received a copy of a bill that is the subject of a press release by the Government until there is a second reading speech. We do not get briefs. We were not consulted on this legislation or any of the other three related antisemitism bills by the Government. When members get up in this place and suggest otherwise, it requires correction.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (18:47):** I will address the last comments first. The shadow Attorney General makes an assertion about a conversation that we had on the phone last Tuesday. That is absolutely not my recollection of the conversation at all. The question that the shadow Attorney asked me was whether the bills last week were going to be pushed through all stages. I said that I did not know but would talk to the Leader of the House. I did, and I rang him back straightaway. I have no recollection whatsoever of him asking for a copy. The door is always open. The problem is that the shadow Attorney does not walk through it. He says, "We don't get briefs." I do not recall the last time the shadow Attorney asked me for a brief. I do not recall the last time.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** You can't claim bipartisanship.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** When you know that something is coming and you ring me and say, "Can I get a briefing on it?", you can get a briefing any time you like. I do not recall the last time you asked for one, so do not get up and posture, my friend. The Government does not support these amendments. We have introduced a comprehensive suite of reforms targeting abhorrent antisemitic behaviour in New South Wales. Our measures go well beyond anything the Opposition has managed to come up with at late notice. We have made changes to make it a circumstance of aggravation to graffiti a place of worship. There has been nothing from the Opposition addressing that very serious conduct and nothing from the Opposition directed at protecting places of worship at all in New South Wales. We have made changes to ensure that it is an aggravating factor on sentence if an offence is partially or wholly motivated by hatred, which applies to all offences in New South Wales. There has been absolutely nothing from the Opposition relating to aggravating factors on sentence.

We have made changes to protect people trying to access or leave places of worship by making it an offence to block people trying to do so. We have also made it an offence to intimidate or harass people engaging in that type of conduct. That will make sure that people can freely attend their places of worship to express their faith across the State. There have been no ideas, no suggestions and no protections proposed by the Opposition about that. We have also introduced a landmark new offence to protect people against the intentional incitement of racial hatred across the State. Two private members' bills introduced by the shadow Attorney General last week contained no protections against racist hate speech.

We have also introduced an aggravated offence that means that people will be exposed to double the current maximum penalty if they publicly display a Nazi symbol on or near a synagogue, Jewish school or the Sydney Jewish Museum. We have clarified that graffiti is a public act to make sure that section 93Z and section 93ZA of the Crimes Act—provisions introduced by those opposite when they were in government, to be fair—apply to that type of conduct. The Opposition has offered up amendments that introduce offences that already exist, including at the Commonwealth level, with the same maximum penalties that already apply to Commonwealth offences, which are available to State police in New South Wales to charge. The amendments cannot be supported. They largely duplicate existing Commonwealth offences, and they could give rise to confusion that cannot be condoned in areas of law as important as this. They could lead to prosecutorial and policing operational difficulties and inconsistent application.

I address the inclusion of terrorist organisation symbols first. In 2002 New South Wales passed the Terrorism (Commonwealth Powers) Act 2002, which referred its own State-based legislative powers to the Commonwealth to make law with respect to terrorist acts. Other States passed corresponding legislation. The purpose of those unified national referrals was to make sure that the Commonwealth could make laws to outlaw terrorist acts as part of an approach to promote collaborative counterterrorism arrangements and frameworks, including across New South Wales, and it has worked well for over two decades. Terrorism offences that are enforced in New South Wales and other Australian jurisdictions are enacted by the Commonwealth Parliament under the Criminal Code, which also provides for the Commonwealth to make regulations that specify an organisation to be a terrorist organisation.

It is long and well understood that legislating for terrorism is a Commonwealth area of responsibility and the Commonwealth has legislated for an offence of displaying a terrorist organisation symbol in a public place under section 80.2HA of the Commonwealth Criminal Code. The offence applies in New South Wales. The NSW Police Force can arrest—and has arrested—people for that offence. The NSW Police Force also has powers to direct people to take down terrorist organisation symbols and it is an offence to not comply with that direction. We will, of course, continue to work with the Commonwealth—something that the Opposition has not done with this bill, obviously—to make sure that our existing anti-terrorism frameworks are strong. But we cannot support amendments that are largely duplicative of an existing, clear Commonwealth scheme that covers the conduct the Opposition is trying to address.

In relation to the proposed amendments as they apply to the display of a Nazi symbol, again, the Opposition is simply seeking to replicate both an existing New South Wales offence that it introduced and a Commonwealth offence of displaying a Nazi symbol that has the same maximum term of imprisonment as the offence proposed by the Opposition. Again, that amendment is not required. There is an offence for the display of a Nazi symbol in New South Wales. We have introduced an aggravated offence with an increased maximum penalty for the display of a Nazi symbol on or near a synagogue, Jewish school or the Sydney Jewish Museum. The Commonwealth has an offence for the display of a Nazi symbol that carries a maximum penalty of imprisonment of five years. The amendments proposed by the Opposition are not required and do not make a meaningful contribution. The Government does not support them.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (18:54):** My first point is that if having the same offence as the Commonwealth is a reason not to pass legislation relating to terrorism symbols, then that reason would also have had to apply to the legislation relating to Nazi symbols, which the Commonwealth also has an offence for.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Except you legislated those before the Commonwealth did. You've got a bad memory of your own legislation.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** The Attorney General needs to settle down a bit. My second point is that the so-called aggravated offence, which the Attorney General has introduced with regard to synagogues and other places, actually has a lower penalty than the Commonwealth penalty for displaying Nazi symbols, which applies anywhere in New South Wales, whether it is on a synagogue, a Jewish school, the Sydney Jewish Museum or anywhere else. It is not much of an aggravating offence if the penalty is lower than the Commonwealth penalty. The Opposition, frankly, agrees with the Commonwealth that there should be a stronger penalty than what is provided for by the Attorney General's aggravated offence in this bill. That is why we are seeking to amend the bill to have much more serious penalties—because the more serious the penalty, the greater the deterrence.

As opposed to a summary offence, which the Attorney General is proposing, an indictable offence to be heard in the District Court, which is what the Coalition's amendments are proposing, is likely to have a much higher penalty imposed by our courts. Therefore it is a much greater deterrent to that sort of abhorrent activity than would be the case under the Attorney General's proposed bill. That is why the Coalition is proposing a much stronger response to the public display of Nazi symbols, terrorism symbols or symbols that are deceptively similar to those symbols than that proposed by the Attorney General. I am surprised that the Government is not supporting our amendments. I am surprised that it is not agreeing with the Jewish Board of Deputies that they are sensible and warranted changes that will help rebuild community safety and cohesion. We have heard a lot about bipartisanship and community cohesion, but the Government does not seem to be prepared to walk the walk. All it wants to do is talk the talk.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that Opposition amendments Nos 1 and 2 on sheet c2025-012E be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....36  
Noes .....46  
Majority.....10

**AYES**

Anderson, K  
Ayyad, T  
Butler, R  
Clancy, J  
Coure, M  
Cross, M  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Donato, P  
Griffin, J  
Hannan, J  
Henskens, A  
Hodges, M

James, T  
Kemp, M  
Lane, J  
Layzell, D  
McGirr, J  
Moylan, B  
Petinos, E  
Provest, G  
Regan, M  
Roberts, A  
Saunders, D  
Scruby, J

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

**NOES**

Aitchison, J  
Atalla, E  
Bali, S  
Butler, L  
Car, P  
Catley, Y  
Chanthivong, A  
Cotsis, S  
Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Dalton, H  
Davis, D  
Dib, J  
Doyle, T  
Finn, J

Hagarty, N (teller)  
Harris, D  
Haylen, J  
Hoenig, R  
Holland, M  
Hornery, S  
Kaliyanda, C  
Kamper, S  
Kirby, W  
Leong, J  
Li, J  
McDermott, H  
McKeown, K  
Mehan, D  
O'Neill, M

Piper, G  
Quinnell, S  
Saffin, J (teller)  
Saliba, D  
Scully, P  
Shetty, K  
Smith, T  
Stuart, M  
Tesch, L  
Vo, T  
Voltz, L  
Warren, G  
Washington, K  
Whan, S  
Wilkinson, K

NOES

Greenwich, A

PAIRS

Cooke, S  
Di Pasqua, S  
Preston, R  
Thompson, T

Watson, A  
Harrison, J  
Park, R  
Minns, C

**Amendments negatived.**

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. If members wish to have a conversation, they should take it outside the Chamber.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (19:04):** By leave: I move Opposition amendments Nos 3 and 4 on sheet c2025-012E in globo:

**No. 3 Offences must be dealt with on indictment**

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 23—

**[5A] Section 93ZA(5)**

Insert after section 93ZA(4)—

(5) Proceedings for an offence against this section must be dealt with on indictment.

**No. 4 Display of Nazi and terrorist organisation symbols**

Page 5, Schedule 2. Insert after line 4—

**[1A] Part 4, Division 1A, Table**

Insert after item 10P—

10Q Section 93ZA(1) of the *Crimes Act 1900* (displaying Nazi and terrorist organisation symbols)  
1.5 years

In my second reading debate contribution, I made reference to the first prosecution of some of the terrible antisemitic crimes in our community in recent months. There was an election for that offence, which had an 11-year maximum imprisonment term, to be dealt with in the Local Court, and the person who committed that antisemitic firebombing offence was only given 10 months imprisonment because the matter was dealt with in the Local Court. That is an immediate discount of over 80 per cent of the sentence by reason of the matter being dealt with in the Local Court.

Opposition amendment No. 3 will make it mandatory for terrorism symbol offences to be dealt with as indictable offences and therefore be dealt with in the District Court. It is an indication of the seriousness of those offences, and the way in which they attack social cohesion, that they will not be treated as summary offences, which is a lower-order offence, but as offences treated with the utmost seriousness within our community. Opposition amendment No. 4 requires the matter to be dealt with as an indictable offence and also seeks a standard non-parole period of 1.5 years. The importance of those amendments is that they convey a very strong message from this Parliament that publicly displaying Nazi symbols, which are symbols of hate, will be dealt with as indictable offences with a standard non-parole period of 1.5 years imprisonment.

My father had the great misfortune to live in the Netherlands under Nazi occupation in the Second World War. The Nazis invaded the Netherlands the day before his fifteenth birthday. He lost two brothers to the Nazis, including one in a concentration camp as a political prisoner. Nothing could be more abhorrent, not only to members of the Jewish community but also to the many people who remember that odious regime, than the display of Nazi symbols and showing, in any way, an acceptance for Nazi ideology in a community that should have cohesion and tolerance. I encourage the House to support the notion that the display of Nazi symbols be treated with the utmost seriousness, given its capacity to corrode social cohesion, and that both offences be treated as indictable offences with a standard non-parole period of 1.5 years imprisonment to show the seriousness with which this Parliament takes offences of that kind.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (19:09):** The Government does not support the amendments. The Local Court is an incredibly efficient and effective court. It hears over 90 per cent of the criminal matters dealt with in our State, and it deals with over 350,000 criminal matters every year. To suggest that the highly qualified and hardworking judicial officers of the Local Court cannot impose appropriate sentences

for offences that involve the public display of Nazi symbols is misguided. The Local Court can impose terms of imprisonment of up to two years for a single offence and up to five years for multiple offences. In addition, if a summary offence is charged alongside indictable offences that are to be dealt with in a superior court, there is already a process under the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 to allow that summary offence to travel to a superior court. There is also a well-established process to enable elections to be made for table offences so they can be dealt with in superior courts when required.

There would be an impact on the District Court if all of those offences were to be dealt with there as a matter of course. Dealing with an offence in the District Court, understandably, takes longer, costs more, involves a trial—often a jury trial—and matters have to go through both this process and the committal process before they can be finalised. Putting every offence of displaying a Nazi symbol in the District Court means it would take longer for those matters to be finalised, which would increase the time to justice for victims not only of those matters but also of other offences. One of the things I heard when I was shadow Attorney General was that time to justice, particularly for female victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, was too long in the District Court. These amendments would make it longer.

Our Local Court is more than capable of imposing strong and significant sentences on people found guilty of an offence of the display of a Nazi symbol. The amendments are not required. They will not make the community safer, and they will not have the effect that the Opposition says they will. What will make our community safer and ensure that people who commit vile acts of antisemitism in our community are held to account is the Government's suite of legislative reforms that protect places of worship across the State, that prevent the intentional incitement of hatred based on race, and that provide for increased penalties in relation to graffiti and the display of Nazi symbols. Those reforms attack hatred and prejudice head-on.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (19:12):** Regrettably, that was an incredibly disappointing contribution from the Attorney General. He seemed to suggest that new section 93ZA was something other than a summary offence and was somehow included as a table offence. I checked this last night; it is not a table offence.

**Mr Michael Daley:** I did not say that.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** You made reference to the table offences. There is no election.

**Mr Michael Daley:** I did not say that.

**The SPEAKER:** The Attorney General and the member for Wahroonga will not debate the issue across the table.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** This offence does not go in the District Court. It is a summary offence only, and it will be dealt with in the Local Court. The Attorney General implied that I was somehow having a go at the Local Court. I was not having a go at the Local Court. In fact, it was the Premier who had a go at the sentencing by the Local Court with respect to the Curly Lewis Brewing Co firebombing on 17 October. When Guy Finnegan was sentenced to only 10 months imprisonment by the Local Court, it was the Premier who said that sentence did not meet community expectations. We are addressing that criticism by the Premier with these amendments by putting those matters in the District Court, where there are higher penalties and where the matter is more likely to be dealt with as a serious criminal offence.

I point out that the Attorney General referred to committals as being a problem. He well knows that committals are a paper process. If the Government is suggesting that the offences warranting this bill and legislative reform are serious criminal offences, then it should be able to show its seriousness and back that up by putting them in the District Court as indictable offences with standard non-parole periods so there is a true deterrent to the display of Nazi symbols. That is what the Coalition amendments propose, and I am surprised that the Government does not support them.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that Opposition amendments Nos 3 and 4 on sheet c2025-012E be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....37

Noes .....46

Majority.....9

AYES

Anderson, K  
Ayyad, T  
Butler, R

Kemp, M  
Lane, J  
Layzell, D

Singh, G  
Sloane, K  
Speakman, M

## AYES

Clancy, J  
 Coure, M  
 Cross, M  
 Crouch, A (teller)  
 Donato, P  
 Griffin, J  
 Hannan, J  
 Henskens, A  
 Hodges, M  
 James, T

McGirr, J  
 Moylan, B  
 Petinos, E  
 Preston, R  
 Provest, G  
 Regan, M  
 Roberts, A  
 Saunders, D  
 Scruby, J

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

## NOES

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

Greenwich, A  
 Hagarty, N (teller)  
 Harris, D  
 Haylen, J  
 Hoenig, R  
 Holland, M  
 Hornery, S  
 Kaliyanda, C  
 Kamper, S  
 Kirby, W  
 Leong, J  
 Li, J  
 McDermott, H  
 McKeown, K  
 Mehan, D

O'Neill, M  
 Quinnell, S  
 Saffin, J (teller)  
 Saliba, D  
 Scully, P  
 Shetty, K  
 Smith, T  
 Stuart, M  
 Tesch, L  
 Vo, T  
 Voltz, L  
 Warren, G  
 Washington, K  
 Whan, S  
 Wilkinson, K

## PAIRS

Cooke, S  
 Davies, T  
 Di Pasqua, S  
 Thompson, T

Minns, C  
 Harrison, J  
 Watson, A  
 Park, R

**Amendments negatived.**

**The SPEAKER:** For clarification, there was a fifth amendment but the member for Wahroonga has indicated that he will not proceed with it.

The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 3 be agreed to.

**Clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 3 agreed to.****Third Reading**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.****CRIMES AMENDMENT (PLACES OF WORSHIP) BILL 2025****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from 11 February 2025.**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (19:23):** I make a contribution to debate on the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025. I gave the House much of the contextual background in terms of what has happened in the community in my earlier contribution to the second reading debate on the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. This bill proposes a penalty of up to two years imprisonment

for blocking access to a place of worship without reasonable excuse, or for harassing, intimidating or threatening people accessing places of worship. It also provides move on powers to the police.

The matters in the bill appear to have been motivated by an event that was not included in the chronology I gave in my contribution to the racial and religious hatred bill. It concerns an incident that occurred on 4 December 2024, when a group of Palestinian protesters targeted the Great Synagogue in Sydney while members of the Jewish community were holed up inside. The synagogue was hosting an event to mark 100 years of the Israel Institute of Technology, called Technion, with esteemed professors, artists and political thinkers headlining the occasion.

Outside, the protest group Stop the War of Palestine led chants of, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free." They also held up a slogan calling for the eradication of the State of Israel. When police arrived on the scene, the synagogue was in lockdown. According to senior police sources who were involved in the situation, those inside the synagogue were unable to leave. Rabbi Yossi Friedman was inside the synagogue leading prayers for Israel, the Israel Defense Forces and the hostages still held in Gaza. The group of protesters outside was apparently supported by staff and students from the University of Technology Sydney and the University of Sydney. They claimed that they were protesting only against Technion despite gathering outside the home of Sydney's oldest Jewish congregation and a significant religious site.

One thing about this terrible incident which has always troubled me is that, under section 545C paragraphs (1) and (3) of the Crimes Act, it is a criminal offence with a penalty of up to six months imprisonment, a \$500 fine, or both, for "any assembly of five or more persons whose common object is by means of intimidation or injury to compel any person" to stop doing what the person is legally entitled to do. Any person who wished to get in or out of the Great Synagogue on the occasion in question was legally entitled to do that. The protest consisted of a much greater number than five persons, so clearly an offence under section 545C of the Crimes Act was committed that evening. It surprises me that no-one was arrested, charged or given move on directions by the police on that occasion. Whilst the bill proposes a welcome increase to the penalties under section 545C of the Crimes Act, the question still remains—why was the existing criminal offence not applied on 4 December 2024 outside the Great Synagogue to stop what occurred on that occasion?

I will now go through the bill in more detail. The bill deals with public assemblies, including under part 4 of the Summary Offences Act, and police powers with respect to public assemblies. Some of these aspects are covered by the Coalition's private member's bill which was introduced last week, and I will seek to use them as amendments to this bill. In schedule 1 [2] to the bill, new section 214B (1) inserts into the Crimes Act a new offence of intentionally blocking, impeding or hindering a person accessing or leaving, or attempting to access or leave, a place of worship. Section 214B (3) makes it clear that the offence only occurs if section 24 of the Summary Offences Act does not apply. That section falls within part 4 of that Act and makes it clear that if a public assembly is held substantially in accordance with the particulars furnished and agreed under section 23, then a person is not guilty of any offence, including by reason of the new offence in section 214B (3). That is important to the Opposition amendments to the bill because the Coalition wishes to make changes to the manner in which section 23 of the Summary Offences Act operates, which relates to the subject matter of the bill in question and will impact on it.

The Opposition amendments seek to specify mandatory considerations that must be taken into account before authorising a public assembly under section 23, which will then have reference to the exception under section 214B (3) of the bill. Those are in amendment No. 2 on our sheet of amendments and include considerations like public safety, public amenity impacts, business impacts, impacts on groups including religious groups in the vicinity of the proposed authorised public assembly, and the policing costs of the proposed public assembly. The amendments also provide for the possibility of a fee for the policing costs for more than three public assemblies on the same topic in a 12-month period. We believe the amendments will improve the bill and the situation regarding authorised protests in general, as well as protests around places of worship if an authorisation of a public assembly under section 23 of the Summary Offences Act occurs.

New section 214B (1) of the bill also makes it an offence to harass, intimidate or threaten a person attempting to access or leave, or actually accessing or leaving, a place of worship. Significantly, that is an offence whether or not there is an authorised public assembly under section 24 of the Summary Offences Act. New section 214B (2) contains exceptions for the offence in subsection (1), which include industrial actions, protests outside Parliament, protests outside MPs' offices or conduct in accordance with the consent of the police commissioner or persons in charge of the place of worship.

Schedule 2 to the bill extends police officers' move on directions in relation to protests or public assemblies under the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002. The Opposition amendments relating to new section 200B of that Act, covered in amendment No. 1, would expand those police powers to deal with people who disguise their appearance in a public assembly. I put to the House that this important bill with important

protections regarding accessing and leaving places of worship will be improved by the various amendments proposed by the Coalition, which I encourage the House to support.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (19:33):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025. Speaking to the issue in the bill provides me with no joy. I am not happy about doing it. I am horrified by what we are seeing, not just across the eastern suburbs of Sydney, in my electorate of Coogee and neighbouring electorates of Maroubra and Vaucluse, but also across New South Wales and Australia. I have spoken in this place a number of times against antisemitism and hate, and about the immense and beautiful impact that the Jewish community has had not just on me personally but also broadly in the eastern suburbs.

I acknowledge my good friend and colleague the Leader of the House for his heartfelt contribution to the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025. As a fifth-generation eastern suburbs resident who has been lucky enough to spend my entire life in that area, I grew up with stories from my mother regarding the very deep and real impact that Jewish migration has had on the eastern suburbs. That is something I am incredibly proud of about my electorate. I am horrified about where we are right now. It fills me with sadness. The electorate of Coogee is home to two of the biggest Jewish schools in this State: Moriah College and Emanuel School. As someone who went to a Catholic private high school, I look at the huge amounts of security that those schools require so that those kids can feel safe to access education every day. It horrifies me that that is needed. We should all be deeply ashamed of it. Their need for security existed long before October 7, but the level of security they need today is even higher.

As I said, I am not pleased to speak to the bill, but I thank the Premier and those from all sides of the Chamber who want to tackle antisemitism and hate in our community, in a nonpartisan way. I also acknowledge other points made, particularly by the Attorney General, that are incredibly alarming in the context of the bills we are debating tonight and into tomorrow. The reason we need a nonpartisan approach in tackling this scourge of hate is that we have indications that organised crime is now deeply involved. Every person has a right to attend their school and to practise their religion, whether they are a weekly attendant or they do so two times a year. In Catholicism we call them C&E Catholics; I know that in Judaism the terms are "twice-a-year" or "CEO". Every person has a right to attend their place of worship free from prejudice and hate, without fear that they are going to be discriminated against.

The bill amends the Crimes Act to create new offences that apply to persons who impede, intimidate or take certain other actions in relation to persons accessing or leaving places of worship. It provides police new powers to issue move on directions in or near places of worship, which is particularly important with regard to the Great Synagogue. The shadow Attorney General spoke about the incident of 4 December but I note that there have been a number of other incidents outside the synagogue. There were protests in Hyde Park where people crossed the road to the synagogue to take a photo, which is highly offensive, to intimidate and to bully the Jewish community practising their religion. It is because of such incidents that I welcome the new police powers. Even if fleeting, such actions intend to divide, bully and intimidate, and there is absolutely no place for them within our community.

The bill introduces new offences prohibiting the display of Nazi symbols on or near synagogues, Jewish schools and the Sydney Jewish Museum, with a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment. I welcome those new offences because, as I mentioned, my electorate is home to two beautiful Jewish schools, Emanuel School and Moriah College. It fills me with sadness to know the fear that these kids and their families have felt since October 7 simply going to school. There have been numerous incidents. I have had conversations with parents who have told me that they have been talking to their kids about hiding or not wearing their uniforms on their way to school, or not wearing their kippahs or their Star of David outside school, out of fear they will be targeted. I went to a Catholic high school in the middle of Potts Point and I cannot imagine what it would feel like to have such hate and vile language thrown at you while you are simply trying to finish the HSC or to be a teenager going to school.

Unfortunately, these laws are necessary. I am appalled that they are needed in this country. The people who seek to commit such acts do so because they want to bring terror to our suburbs and drive us apart. I say to the people in my community and across New South Wales that we all play a role in addressing hate and stamping out antisemitism. We all need to call it out. [*Extension of time*]

I note that the Opposition, at different points, has mentioned the pace at which this legislation has progressed. Labor has a long and rich history of standing up for the Jewish community and for vulnerable communities. It was the Hon. Walt Secord, a former member of the other place, who brought forward the first piece of legislation to ban Nazi symbols, and he did that while we were in opposition. It was not the Government; it was us, in opposition. It might be an uncomfortable truth for Opposition members but, from 2021, while they were in government, there were significant calls for a review of the Anti-Discrimination Act. The reality is that

that review did not happen until we formed government. For those opposite who say that we have done nothing, I remind them that they had plenty of time to address these issues when they were in government, yet they chose not to. I stand proud to be part of a Labor government that continues our long legacy of standing up for our Jewish community in the face of hate. I call on all members of this House to support the bill.

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (19:45):** I support the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025 and the amendments that will be moved by the shadow Attorney General. In December the Great Synagogue in the City of Sydney held a special event to mark 100 years of the Israel Institute of Technology. They were celebrating excellence that night, and amongst the attendees were professors, artists and political thinkers. It should have been a very special evening. Instead, it became a confronting experience for those inside, as protesters gathered out the front. They were chanting "from the river to the sea", and one held up a sign calling for the eradication of Israel.

The synagogue went into lockdown. Many of those inside could not leave for a long time. When they did leave, they were told to leave in groups and to hide any of their Jewish symbols. It was a shameful display. It was frightening and targeted. It should never happen anywhere in society, let alone at a place of worship. No-one should be fearful in their place of worship. Freedom of religion is a fundamental right in our country. Religious places should be entered freely, without fear. They should be places of sanctuary and harmony, where we think and reflect on how amazing our multicultural community in Sydney is—or should be. Unfortunately, that has been under siege in recent times.

The bill creates a criminal offence of blocking, impeding, hindering, harassing, intimidating or threatening a person accessing or leaving a place of worship. It refers almost exactly to what happened at the Great Synagogue that night. The proposed penalty is a maximum of two years imprisonment or a \$22,000 fine, or both. The bill amends section 200 of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 so that police officers can give direction in relation to a demonstration, protest, procession or assembly if it is not authorised under the Summary Offences Act and is occurring near a place of worship. The new laws are vitally important but the Opposition feels that the proposed laws do not go far enough regarding the ongoing pro-Palestinian protests. The protests have been an almost permanent encampment, occupying a public park in the city each week. That is unacceptable. It is a drain on police resources.

The Premier said in October that the weekly protests had cost taxpayers \$5 million in 2024 and that something had to be done about them. To that end, the Opposition's amendments include a new mechanism for the Commissioner of Police to take into account relevant factors in allowing or rejecting public assemblies, including the cost to the State, the economic and social impact of those assemblies, the impact on small or large businesses, the frequency of similar assemblies, as well as public safety. For repeated protests, the Government or court can, if it wishes, charge part or all of the cost of policing the protest as a condition of approval.

The Opposition is also proposing amendments to allow the police to better identify perpetrators of antisocial conduct at public assemblies by allowing the police to require the obscuring of a person's appearance to be taken away or, alternatively, for the person to be taken into custody for the remainder of that protest. There would be an exception for religious dress obscuring a person's appearance. As the shadow Attorney General said last week:

... extraordinary times call for extraordinary action by this Parliament to restore social cohesion back to our community and to punish those who would rob us of the peacefulness and security that every group in our community is entitled to in a civil society.

Enough is enough. These protests have moved beyond demonstrations of free speech. They have become permanent weekly disruptions in the heart of our city. While freedom of speech is a fundamental right, it must be balanced against the rights of others to live, to work, to earn a living and to move freely without constant disruption and intimidation. When one group's expression imposes undue burdens including financial burdens on the wider community, the line between free speech and infringement on others' freedoms must be redrawn and balanced. It must be fair. The Opposition is putting forward sensible amendments.

I agree with the points made about the speed of this bill coming to this House. We want speed and we want to fix this problem. I wrote to the Premier and to the Attorney General a month ago, asking to have input. My electorate has one of the largest Jewish populations in this State and I wanted to have a say. I am hearing directly from constituents who are impacted. I am hearing directly from those who were trapped in the Great Synagogue that night. I am hearing directly from people in my community whose houses were firebombed, whose cars were burnt and whose children went to that day care centre. Friends of the Jewish community and I wanted to have a say and to work collectively. It was a missed opportunity for the Government to not even respond to my email. That is a deep shame because in this Chamber there is a collective sense of action to stamp out antisemitism. We are aligned in that.

I have congratulated the Premier many times on his stand on antisemitism. Many of the bills before the House this week will achieve great things, but we need to achieve those great things together. The Opposition has put forward sensible amendments that will be debated. I call on the Government to work with us to ensure that we have strong laws to protect not only Jewish citizens but all people who celebrate different faiths across our city. They all deserve to feel safe in their places of worship.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (19:52):** Summer is a quintessential part of being an Australian. It is a time to enjoy a game of backyard cricket. It is a time to unwrap Christmas presents or to light the menorah, or both. It is a time to take the kids to the beach and for family holidays. It is a time to relax and come together as a community and as a family. But over the last few months, our New South Wales Jewish community did not get the quintessential summer we hoped for. Instead, we witnessed a summer of rolling hatred and domestic terrorism. Today we take the next steps of putting an end to this shameful chapter in our State's history. We are drawing a line in the sand that acts intended to cause violence, incite hate or create harmful division in our community will not be tolerated.

I support the Crimes (Places of Worship) Bill 2025. I thank the Hon. Michael Daley, the Attorney General, for his work in preparing this bill and for his collaboration with stakeholders to provide a timely legislative response. In particular, I acknowledge contributions from the Faith Affairs Council; the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies; the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, Jillian Segal, AO; the LGBTIQ+ Advisory Council; the Law Society of New South Wales, the New South Wales Bar Association, Legal Aid NSW, and the NSW Police Force. The bill demonstrates a firm legislative response to any person attempting to deter another from expressing their faith in New South Wales.

Over recent months, we have been appalled by disgraceful acts targeting places of worship. We were shocked to witness an arson attack on the Adass Israel Synagogue of Melbourne on 6 December 2024 and the vandalism of synagogues in Allawah and Newtown on 10 January and 11 January 2025. We also looked on in horror as a childcare centre in Maroubra was engulfed in flames. As a State, we were shocked to see this happening in our own backyard and the NSW Police Force immediately began an investigation to identify and arrest those responsible. This month the Government acted to strengthen the instruments needed to hold perpetrators accountable. Targeting places where people congregate to share and express their faith with demonstrations, threats and acts of intimidation or violence is unacceptable.

Recent events have shone a harsh light on the clear need to ensure that people of all faiths are able to practise their religion freely and without fear of intimidation or harassment. The bill makes crucial amendments to protect and affirm this right, and to ensure that we have the means to effectively deter the few who do not respect our faith community. It amends the Crimes Act 1900 and creates two new offences to capture intentional acts that seek to impede people from accessing a place of worship as well as conduct that intimidates, harasses or threatens people attempting to access a place of worship. It also amends the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, or LEPR, to create an exception to existing limitations on New South Wales move on powers.

I will now address the key amendments in this bill. Item [2] of schedule 1 inserts new section 214B into the Crimes Act and creates two new offences. It makes it an offence to, without reasonable excuse, intentionally block, impede, or hinder another from accessing or leaving a place of worship. To satisfy this offence, the conduct must be intentional. New section 214B (1) (a) makes provision for the reasonable excuse element, recognising other scenarios in which access to a place of worship may be validly blocked—such as a community market, a sporting event, or for essential maintenance of the complex. The second offence in new section 214B (1) (b) provides that a person in or near a place of worship must not harass, intimidate or threaten a person accessing or leaving, or attempting to access or leave, the place of worship.

Unlike the first offence, new section 214B (1) (b) does not include a reasonable excuse element. That is because it is never, and will never be, reasonable to harass, intimidate or threaten a person, particularly when they are trying to practise their faith. Both offences carry a maximum penalty of imprisonment for two years, a fine of \$22,000, or both. Schedule 2 to the bill amends section 200 of LEPR. Section 197 of LEPR empowers police to issue move on directions, if they believe on reasonable grounds that a person's behaviour or presence is obstructing another or constitutes harassment or intimidation. Section 200 of the Act limits the exercise of those powers. Schedule 2 amends section 200 to include additional circumstances in which move on directions can be issued. Where a demonstration, protest, procession or assembly is not an authorised public assembly under the Summary Offences Act 1988, a police officer will be able to issue a move on direction if the assembly occurs near a place of worship.

It is important to note that none of the new provisions, nor the extended move on powers, are intended to impact the right to peaceful protest. In fact, the new section 214B (1) (a) offence will not apply if the person's conduct forms an industrial action, dispute or campaign; occurs at or outside Parliament House or an office of a

member of Parliament; or is in accordance with the consent of the Commissioner of the NSW Police Force or the place of worship. It is not the intention of the bill to criminalise lawful protests or civil assemblies near places of worship. The Summary Offences Act 1988 creates a framework under which protest organisers can seek authorisation to hold a public assembly. While there is nothing inherently unlawful about unauthorised public assemblies, participants in an authorised public assembly are protected from prosecution for obstruction offences, provided the assembly is approved by the Commissioner of the NSW Police Force.

The bill has been developed with recognition and adherence to those protections. It makes clear that the sections 214B (1) offences are subject to section 24 of the Summary Offences Act. The bill also identifies that the additional circumstance to exercise move on powers will not be valid where a demonstration is authorised under the Summary Offences Act. I stress, particularly to those persons and organisations who have expressed concern to me, that the bill will not prohibit or restrict lawful, peaceful protests near places of worship. The Government recognises the need for careful and balanced legislation, particularly in this bill, which hinges on the intersection of key civil and political rights under Australian law and international human rights law. The right to protest is a critical aspect of our society. However, it is appropriate that there are safeguards to protect members of our community and uphold their freedom of religion.

The Australian Constitution recognises the importance of freedom of political communication and freedom of religion. Additionally, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, or the ICCPR, protects freedom of religion, freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly under articles 18, 19 and 21. However, those rights are not absolute. For example, Article 19 (3) of the ICCPR provides that freedom of expression may be limited by law when necessary to protect the rights and reputations of others, national security, public order, public health and morals. Further, the preamble to the ICCPR recognises that civil and political freedom can only be achieved if conditions are created that allow everyone to enjoy their civil and political rights. [*Extension of time*]

While the bill may limit freedom of expression in some cases, it does so proportionately to facilitate freedom of religion and the right to manifest that freedom in a place of worship. As stated in the Supreme Court of New South Wales case of *Commissioner of Police v Langosch* in 2012, "it is the nature of a protest that others will be affected and their routines interrupted." This interruption is encompassed in the freedom of expression, but it cannot contravene another's right to exercise their freedom of religion. The amendments proposed strike an appropriate balance in that regard. In Western Sydney, I am proud to represent a vibrant and significant faith community. The electorate of Prospect is home to the largest and most active faith community in New South Wales: Catholic, Jewish, Coptic, Maronite, Hindu, Chaldean, Buddhist, Islamic, Orthodox and Protestant faith traditions—and I am sure I have missed one! We all watched on in horror as our Jewish brothers and sisters experienced acts of hate and aggression purely because of their beliefs and their race.

Recent incidents were intended to intimidate our Jewish community. Manufactured to express contempt, inflame anger, drive wedges between people and provoke, they aim to transform differences of perspective into hatred and violence. It is completely unacceptable that public hatred and hostility have emerged in our respectful contemporary New South Wales society. Many members of our community are people of diaspora who have immigrated seeking prosperity and safety. Some have endured unimaginable lived experiences, carrying historic trauma from religious persecution and human rights abuses. They come to New South Wales in search of peace and a chance to rebuild in an accepting and supportive society. We must act to ensure we continue to provide that safe space and home in New South Wales.

Last year I attended the commemoration at the Parramatta synagogue for victims of the October 7 attack. During the commemoration, the synagogue president and a good friend of mine, Michael Morris, OAM, reflected on his memories of the synagogue. Once they had a low brick fence and garden where children would play. They displayed a Star of David prominently so everyone in Parramatta could see it, welcoming people to join the congregation and share many community engagements. Today their security fence is six-feet high and monitored 24/7. They stand behind a security door with a panic button in hand. They no longer hold open community events and children no longer play outside the synagogue.

Extra security measures were implemented gradually due to changing social dynamics—and that is the polite way of putting it. These escalated into security concerns and hate crimes. Perpetrators of hateful acts tried to shatter the sanctity. They failed. The Jewish community at the Parramatta synagogue continue united and strong, with all of our community's support. Our Government stands with them, and with all members of our Jewish community. Blocking access to a synagogue is an unacceptable act of antisemitism. It is imperative that we enact these amendments, to enforce stronger penalties and expand police powers to ensure people can practise their beliefs safely.

I personally thank the NSW Police Force for its work targeting antisemites. The NSW Police Force is working to maintain peace and safety in our country in New South Wales. Strike Force Pearl has increased the number of dedicated detectives to 40. Operation Shelter conducts more than 300 proactive patrols every day

around places of worship, schools and kindergartens. We must ensure that they are equipped with the tools they need to protect our Jewish and other faith communities. Freedom of religion is a fundamental freedom afforded to every person in New South Wales. Due to unconscionable acts intended to create division in our society, members of our Jewish community are being barred from fully exercising their fundamental freedoms and rights. These attempts to divide our State are deplorable and they will not work. We must act quickly and decisively to ensure that our faith-based communities can continue to live in harmony. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) (20:07):** I contribute to debate on the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025. Religious freedom is the cornerstone of Australian democratic principles. As a State and as a nation, we are often guided by and modelled on traditional Judeo-Christian values. As our community has grown and changed over the decades, we have embraced and welcomed the messages and values of Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism. The varying religious identities of our citizens strengthen our society, and the teachings throughout our multiple faiths speak to our duty and obligations to one another, and the expectations of members in this place.

Leviticus says, "You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself." The Quran says, "Because everyone is created by God Almighty, the Maker of All, humans must treat one another with full honour, respect and loving-kindness." The Tripitaka says, "Be truthful, do not yield to anger. Give freely, even if you have little." Whilst we maintain the clear separation of church and state, the messages of all religions are interwoven with the responsibility of government through the articulation of peace, tolerance and understanding. That message of peace, tolerance and understanding is now under threat. For the 500 days since October 7, our Jewish community has been targeted, vilified and ostracised for no other reason bar their ethnic and religious identity.

The jurisdictional legitimacy of the Israeli Government is not derived from Australian Jews. The repeated and targeted attacks are not influential or liberating. The Australian Jewry are not Israeli voters. They hold no positions of power in that State. They hold no influence over Israeli affairs. Their fraternity with the State of Israel is based entirely on ethnicity and faith. The attacks are malicious. They are a call to action with the singular purpose of striking fear into the Australian Jewry and intimidating them into the suppression and resignation of their Australian Jewish identity. The attacks violate the core values that we all hold dear. With each attack on our citizens, it becomes clearer that growing radicalisation and rife antisemitism have been able to flourish under a relaxed government that has allowed the behaviours to continue. Churches, synagogues, mosques and temples are the beating social and cultural hearts of communities across our suburbs—every bit as much as a town hall is to a municipality or the Parliament is to our State democracy.

To hinder access to a place of worship is to strike at the core of a person's religious and cultural identity. It is shameful enough that our Jewish community have to increase security at schools, businesses, charities and their homes. We must ensure that steps are taken to restrict the ability of radicals and antisemites to intimidate peaceful and tolerant religious congregations. This bill is not without precedent. In the course of the life of a pluralist and respectful democracy, there is a need for lawful and genuine protest. This bill recognises the need for protest protection. The police have the same discretionary powers as ever. But the powers granted to our police are essential. They send a critical message, which is long overdue, to those who wish to intimidate and repress people of faith that they are not welcome, their views are not welcome and their actions are not welcome. Community sentiment and basic human decency demand we send that message. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (20:11):** I support the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025, which amends the Crimes Act 1900 to prohibit persons who are in or near a place of worship from intentionally blocking, impeding or hindering a person who is seeking to access or leave a place of worship without a reasonable excuse. It prohibits a person from harassing, intimidating or threatening a person who is seeking to access or leave a place of worship. The bill also amends the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 to enable police officers to issue a move on direction to persons participating in a demonstration, protest, procession or assembly in or near a place of worship in certain circumstances.

I moved to Parramatta 30 years ago. Prior to that, I lived in the inner west and eastern suburbs, and I have formed lifelong friendships with members of the Jewish community. Like many other members of Parliament, I have shared celebrations with friends as their children have marked their coming-of-age bar mitzvahs and bat mitzvahs. It is wonderful to be a part of those religious rituals. Although I was familiar with Jewish schools and synagogues in other parts of the city, it was not until I worked for the former member for Parramatta, Tanya Gadiel, that I even realised there was a synagogue in Parramatta. Tanya's children attended the synagogue preschool, like thousands of other children since the Parramatta synagogue was established on Victoria Road in 1955. It was born from the initial establishment of the synagogue in a house at 471 Western Road in Pendle Hill.

In 1949, Morry, Alf and Mark Borman, Lou Klein, Sidney Sinclair, and their families came together to establish a community to commence formal Jewish education for their children. It saddens me as I drive past the

synagogue every day on my way to my electorate office that there is a security camera, security guards and—regularly—police perched up on the verge. Bravely, the Star of David welded into the little gate at the front of the synagogue remains. But, sadly, the peace and relaxed environment that I first witnessed 20 years ago is no more. I am proud to represent an incredibly diverse electorate. Parramatta is home to the first Christian church in Australia, St John's; St Patrick's Cathedral; the Nan Tien Temple; several mosques, prayer halls and churches of varying denominations; and a synagogue.

It is disappointing that today the Government needs to take the serious steps laid out in this bill. But our role is to protect all members of society and ensure that everyone of faith can practise their religions in safe environments. The current situation is not new. Sadly, it has gone on for many years. But with the increase and rise of harmful activities in recent times, there is no alternative for us to ensure that those who are in a vulnerable position are protected. This bill was developed in consultation with the Faith Affairs Council, the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, the special envoy to combat antisemitism, the LGBTIQ+ Advisory Council, the Law Society of New South Wales and the New South Wales Bar Association, as well as internal New South Wales government stakeholders, including the NSW Police Force and Legal Aid NSW. It is a sad day when we do need to make these amendments to our laws. But our job is to ensure that our communities are safe. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (20:16):** I support the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025. The Davidson electorate is home to three synagogues: two in St Ives and one in Lindfield. I have visited all three and they are wonderful places that bring the community together. There are many other places of worship in my local community, including churches and temples. The purpose of the bill is to address activities outside places of worship that aim to intimidate people trying to attend those places to express their faith or to prevent people from practising their faith. Freedom is so important in the democratic society of Australia. The bill creates two new offences, which I will detail shortly. On 3 February 2025 I wrote an opinion piece for *The Australian Jewish News* entitled "We all have a role to play in combatting antisemitism". In the opinion piece I stated:

... whilst I support peaceful protest, it should not be allowed directly outside places of worship. To do so removes the freedom, safety, and dignity of a community. Data released to the NSW Parliament shows 117 public assemblies were held in the year after October 2023 in Sydney's Hyde Park opposite the Great Synagogue. This has resulted in our Jewish community changing or cancelling plans, such as bar and bat mitzvahs. A protest that directly impacts the freedom of a community is not the Australian way.

Sadly, since the events of October 7, those actions have taken place. On 15 December 2023 an article in *The Australian* was published that spoke directly to what this bill is about. The article, entitled "Sydney synagogue forced to 'bar' mitzvah amid pro-Palestine rally concerns", states:

Members of Sydney's oldest synagogue congregation have felt forced to relocate a bat mitzvah given the proximity and clash with weekly Hyde Park pro-Palestine rallies as they called for a route rethink.

In the article, Jewish Board of Deputies President David Ossip acknowledged the right of peaceful protest was a defining feature of a liberal democracy, but said that a line had been crossed. He said:

Such a right does not extend to vilifying others, spreading hate speech or inciting violence ... The location of such protests also needs to be carefully considered to avoid consistently disrupting the rights of other groups to peacefully congregate.

The antisemitic language, graffiti, vandalism, violence and terror that we are tragically witnessing are acts of hate, evil and exclusion. Our Jewish community rightly and justifiably feels unsafe, and that is heartbreaking. We need to do everything that we can as legislators and this bill is one such measure. Antisemitism goes against everything we stand for as Australians—our way of life and the values that we hold dear—and it has been on the rise since 7 October 2023. Data released to the Parliament shows that the NSW Police Force received 130 reports of incidents of antisemitism in the financial year before October 2023 and in the following year there were 425 incidents, representing a shocking 227 per cent increase. We cannot under any circumstances allow antisemitism to become normalised in our community.

The bill does several things. Firstly, it amends the Crimes Act 1900 to create two new offences that capture intentional acts that seek to impede people from accessing or leaving a place of worship, as well as conduct that intimidates, harasses or threatens people who are attempting to access or leave a place of worship. Secondly, the bill amends the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 to create an exception to existing limitations on the exercise of move on powers by New South Wales police officers so that such powers may be exercised in relation to demonstrations, protests, processions or assemblies outside places of worship in appropriate circumstances. The bill can be further strengthened, and the shadow Attorney General will move amendments.

I finish by sharing a story about a place of worship within the Davidson electorate that demonstrates why the bill is very relevant. A year ago the local rabbi invited me to the North Shore Synagogue in Lindfield to help plant a tree. It was no ordinary event with a shovel and watering can. That day we planted a dedicated tree of peace. Our local synagogues bring our vibrant Jewish community together to share faith, worship and prayer. They are spaces of love, peace and inclusion. The tree of peace that the rabbi, the other members of the local

Jewish community and I planted continues to grow in the synagogue garden. I know that the love, peace and inclusion of our Jewish community will help that tree stand strong and tall, and to weather any storm. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:22):** I thank the Attorney General for bringing to this House a trilogy of bills to address the antisemitic attacks on synagogues, schools and early learning centres. The three bills are the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025, which was debated earlier today; the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025, which is before us now; and the newly introduced Crimes Amendment (Inciting Racial Hatred) Bill 2025, which will be debated tomorrow. The Attorney General has acted as quickly as possible to ensure that workable laws are brought before the Parliament after consultation with stakeholders. These bills are a targeted legislative response to the abhorrent antisemitic attacks.

The member for Heffron made a powerful contribution to the previous debate that included sharing his personal journey and that of his family, including what his mother has suffered. To paraphrase the member for Heffron, he said that there is a clear need for these specific laws to address the current antisemitic attacks. Before we can build community harmony and address the many other parts of the community that have been subjected to hate crimes—including those based on culture, sexual orientation, sex, gender or other religions—we must first address the most offensive antisemitic attacks.

The Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025 focuses on intentionally blocking, impeding, hindering, harassing, intimidating or threatening a person who seeks to access or leave a place of worship, without a reasonable excuse. Whilst people may have legitimate concerns about how governments around the world are conducting themselves, that in no way excuses actions undertaken by people living in Australia to impede, harass, intimate or threaten a person accessing or leaving a place of worship. What the Israeli Government does is not influenced by our Jewish community in Australia. The attacks on religious institutions are really an attack on the Australian way of life and must be stamped out. The Sydney synagogue has been attacked with graffiti and people need security guards to provide safe passage in and out. Recently a Melbourne synagogue was set alight.

The member for Bathurst unfortunately tried to politicise the issue in his contribution to the previous debate, saying that Labor had acted slowly and identifying a few incidents from the past 500 days. I remind the House that the member for Bathurst served as police Minister from December 2021 to March 2023 and has held senior ministerial and shadow ministerial roles since 2014. During his tenure as Minister for Police, in 2022 a published report on antisemitism in Australia identified increasing concerns from the Jewish community about the rise of neo-Nazi activity and the proliferation of neo-Nazi groups. The member for Bathurst mentioned some incidents during his speech, but the report identified many such incidents during his time as police Minister. One incident occurred in Bondi on 3 June 2022:

A male and female approached an identifiably Jewish man, the female shouted at the Jewish man "You Jews don't belong in the area!" and "You're destroying the heritage!", then the female removed the man's hat from his head and threw it on the ground ...

The report details many other instances of vandalism, with Nazi swastikas either painted or engraved into fencing, as well as public verbal abuse and abusive text messages and phone calls. Antisemitic incidents grew by 6.9 per cent during 2022 compared with the previous year, with 45 per cent of all incidents in Australia taking place in New South Wales. From 2016 to 2022, the number of antisemitic attacks doubled. The member for Bathurst waltzed into the Chamber to throw political barbs at the Government, saying that we have not acted for 500 days, but the former police Minister failed to act at all during his term. Can he explain to the House why he did nothing over 4,380 days of government and 460-odd days as police Minister? The laws are necessary. There is no room for politicising those antisemitic attacks in this House. Members should concentrate on improving laws and addressing antisocial and antisemitic behaviour. I thank the Attorney General for bringing the bill to the House. I commend the bill.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (20:28):** I contribute to debate in strong support of the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025. It is crucial legislation that reaffirms one of the most fundamental principles: the right to practise one's faith without fear, harassment or intimidation. For centuries, places of worship have served as sanctuaries of peace, reflection and community, regardless of faith or denomination. Those sacred spaces provide thousands, if not millions, of Australians with a sense of belonging, hope and spiritual guidance. However, in recent years, and particularly in the past 12 months, there has been an alarming rise in targeted harassment and obstruction outside places of worship. Worshippers have been threatened, intimidated and in some cases prevented from accessing their religious institutions. That is totally unacceptable. Every Australian should be able to freely enter their place of worship without fear of violence or disruption.

The bill is not just about upholding public order; it is about protecting religious freedom, reinforcing respect for all faiths and ensuring that our communities remain safe and inclusive for all. The Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025 will make it a criminal offence to block, impede, hinder, harass, intimidate or

threaten any person attempting to enter or leave a place of worship. As is clear from the explanatory notes, the penalties in the bill are significant, with a maximum of two years imprisonment or a \$22,000 fine. That sends a clear message that Australia will not tolerate attempts to intimidate people in their places of worship. There have been distressing reports of individuals or groups deliberately blocking entrances, shouting abuse or following worshippers as they enter or exit religious sites. Those actions are not legitimate protests; they are acts of intimidation designed to instil fear and disrupt religious practices.

To be clear, the bill does not limit the right to protest. As previous speakers have outlined, it respects lawful demonstration and industrial actions. However, it rightly distinguishes between peaceful public expression and targeted harassment of individuals seeking to practise their faith. There are important exemptions in the bill. Industrial action is exempt, along with public assemblies authorised under the Summary Offences Act and protests held with police approval. The measures strike the right balance between preserving public order and respecting civil liberties. Religious intolerance is not a distant issue; it is happening in Australia. There have been increasing cases of harassment outside mosques, synagogues, churches and temples. Those instances do not just affect individuals; they create fear within entire communities.

Religious discrimination does not belong in our country. Diverse faith communities have been part of Australia's fabric for generations, contributing to our great society in every field from health care to education, politics, business and social services. It is our duty as lawmakers to ensure that people of all faiths feel safe and supported. As I mentioned earlier, in the past 12 months hate crimes targeting places of worship have become more common. Acts of vandalism, verbal abuse and physical obstruction outside religious institutions have been reported across multiple States, and particularly in New South Wales. Without strong laws, those acts will continue to grow, threatening harmony and undermining the values of tolerance and respect that define Australia. The bill will provide law enforcement with the tools needed to prevent and penalise such actions effectively.

Another key provision is the amendment to section 200 of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act. The change will allow police officers to give directions to individuals or groups near places of worship if their gathering is not authorised under the Summary Offences Act. That is not about banning protests; it is about ensuring that demonstrations do not spiral into intimidation or violence. Week after week, unauthorised protests have caused distress and fear among worshippers. The amendment empowers the police to act where necessary and ensures our places of worship remain places of peace, not conflict. We cannot allow intimidation outside places of worship to become the norm. Every Australian should be free to practise their faith without fear. The bill is not about limiting free speech; it is about ensuring that religious communities can worship in peace, free from harassment and obstruction.

The Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025 is an important step towards strengthening religious freedom and public order in Australia, but we can and must go further by adopting stronger protections and additional safeguards. I call on all members of Parliament to support the bill. Stand with our faith communities and reject intimidation and hatred in all forms. This is not a political issue; it is a moral issue. It is about ensuring that every person, regardless of their religion or beliefs, feels safe and respected in our society. Places of worship are sacred. Their protection is not optional, but essential. I urge members of this House to pass the bill and work together to ensure that it delivers the strongest possible protection for our communities.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (20:35):** I contribute to debate on the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025. Acts of antisemitism in New South Wales, including vandalism, arson and harassment targeting the Jewish community, are unacceptable. The Minns Government has pledged new laws to combat antisemitism, including stronger penalties for hate crimes, increased police resources and targeted legislation against Nazi symbols and religious harassment. This bill is a crucial piece of legislation that aims to safeguard the fundamental right of individuals to practise their faith freely and without fear of harassment, intimidation or obstruction.

The bill is a necessary and measured response to the disturbing rise in incidents targeting places of worship. It reaffirms the Government's commitment to protecting religious freedoms while upholding the principles of peaceful assembly and lawful protest. On 8 December 2024 the New South Wales Government announced that it would consider legislative reforms to address activities occurring outside places of worship that intimidate, harass or prevent individuals from practising their faith. That commitment followed a series of deeply concerning incidents, including the arson attack on the Adass Israel Synagogue in Melbourne on 6 December 2024 and the vandalism of synagogues in Newtown and Allawah. There was also an alleged arson attempt on the Newtown synagogue in January of this year.

The people of New South Wales overwhelmingly reject those disgraceful acts of hatred and intimidation. Every person, regardless of their faith, should feel safe when attending their place of worship. The bill ensures that right is upheld by introducing targeted amendments to the Crimes Act 1900 and the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, known as LEPR. The bill will introduce new section 214B to the Crimes

Act 1900, which establishes two new offences. Under new section 214B (1) (a), it will be an offence to intentionally block, impede or hinder a person from accessing, leaving, or attempting to access or leave a place of worship without a reasonable excuse. Under new section 214B (1) (b), it will be an offence to harass, intimidate or threaten a person accessing, leaving, or attempting to access or leave a place of worship. Both offences carry a maximum penalty of \$22,000 in fines, imprisonment for up to two years, or both.

A "place of worship" is defined as a building or other structure ordinarily used for worship, including churches, mosques, synagogues and temples. That definition ensures that the legislation is clear and focused on protecting places where religious services are held regularly. The bill also amends LEPRA to allow police officers to issue move on directions in relation to protests occurring in or near places of worship under certain circumstances. Currently section 200 of the LEPRA limits the ability of police to issue such directions in relation to protests, except where there is a serious risk to safety or where an assembly is unauthorised. The bill amends section 200 to allow police officers to issue directions where a demonstration, protest, procession or assembly is either unauthorised or not being held in accordance with its authorisation and is occurring in or near a place of worship. It is important to stress that this bill does not prohibit lawful, peaceful protests outside places of worship. Instead, it provides law enforcement with the necessary powers to address conduct that crosses the line from protest to intimidation, obstruction or harassment.

In a democratic society, it is essential that legislation upholds and balances civil and political rights. The Australian Constitution protects freedom of political communication, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Australia is a party, safeguards freedom of religion, freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly. However, those rights are not absolute and can be subject to lawful and proportionate limitations to protect public safety, order and the rights and freedoms of others. This bill strikes the right balance between the right to protest and the fundamental right to worship freely and safely. While it places reasonable limits on certain forms of expression near places of worship, those measures are justified to ensure the security and dignity of religious communities across New South Wales. The drafting of this bill was informed by consultation with key stakeholders, including the NSW Faith Affairs Council, the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, the LGBTIQ+ Advisory Council, the Law Society of NSW, the NSW Bar Association, the NSW Police Force and Legal Aid NSW. Their input has been instrumental in shaping the bill so that it is both effective and proportionate.

The amendments will come into force three months after the bill receives assent, or earlier upon proclamation, allowing sufficient time for police and other stakeholders to undertake the necessary implementation and training. Both freedom of religion and the right to protest are integral to our democracy. However, no-one should have to run a gauntlet of intimidation simply to attend a place of worship. The bill provides a clear, enforceable framework that protects the rights of all individuals to practise their faith peacefully and without fear. The bill underscores our longstanding promise of safety for Jewish people and asserts that foreign conflicts cannot justify hatred in Australia. The Minns Government is firmly committed to eradicating antisemitism and ensuring that New South Wales remains a place of tolerance and security for all. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (20:43):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025. The notable rise in antisemitism, particularly in the form of public displays of Nazi symbols, hate speech and attacks on Jewish communities and property, is abhorrent and has shone a light on the worst parts of our society. Any form of racial or religious hatred will not be accepted or tolerated in New South Wales. We have a diverse, multicultural society that is able to live harmoniously together, yet some individuals are spreading hatred and causing fear in many communities. Enough is enough, and tougher penalties are required for any form of racial or religious hatred. This bill aims to create a criminal offence of blocking, impeding, hindering, harassing, intimidating or threatening a person accessing or leaving, or attempting to access or leave, a place of worship. The penalty for that type of offence will be a maximum two-year prison sentence, a \$22,000 fine, or both.

Each time a pro-Palestine protest takes place, it disrupts the capital city of New South Wales, requiring hundreds of police officers to be pulled from other commands and districts from around the region. Those police manage the crowds at a cost of millions of dollars to the taxpayers of this State. That ultimately leaves other commands further understrength, with crime potentially escalating in those communities, leading to further police burnout. It is simply not fair and completely unreasonable to expect those protests to continue weekly at no cost to the organisers. That is not free speech; it is crippling our Police Force and taking taxpayers for a ride. We see major sporting events where additional police are deployed, and they are paid for by the event organisers, yet we seem to allow protests to continue freely.

The Government needs to declare the protests illegal or have a system whereby after so many protests they become a user-pays event. The free-for-all of continuous protests must stop. After three repeat protests, payment

for the cost of policing should be a condition of approval. Otherwise, no payment means no legal protest. That is why I support the amendments foreshadowed by the shadow Attorney General to make these laws stronger. The Opposition wants clarity around the factors that must be taken into account for a public assembly to be authorised. We want to allow for payment for the cost of policing after three repeat protests, and that may be a condition of approval. We also want to increase police powers for dealing with protesters who hide their appearance. As I said, at sporting events and major events that take place across New South Wales, organisers have to pay to have police numbers there. We have seen protests going on week in, week out since October 2023, which has come at a cost to taxpayers in New South Wales. It simply cannot go on forever.

Furthermore, during certain protests, some participants have displayed symbols, slogans or imagery that are associated with antisemitism. Those symbols have served as a catalyst for further hate and violence against Jewish individuals. At times, inflammatory language used at those protests has incited hostility and hatred towards Jews as well. When that type of antisemitic rhetoric and violence is allowed to continue weekly, it is no wonder it has fuelled division and caused harm to the fabric of the multicultural society we live in. If we look across the border to our neighbours in Victoria, its Premier was able to come to an agreement with pro-Palestine activists to end their weekly protests in Melbourne's CBD, after they were disrupting the city for 71 consecutive Sundays. Maybe the New South Wales Government could also look at providing a system that would see those protests not occurring week in, week out.

Making these changes with amendments also sends a message to potential offenders that there are severe consequences for engaging in such harmful conduct. That is why the Coalition amendments that would make these laws stronger are integral to the success of the bill. If left unchecked, racial and religious hatred can escalate into more serious forms of violence such as hate crimes or even acts of terrorism. After 15 incidents of antisemitism in the past two months, we can no longer continue with a lacklustre approach to this most serious subject. By imposing tougher penalties, we can prevent any further escalation of harmful behaviour that could have far-reaching consequences for public safety. Every individual has the right to live free from hatred, prejudice and discrimination. To be an effective government, no matter what side of the House we sit on, we must ensure that New South Wales remains a safe and inclusive society for all its residents.

We have seen antisemitism rallies held in the Sydney CBD labelled as being intimidating and harassing. These weekly protests should not continue. They should be banished from the city centre. Antisemitism has escalated in Australia. These incidents have become more violent in nature in the 16 months since October 2023, and they need to be dealt with. We need legislation to ensure that no demonstrations are held outside places of worship. There are instances of community members who feel extremely threatened. People are being terrorised and they feel unsafe. In some places, people are looking at leaving or not sending their children to school or university. Some people are even thinking of sending their children overseas to get away from these incidents. They are more violent now and must be condemned. The Parliament of New South Wales can work together to stamp out this behaviour.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (20:51):** I make a contribution to the debate on the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025. The bill seeks to insert a new offence into part 4AF of the Crimes Act, expanding "Major facilities" to include places of worship. The bill will make it an offence to block, impede or hinder a person seeking to access or leave a place of worship. It will also insert into the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act the power for police to issue a move on direction to persons participating in a demonstration, protest, procession or assembly in or near a place of worship.

From the outset, I acknowledge the concerns in our community that the bill seeks to address. There has been an alarming rise in racially charged attacks, including antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crimes. There is no question that we do not want to see firebombing, graffiti or any of the other horrifying acts of antisemitism that we have recently seen in our city spread across our State. We must categorically condemn attacks of this nature. Everyone, regardless of their race or religious background, has a right to feel safe and to practise their religion safely and freely. I think it is really important that we make clear that these attacks have been unrelated to peaceful protests and assemblies.

There has been no connection made between peaceful protests and the racially motivated criminal incidents that we have seen. These laws have wrongly conflated two distinct issues, and they run the risk of undermining basic human rights principles as a result. While the concerns of our community are valid and understandable, the laws before us today are not proportionate and will not resolve the concerns they are seeking to address. In practice, this bill directly undermines public protests and demonstrations despite its stated aims. It fundamentally infringes on our most basic democratic freedoms. The law is reactionary and has not been subject to proper scrutiny by legal experts. It threatens to further erode the right to protest. For this reason, The Greens do not support the bill, and will move amendments to it.

With regard to the intent of this bill, it is worth noting that religious vilification is already a crime. Similarly, criminal offences already exist to address intimidation. The violent, racially motivated acts we have seen in recent months have been dealt with under our existing laws. Introducing further criminal offences targeting protests is unjustified, unnecessary and will have a chilling effect on the right to protest in New South Wales. I now turn to some concerns this bill creates regarding protest rights. First, the proposal to give police powers to issue move on directions for protests "occurring in or near a place of worship" lacks specificity and could result in a significant number of protests and demonstrations being shut down. In particular, the failure to define what is meant by "near" raises concerns about how this provision will be interpreted in practice.

It is worth noting that it is difficult to find a place to hold a protest or demonstration that would not run the risk of being "near" a place of worship, particularly in the CBD. Common locations for protests, including Hyde Park, Town Hall or the street outside this place, could fall foul of the laws proposed in this bill and result in peaceful protesters being issued move on directions. Furthermore, this proposed move does not require there to be an intent to block or harass people entering a place of worship. This means that move on directions could theoretically be applied to protesters outside Parliament or Town Hall who are protesting about action on climate change or other relevant issues.

In fact, the Australian Human Rights Law Centre has raised concerns that these provisions are so broad that schools or hospitals that have chapels or prayer rooms could fall under the definition of "places of worship". The same legal experts have expressed concerns about the use of poorly defined words, including "impedes" and "hinders". The experts at the Human Rights Law Centre stated:

This lack of clear legal thresholds, and overly broad terms, could lead to arbitrary enforcement by police.

In the past we have seen issues arise when police are given broad, discretionary powers that are open to interpretation. It often results in overpolicing of minority groups, including First Nations people. The Australian Law Reform Commission produced a report in 2019 which spoke to those concerns. The report referenced submissions from stakeholders, including the Redfern Legal Centre and Legal Aid NSW. Both organisations suggested:

... police discretion continues to be exercised inappropriately in regards to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Ill-defined laws that give rise to broad, discretionary powers for police have been shown time and again to have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities. We should not be putting more laws on the books in New South Wales, particularly when we know they will likely lead to even more overpolicing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Furthermore, civil society groups hold grave concerns about new provisions which carve out exceptions for authorised public assemblies under the Summary Offences Act. This relates to the form 1 regime for notifying police of planned protests and demonstrations. Legal experts from the Human Rights Law Centre rightly point out that notification regimes are meant to facilitate rather than authorise protests. They said:

However, the Form 1 regime in NSW has been increasingly treated as a requirement for permission—a clear violation of international human rights law. Moreover, notification is simply not possible for spontaneous assemblies, which are also protected under international human rights law.

It is for those reasons that the Human Rights Law Centre argue that these laws "are unlikely to meet the threshold for lawfulness, as they lack the precision required" and "they also fail the necessity test". They also suggest:

Moreover, the laws are not proportionate, as they impose blanket restrictions on assemblies near places of worship, regardless of whether they pose any actual risk.

These are experts in their field, warning this Government that the laws they have tabled are not up to scratch and that they may fall foul of the implied constitutional right to freedom of political expression. I implore the Government to listen to those voices and go back to the drawing board rather than continuing to pursue this kneejerk response. Reactionary laws are not good laws. The bill is fundamentally ill-suited to the problems at hand and will only serve to further criminalise and restrict peaceful protests. I also draw members' attention to the contents of a letter from the President of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, written on behalf of 12 faith leaders. He said:

Public protests in New South Wales or anywhere else should not be conflated with harassing worshippers. We believe restrictions on the right to protest should be kept to a minimum because of the importance of public protest actions for helping create a more ethical, just, peaceful and environmentally safe society. For people of faith, this can be an integral part of living out our values, leading many of us to participate in protest movements, including political expression outside our own and other places of worship.

He goes on to say this:

The legislation currently proposed captures a broad range of behaviour that could potentially be perceived as harassment or preventing people from entering a place of worship, meaning common protest actions like chanting or standing near the entrance of a place could conceivably expose community members to charges that carry 2 years imprisonment. We are also concerned that the additional move on powers contained in the legislation will lead to the over-policing of peaceful protests.

If badly worded or poorly implemented, legislation to protect worshippers could effectively restrict the freedom of faith communities to express their support for social and environmental causes, from calling for an end to approvals of new coal and gas projects, to condemning child sex abuse by clergy, to standing up for the rights of refugees.

Subsequent correspondence from the president raised further concerns, particularly with the proposed move on provisions. They were concerned to learn that the move on provisions were "so broad that they could be used to move on a protester for any reason, not just in circumstances where there is harassment or intimidation". Those are words directly from some faith communities the bill is purportedly intended to protect.

They are incredibly concerned that the bill misses the fundamental issues at play and wrongly targets protesters. They have also identified significant risks to vulnerable protesters who may be from religious backgrounds themselves, including those protesting abuse at the hands of the church. While it may not be the intention of the Government to capture those protests under the new provisions, the current wording is far too broad and would allow for widespread crackdowns on peaceful protest, potentially silencing faith communities along the way.

Finally, I make it clear that seeking to address problems around social cohesion through the lens of the criminal law has significant limitations. There are other ways to address the concerns of our community, without resorting to reactionary laws that undermine the right to protest. The Australian Human Rights Commission released a National Anti-Racism Framework, which addresses these issues, calling for a more cohesive approach. Similarly, the Human Rights Law Centre suggests that using the criminal law to address problems with social cohesion is limited and inadequate. [*Extension of time*]

That issue was again brought to the fore by the incredibly moving stories shared on *Four Corners* last night, with interviews from people impacted by members of their families getting caught up in extremism. Many of them felt that early intervention opportunities were inadequate and difficult to come by. If the Government wants to address problems with social cohesion, it is clear that there are opportunities for it to do good by looking at those issues and taking a more cohesive and proactive approach. At the end of the day, the bill will not alleviate community concerns, and it will not address the problems of disturbing acts of antisemitism that it purports to solve. The concerns with the bill, both from faith communities and from legal experts and civil society groups, are widening.

This is a bill that has the potential to do far more harm than good. It ultimately misses the mark and reflects yet another attack on peaceful protest from a government that seems determined to undermine fundamental human rights and democratic principles. While I make it clear that we condemn all forms of antisemitism, The Greens believe that the bill will not achieve that end. We will not support the bill.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (21:02):** The Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025 creates new offences for stopping someone from attending a place of worship. The offences include intentionally, and without reasonable excuse, blocking, impeding or hindering, and harassing, intimidating or threatening, a person who is seeking access to or leaving a place of worship. The bill includes police move on powers where access to a place of worship is prevented. Protests at Parliament House or outside MPs' offices, protests that have arranged police authorisation, or protests that constitute industrial action will not be captured by the new offences or move on powers. I support the bill because antisemitism and recent attacks on synagogues across Sydney and the country are causing significant fear in the community, with some people too afraid to attend and practise their faith.

The situation is untenable in a modern, inclusive civil society. I supported similar laws through safe access zones, which prohibit protest within 150 metres of an abortion clinic to ensure that people can access reproductive health care without harassment. I support both the right to practise religion and the right to protest, and I acknowledge that some people in our community believe these laws go too far and could stifle peaceful protest. They are worried that the bill is aimed at prohibiting public protest against the war in the Middle East. But pro-Palestinian protests should be able to continue with the passage of the bill. In reference to the contribution of the member for Dubbo about the protests that happen weekly in my electorate of Sydney, the experience in working with and talking to police about those protests is that they are organised, peaceful and coordinated.

Police have good working relationships with organisers of the protests and, as the member for Sydney, who represents the area where those protests occur, I know that there is very little objection from the community, with many of my constituents regularly attending them. Even when the exceptions do not apply, the offences will only capture actions that intentionally prevent entering or leaving a place of worship, or that involve harassing, intimidating or threatening a person entering or leaving. Those have not been the actions of past protests, which have been largely peaceful and respectful, and have involved people of multiple faiths, including people who are Jewish.

The right to protest is fundamental to a healthy democracy, and I share concerns that move on powers could apply when protests block access to a place of worship even when the obstruction is neither intentional nor intimidating. The laws should be better fine-tuned to target only obstructions that are motivated by racial or religious hate. Guidelines to ensure that police cannot use the laws to break up peaceful protests in public places like Town Hall, just because they are near a place of worship, will be essential, and I call on the Government to commit to strong guidelines and training for police.

There also needs to be independent oversight on the use of the laws to make sure peaceful protest is protected. I foreshadow that I will move amendments at a later stage for Ombudsman oversight similar to the oversight adopted for mandatory disease testing, which was supported by the major parties when I moved amendments in the last Parliament. The community urgently needs such independent oversight to have confidence that the laws strike the right balance, and the Ombudsman is best placed to determine that. Antisemitism is not being caused by people who are upset about the destruction and loss of life as a result of the war in the Middle East, but by people who are seeking to weaponise community emotions over that conflict to create division and undermine multiculturalism.

There is a growing neo-Nazi movement that is also pushing Islamophobia, racism against people who are First Nations or Asian, homophobia and transphobia. As leaders, we need to act and speak out against any dehumanisation of minority groups. We must never seek to pit one group against another or exploit any division for political gain. As a gay man and representative of the country's largest LGBTQI+ community, I understand what it feels like to be the subject of hateful and intimidating attacks. I support laws that make Jewish people feel safe attending synagogue, and I support the bill.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (21:07):** I speak in support of the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025. The purpose of the bill is twofold: to amend the Crimes Act 1900 to create new offences that apply to persons who impede, intimidate or take certain actions in relation to persons accessing or leaving places of worship, and to amend the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibility) Act [LEPRA] to authorise police to issue move on directions in relation to apparently genuine demonstrations, protests, processions or organised assemblies occurring in or near places of worship.

The bill will insert two new offences into the Crimes Act. First, a person in or near a place of worship must not, without reasonable excuse, intentionally block, impede or hinder a person from accessing or leaving, or attempting to access or leave, a place of worship. That is very reasonable. Second, a person in or near a place of worship must not harass, intimidate or threaten a person accessing or leaving, or attempting to access or leave, a place of worship. Again, that is very reasonable. "Place of worship" is defined as a building or other structure that is ordinarily used for worship, including churches, mosques, synagogues and temples.

The offences apply when a person is in or near a place of worship, and the proximity measure, "in or near", is consistent with section 214A of the Crimes Act, part of which prohibits remaining on or near a major facility when engaging in specified conduct. That section is enforced and regularly prosecuted. It is not new and it is tested so it is an appropriate proximity measure to use for the offences proposed in the bill. The maximum penalty for both new offences is a fine of up to \$22,000 or imprisonment for two years. Both are significant and should act as deterrents.

The offence of impeding or blocking access to a place of worship does not apply if the person's conduct forms part of an industrial action or occurs outside Parliament House or the office of a member of Parliament, or with the consent of the Commissioner of Police or the person in charge of the place of worship. The bill expressly states that protections available under the Summary Offences Act for participants in authorised public assemblies also apply to the offence of impeding or blocking access but no exclusions apply to the offence of harassing or intimidating people who are attempting to access a place of worship. Again, that is reasonable. While intentional acts performed as part of a protest that cause incidental obstructions at places of worship should not be subject to criminal sanction, no such consideration is necessary if the conduct involves what I have just described: the harassment or intimidation of people trying to access the places of worship.

I turn to the amendment to the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act. Section 197 of LEPRA empowers police officers to give move on directions to people in public places if they believe on reasonable grounds that, among other things, the person's behaviour or presence is obstructing another person or traffic, constitutes harassment or intimidation or is causing, or is likely to cause, fear to another person if the conduct would cause fear to a reasonable person—the reasonable person test. Section 198A of LEPRA allows such directions to be given to groups of people and failure to comply with such a direction is an offence punishable by a fine of up to \$220 in recognition of the importance of the right to protest. Section 200 of LEPRA places restriction on the power of police officers to give directions under section 197 in the context of protest. Again, that is a reasonable provision and one that we all support in a democracy.

Section 197 directions cannot be given in relation to an industrial dispute and can only be given in limited circumstances in relation to other protests and assemblies. The first of those circumstances is when the police officer believes on reasonable grounds that a direction is necessary to deal with the serious risk to the safety of the person to whom the direction is given or another person. The second is when, in the case of a protest that is obstructing traffic, the protest is either not an authorised public assembly under the Summary Offences Act or is not being held substantially in accordance with the relevant authorisation, and the direction is limited to the persons who are obstructing traffic. In effect, the Act, as amended, will maintain existing limitations on the ability of police officers to issue directions in relation to protest activities. All in all, the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025 is reasonable. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (21:13):** I contribute to debate on the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025, acknowledging the contribution already made by my colleague the member for Balmain. As the member for Balmain said, The Greens strongly oppose the bill, which will seek to amend part 4AF of the Crimes Act 1900 to create a new offence of intentionally blocking, impeding or hindering a person seeking to access or leave a place of worship. To do that, it expands the current reference to "major facilities" to extend to "major facilities or places of worship". The new offence would carry a maximum penalty of 200 penalty units, which is a \$22,000 fine or two years in prison, or both. The bill expressly carves out exemptions for industrial actions, actions outside Parliament, actions covered by a form 1 protest permit or those held with permission of the place of worship.

The bill is characterised by ambiguity. In principle, The Greens agree that everyone should have the right to attend places of worship without fear of harassment or impediment. Regardless of who or how they worship, people should be able to freely access the places they hold sacred. To be clear, that is not what this bill protects. I am beyond disappointed at where the Government has landed: giving police the most broad discretionary powers to undermine basic human rights. The bill actually criminalises protest activity not just "in or at" but also "near" a place of worship.

In effect, it seeks to criminalise any exercise of fundamental freedoms of speech, assembly and expression in the vicinity of any place of worship, which is a deeply alarming proposition that could have catastrophic effects. The lack of specific definitions for crucial terms like "impede", "hinder", "intimidate" or "near" in the context of the bill leaves broad scope for interpretation and, with it, broad scope for discretion. Who is left to interpret those terms? Who gets that discretion? It is none other than the New South Wales police. Individual police officers are given the power to make a call on what the words mean—on the spot and in the heat of the moment—when even the Attorney General's office and the Parliamentary Counsel have been unable to put a definition in the bill.

If police interpretation and discretion was not enough, the bill also seeks to amend section 200 of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act [LEPRA] 2002 to empower police officers to give a move on direction in a public place where a demonstration or other action is in or near a place of worship. That is perhaps the most concerning expansion of police powers under LEPRA, because it effectively gives the police power to break up any protest near a place of worship. It will be up to police to determine whether an action is sufficiently near a place of worship; there is no objective test set out anywhere in the bill. Anyone who purports to value freedom of expression and assembly should call the bill out for what it is: a stealth attack on the right to protest dressed up as protection for faith communities. Places of worship are located at or near major protest sites in the centre of Sydney, Parramatta and Newcastle, and at the centre of almost every regional town in New South Wales. The breadth of public spaces that would be captured by this bill, and which protests would be therefore be criminalised, is truly staggering.

What is perhaps more staggering is the non-existent link that has been manufactured between peaceful protests and the attacks and vandalism over past months. The arson attack and vile hate symbols on the Newtown Synagogue in the heart of the electorate of Newtown had nothing to do with a protest, nor did the attacks on the childcare centre or the graffiti on and attempted arson at the home in Dover Heights. They were all done under the cover of darkness with one or two lone perpetrators. In his reply I ask that the Attorney General advise Parliament how many protests or demonstrations since the New South Wales Labor Government was elected involved the obstruction, intimidation or harassment of religious worshippers attending a religious service.

When I was briefed by the assistant commissioner of the New South Wales police about the attack on the Newtown Synagogue, he informed me that no person arrested in relation to those matters had any political or religious motivations. There is absolutely no place for antisemitism in our society, just as there is absolutely no excuse for cracking down on peaceful protest. The Greens acknowledge that some faith communities may have experienced real or perceived threats when going into or coming out of their places of worship, and that those threats are not new. Sadly, that is true. But meaningfully addressing those threats requires a genuine commitment to anti-racist work at both State and local community levels. Further criminalising protests is not the answer.

The protests might be a problem for the Government—and indeed for other governments that are committing or are complicit in genocidal attacks on Palestinians—but they are not the cause of harm or damage which most members have spoken about in this debate. As the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change said at a press conference at the back of this place last week, this bill is like "using a sledgehammer to kill an ant". By failing to establish an objective test for what is sufficiently "near" a place of worship, this bill opens the door to perverse and chilling outcomes. Conceivably, any protest or protestor in Hyde Park, which is within the vicinity of places of worship like St Mary's Cathedral or the Great Synagogue, even if they have not directly engaged with either of those places or the communities who worship there, would potentially attract penalties under this bill; so too could any action on any possible topic in a regional town, where everything is "near" a centrally located place of worship. The Knitting Nannas, a Save TAFE action, a vigil for domestic violence, a Sorry Day event or an International Women's Day march could all be captured under these laws.

Another concerning element of this bill is the approach that treats a form 1 as permission for a public assembly, the result being that protests are effectively prohibited unless authorised by police or the courts. This is not, nor was it ever intended to be, the proper function of form 1. People have the right to protest. They do not need permission from police or the courts to do so. They do not need a form to exercise their right to freedom of assembly, freedom of association and freedom of expression. The Human Rights Law Centre advises:

To be compatible with human rights law notification systems, if they exist at all, must be to facilitate, not authorise, peaceful assemblies.

My Greens colleague the member for Balmain shortly will be moving, on behalf of The Greens, proposed amendments to this bill that would curb the ambiguity throughout it. I urge everyone in this place to consider those amendments carefully and in good faith. In an open letter to the Premier and Attorney General sent last week, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights called for the bill to be withdrawn in its entirety owing to genuine concerns about the unacceptable impact it would have on internationally recognised human rights to freedom of assembly and association. Australian Lawyers for Human Rights further described the bill as inconsistent with:

- Australia's binding international legal obligations under the core United Nations Human Rights treaties; and
- the implied freedom of communication that exists under the Australian Constitution ...

The organisation states:

International law is clear—the right to peaceful assembly can only be legally limited in ways that are necessary and appropriate.

In his reply, I ask the Attorney General to explain how he sees this bill meeting that test and to establish how it meets the necessity and proportionality thresholds. In concerns raised with The Greens directly, the Australian Lawyers for Human Rights also indicated its view that some aspects of the bill would "likely fall foul of the implied constitutional freedom of political communication". In demonstrating how new section 214B (1) (a) may impede on this constitutional freedom, it provided the following scenario:

a congregant at a church discovers her son has been sexually abused by someone in the parish and hears the priest is refusing to cooperate with a police investigation. The congregant tries to speak to the priest as he is leaving the church. She stands at the doorway as he is leaving and confronts him, saying "I need to speak to you right now!" This would intentionally impede the priest from leaving a place of worship and would be an offence under the proposed law.

It concludes, "The law is simply not proportionate to the legitimate legislative objective being pursued."  
[*Extension of time*]

The Greens are advised:

In constitutional terms, both aspects of the proposed law would likely be inconsistent with the implied freedom of political communication because they are not necessary and proportionate to any legitimate legislative purpose.

To that end and given the concerns raised, I ask the Attorney General to advise the Parliament in his reply—and I think it is only reasonable to request this—whether the Solicitor General has provided advice on the constitutionality or not of this bill. I note that the Attorney General is in the Chamber. Perhaps the Minns Labor Government, and indeed the Attorney General, are not bothered by whether the proposed laws coming before this Parliament are constitutional, or not. If that is not the case, then perhaps the Attorney General could table the advice so that parliamentarians are able to see it. Similarly, the Human Rights Law Centre has expressed serious concerns over an unacceptably disproportionate response to recent appalling incidents of antisemitism and racism in our communities. In its analysis it says:

... there is no evidence that peaceful protests outside or near places of worship have any connection to these incidents ... The broad and vague language of the Bill, combined with the expansion of police powers, creates significant risks of arbitrary enforcement and unjustified restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly.

Rushing through laws that members of the Government's own caucus have called "draconian", that erode the right to peaceful assembly and the right to protest in this State and that expand police powers to exercise discretion and arbitrary enforcement is surely not what Government members thought they would be doing when they formed

government. The NSW Council for Civil Liberties has expressed its strong opposition to the bill, which the council describes as "another authoritarian step towards the criminalisation of the right to protest". The council also makes the point that religious institutions, as sites of significant and overt political power, can in some cases be legitimate sites of protest in a democratic society. Even those in this place with strong aversions to protest would surely agree that sexual abuse survivors protesting outside St Mary's Cathedral when Cardinal George Pell was laid to rest there was legitimate and completely valid. Yet this bill would capture and criminalise protests like that and, in doing so, muzzle valid—some might say necessary—critiques of religious institutions.

At a time when tensions are high within and between our communities, this Government should be doing everything it can to foster constructive, respectful dialogue across different viewpoints—not shutting down avenues for this to occur. But where this New South Wales Labor Government is failing to bring people from diverse backgrounds together, the community is stepping up. I acknowledge the NSW Council for Civil Liberties for organising a speak-out that brought together people of faith, queer activists, trade unionists and community organisers for climate action and human rights in response to this bill. I put on record The Greens' appreciation for those who participated: the Pitt Street Uniting Church, Jews Against the Occupation, the Trans Justice Project, the Palestine Action Group, the Maritime Union of Australia—Sydney Branch, and the Knitting Nannas, all of whom joined the speak-out.

I also thank the legal minds, activist groups and human rights organisations for their advice and assistance to The Greens on this bill. We are in this place fighting for human rights and the right to protest, but we could not do that without their unwavering support and excellent advice. Unlike those in power, we know that a robust civil society and the right to protest are essential tenets of our democracy—not things to muzzle and quash. The Greens will always stand in defence of basic human rights and democratic freedoms. We strongly oppose this bill because it is not just a tough-on-crime approach of the New South Wales Government. The bill takes that to the next level and is once again using the strong arm of the NSW Police Force to crack down on any peaceful protest that takes place near a place of worship or indeed perhaps in some way impedes or hinders someone seeking to access or leave a place of worship.

This bill is not about protecting the community; it is about silencing dissent. This bill is not about preventing antisemitic attacks at places of worship; it is about cracking down on peaceful protest. Every member of this place who supports this bill should reflect on what they are doing. The bill is cracking down on dissent, shutting down peaceful protest, increasing unchecked police powers, demonising citizens who speak out against genocide and equating collective action—for justice, for environmental protection, for climate action, for peace and for First Nations rights—with a horrific scourge of discrimination, antisemitism, Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian attacks in our community.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (21:28):** In reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Wahroonga, Coogee, Vaucluse, Prospect, Lane Cove, Parramatta, Davidson, Blacktown, Oatley, Mount Druitt, Bathurst, Balmain, Sydney, Lismore and Newtown for their contributions to the debate. As some members have common issues, I will address the issues raised in the debate rather than addressing members individually by name. Firstly, I briefly address the comments made on the bill by the Legislation Review Committee in *Legislation Review Digest No. 25/58*. The Legislation Review Committee raised the issue of the bill's impact on the freedoms of expression, movement and assembly, which are rights that are protected by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, or the ICCPR. The committee also raised the issue of the bill's impact on the implied freedom of political communication in the Australian Constitution, particularly in light of the significant criminal penalties for the proposed offences. This was also raised by the member for Balmain and others. The Government recognises the importance of the rights protected by the ICCPR and the implied freedom of political communication that all members of our community enjoy.

The bill strikes a necessary and appropriate balance between the relevant rights and freedoms that we all have in our strong democratic society. Protest and debate are key components of a thriving democracy, and this bill will not prohibit lawful peaceful protests outside places of worship. Without detracting from the importance of those rights, it is also important to protect and uphold the freedom of religion, which is another integral part of a democratic society. That right is also protected in the ICCPR. None of those rights are absolute, and each needs to be considered alongside other key rights and freedoms. The ICCPR recognises the importance of creating the conditions that allow everyone to enjoy their civil and political rights. Where legislation that seeks to protect one of these ideals may undermine the other, it is important to strike the right balance. The bill achieves that balance.

Conduct that involves intentionally blocking people from expressing their freedom of religion at a place of worship, or that harasses or threatens worshippers, does not promote the freedoms of expression and assembly. It only undermines the freedom of religion. The Legislation Review Committee also raised that the bill should have a clear start date to provide certainty to those affected. While the Government understands the need for certainty, one of the reasons the bill commences in three months, or earlier by proclamation, is to enable the

necessary training within the NSW Police Force to occur. I know that police training is something the member for Sydney is interested in. The New South Wales Government understands that it is likely that the training will involve general information being provided to all police officers concerning the new proposed offence and police powers, and an overview of circumstances where these offences may or may not be applicable in policing duties.

More detailed information is also likely to be available to police officers whose duties may involve more frequent consideration of those amendments. For example, police officers who are involved in policing tasks in connection with public assemblies in locations that are near places of worship will likely receive more specific training. Operational police will have access to legal advisers who will be able to advise on matters relating to the legislation based on specific circumstances arising in the field. Further, the full range of existing police education and quality management processes that promote compliance with the law and professional policing standards will continue to apply in respect of these new offences.

I now address some of the issues raised by some members during debate on the bill. The member for Wahroonga asked why no-one was charged following the incident outside the Great Synagogue in December, including for an offence under section 545C of the Crimes Act, which prohibits knowingly joining or continuing in an unlawful assembly. Members cannot have it both ways. They cannot profess undying love and support for the Police Force hand on heart while selectively picking apart its operational decisions. I keep hearing it time and again in relation to episodes like the protest at the Sydney Opera House. The deputy commissioner, Dave Hudson, gave evidence in budget estimates that the community safety of the procession that night was the paramount concern and that, if he had time to consider operational decisions made that night, he would make the same decisions again.

The charging of offences is a matter for the NSW Police Force based on evidence gathered by police officers. They are the experts in identifying and charging offences in this State. I have been the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. I know how hard our NSW Police Force work. It is unfortunate that the shadow Attorney General and other members we have heard tonight, including the member for Bathurst, want to criticise police selectively. They are policing public assemblies every day, arresting those engaging in antisemitic crime, and keeping our community safe.

The bill will address any gaps in the criminal law by introducing specific offences aimed at protecting persons attending places of worship. The member for Balmain suggested that existing criminal offences are available to address the conduct underpinning the bill. The bill introduces specific, targeted measures that will ensure that members of our community seeking to express their faith at a place of worship are protected and not impeded, harassed or intimidated when doing so. The member for Balmain also said that the move on powers lack specificity due to the failure to define what is meant by the term "near". She expressed concern that peaceful protestors could be issued with move on directions in large parts of the CBD as a result.

Members of the community can take a commonsense approach to what is "near" a place of worship, just as protesters who, for example, protest "near" but do not block or protest "in" Port Botany do not fall foul of protest laws. We have adopted the language in section 214A of the Crimes Act in the bill as well. I emphasise that the bill does not prohibit lawful peaceful protest that occurs outside a place of worship. It is only directed to specific conduct that interferes with the right of faith adherents to practise their religion safely and without undue interference.

The member for Balmain also raised concerns that the definition of "places of worship" is too broad and could capture, for example, chapels inside hospitals. "Place of worship" is defined in the bill to mean a building or other structure ordinarily used for worship, with an open list of examples including a church, mosque, synagogue or temple. The definition is not intended to capture places such as prayer rooms, multi-faith rooms and chapels within other buildings such as hospitals, airports and office blocks. It is intended to capture places that are ordinarily used by religious denominations for the purposes of worship. That was made clear in my second reading speech.

The Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025 is one part of a suite of reforms that the New South Wales Government is progressing aimed at addressing increasing acts of antisemitism in the State. The bill does not seek to prohibit lawful peaceful protest outside places of worship. Rather, the bill seeks to provide better protection to persons practising their faith. In that regard, the bill balances freedom of religion and the right to protest. I thank members for their respectful debate and commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Ms Kobi Shetty, Mr Alex Greenwich and Mr Alister Henskens.**

### Consideration in Detail

**The SPEAKER:** By leave: I will deal with the bill in groups of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 and 2 be agreed to.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order: In relation to the amendments to be moved by the member for Wahroonga, I ask that, in accordance with Standing Order 210, his proposed amendments be ruled out of order. Standing Order 210 allows amendments to be moved to any part of the bill providing they are:

... within the long title of the bill or relevant to the subject matter of the bill and are otherwise in conformity with the standing orders and practice.

The long title of the bill is:

An Act to amend the Crimes Act 1900 to provide for offences in relation to persons blocking, impeding, hindering or taking certain other actions in relation to persons accessing or leaving places of worship; and to amend the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 to authorise police officers to issue move on directions in relation to apparently genuine demonstrations, protests, processions or organised assemblies occurring in or near places of worship.

Schedule 1 to the bill proposes amendments to the Crimes Act 1900. Schedule 2 proposes amendments to the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002. The bill has a very narrow compass. For example, Opposition amendment No. 1 on sheet c2025-021D proposes to insert after section 200A, new section 200B, which creates directions and powers about masks and disguises worn during public assemblies. Whilst I might understand what the member for Wahroonga is trying to achieve with that amendment, it falls completely outside the long title of the bill and has nothing to do with what the bill brought before the House by the Attorney General requires the House to consider. Standing Order 210 is worded to include more than just the long title of the bill, as it should, so the provisions are not oppressive. But the standing order was designed to ensure that a member does not propose a whole range of provisions by amendment that the bill does not particularly relate to.

In Opposition amendment No. 2, the member for Wahroonga proposes amendments to the Summary Offences Act and changes the laws around authorised public assemblies by adding new subsections (3) to (8). This bill has nothing to do with authorised public assemblies other than to make reference to the fact that they might occur. If the member for Wahroonga wishes the House to consider, for example, that new section 200B be added to the Crimes Act, he needs to propose it in a separate bill. If he wishes to amend section 23 of the Summary Offences Act, he needs to put forward a separate bill. It is not appropriate just to tack on amendments that have nothing at all to do with the bill, which has a very narrow focus. References to the Summary Offences Act or cases where there are authorised assemblies do not enable the member for Wahroonga to change the laws around authorised assemblies. I ask the Speaker to rule the Opposition amendments proposed by the member for Wahroonga out of order under Standing Order 210.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** To the point of order: Of course, the amendments that I proposed fall within the subject matter of the bill. I explained why that was the case in my contribution to the second reading debate, but I can elaborate again. In proposed new section 214B in schedule 1 to the bill, the offence that this bill seeks to create under subsection (1) has an exception, which is subsection (3). The exception is section 24 of the Summary Offences Act, which relates to authorised public assemblies, which is the nature of the second of the two amendments in the bill that relates to section 23 of the Summary Offences Act. Section 24 of the Summary Offences Act creates the exception to an offence created by the bill introduced by the Attorney General. An authorised public assembly is defined under section 23 of the Summary Offences Act. Section 24 of the Act states:

If an authorised public assembly is held substantially in accordance with the particulars furnished with respect to it under section 23 (1) (c) or, if those particulars are amended by agreement between the Commissioner and the organiser, in accordance with those particulars as amended and in accordance with any prescribed requirements, a person is not, by reason of any thing done or omitted to be done by the person for the purpose only of participating in that public assembly, guilty of any offence relating to participating in an unlawful assembly or the obstruction of any person, vehicle or vessel in a public place.

There is a direct reference to section 23 within the provisions of the bill. Section 24, which is referred to in the bill, only gets its meaning by reference to section 23, which is the definition of an authorised public assembly under part 4 of the Summary Offences Act. The amendment I seek to make to change section 23 will alter the operation of section 24. It is all in relation to a bill that concerns public assemblies. That is the subject matter of the bill.

My second amendment is directly relevant to proposed new section 214B. Subsection 5 (a) (i) of schedule 2 to the bill specifically refers to part 4 of the Summary Offences Act and concerns the granting of police powers in respect of public assemblies. That is what it relates to. It relates to the Summary Offences Act and the proposed change to section 23 and police powers. Opposition amendment No. 1 amends the Act that schedule 2 to the bill concerns, which is the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act. It gives police additional powers to the ones that are within schedule 2 to the bill. It talks about powers with regard to how people participate in a public assembly, which is the subject matter of this bill. It gives additional powers to police with respect to the

hiding of a person's identity or a disguise. There is an exception for wearing an item of clothing for religious purposes. It gives powers to the police to deal with situations where people hide their identity or disguise their appearance during a public assembly, which is the subject matter of this bill.

Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 8 on sheet c2025-021D relate to the subject matter of the bill. They fall within the subject matter of the bill. My respectful contention is that they ought to be allowed. It is incredibly disappointing, after we have heard about bipartisanship and the need in the community at this time for people to be acting in a bipartisan and collaborative fashion, for this sort of technical point of order to be taken. What is the Leader of the House concerned about? The amendments relate to the subject matter of the bill. The House should be allowed to vote on them.

**The SPEAKER (21:48):** Without the luxury of being able to adjourn to consider the counsel I have received on this matter and as there are no further speakers, I will rule on the point of order. I thank the Leader of the House and the Manager of Opposition Business. I note that earlier the Manager of Opposition Business raised with me the issues he was going to deal with. I have not conversed with the Government about this matter. As members would expect, I have sought counsel from the Clerks as to the competence of these particular amendments. A point of order has been taken regarding the amendments to the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025 that were circulated by the member for Wahroonga. The amendments clearly do not fall within the long title of the bill. That is evident because they are accompanied by consequential amendments to the long title.

The scope of the bill is relatively narrow in that it primarily proposes to create a new offence of impeding or harassing a person accessing or leaving a place of worship. It extends police powers to issue directions to people engaging in demonstrations in or near a place of worship. The Opposition amendments are about public assemblies in general and are not specifically related to places of worship. Additionally, the Opposition amendments seek to amend the Summary Offences Act relating to the authorisation of public assemblies, whereas the Government bill does not touch on that issue. Having listened to the arguments, considered the amendments and received the advice of the Clerks, I rule the amendments out of order.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (21:50):** By leave: I move The Greens amendments Nos 1 to 3 and 7 on sheet c2025-027B in globo:

- No. 1 **Intention to block etc persons accessing or leaving place of worship to prevent persons from practising their religion**  
Page 3, Schedule 1[2], proposed section 214B(1) (a), line 10. Insert "to prevent the person from practising the person's religion" after "worship".
- No. 2 **Intention to harass etc to prevent persons from practising their religion**  
Page 3, Schedule 1[2], proposed section 214B(1) (b), line 11. Insert "intentionally" before "harass".
- No. 3 **Intention to harass etc to prevent persons from practising their religion—consequential amendment**  
Page 3, Schedule 1[2], proposed section 214B(1) (b), line 12. Insert "to prevent the person from practising the person's religion" after "worship".
- No. 7 **Intention to harass etc**  
Page 4, Schedule 2[2], proposed section 200(5) (a) (ii), line 15. Insert "with the intention of harassing, intimidating or threatening a person practising the person's religion," after "section 214B,".

These amendments seek to ensure that the offences of blocking, impeding or hindering a person accessing or leaving a place of worship, and of harassing, intimidating or threatening a person to prevent them from accessing or leaving a place of worship, must be carried out with the intention to prevent the person from practising their religion. As the bill attempts to meet its objective of preventing antisemitic actions and other acts motivated by religious intolerance towards people at their places of worship, the amendments will prevent the possible unintended consequence of people unwittingly committing an offence when assembling or demonstrating at or near a place of worship that is being used for a purpose other than worship, such as a political rally or protest. The amendments attempt to address some of the concerns raised by legal experts and civil society groups who outlined the dangers of the bill as it currently stands.

As earlier stated, it is difficult to find a place in the CBD to hold a protest or demonstration that would not run the risk of being near a place of worship. Common locations for protesting including Hyde Park, Town Hall or Macquarie Street. That would fall foul of the bill, resulting in peaceful protesters being issued move on directions. As it currently stands, the proposed move on power does not require there to be an intent to block or harass people entering a place of worship. That means that move on directions could theoretically be applied to unrelated protests taking place outside Parliament or Town Hall calling for action on climate change or other issues. Someone reasonably protesting child sex abuse could be caught by this law.

By requiring that there be a clear intent to affect a person in the observance of their religion before a move on order can be issued, the amendments will tighten the scope of the law and ensure that it is fit for purpose without unduly infringing upon the right to protest and the implied freedom of political communication. Furthermore, the amendments would also help to address some of the risks potentially posed by poorly executed police discretion. As mentioned earlier, discretion has historically been poorly executed, particularly with regard to minority communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Adding clearer parameters around the exercise of police discretion helps to better protect vulnerable communities and limits the risk of overpolicing.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (21:53):** The Government does not support these amendments. Amendments Nos 1 and 3 would limit the new offences in proposed new section 214B of the Crimes Act so that they would apply only to circumstances where not only is a person blocked from attending their place of worship but it can also be proved that they were blocked with the intent to prevent them from practising their religion. The bill provides protection to all persons seeking to access a place of worship, regardless of when or why the person is seeking to access the place of worship. A person may attend a place of worship for solace or to convene with people of faith. Regardless of the reason for attendance, the person's right to safely access their place of worship should be protected. If the scope of the offence was limited in the way suggested by the amendments, it would be very difficult for police to ascertain if there was such an intention and for the prosecution to prove it. That would lead to problems enforcing the offence, and for that reason the amendments cannot be supported.

Amendment No. 2 would add a mental element of intention to the proposed offence of harassing, intimidating or threatening a person accessing or leaving, or attempting to access or leave, a place of worship. The Government does not support that amendment. Not including a mental element is consistent with other offences that include elements of harassment and intimidation, such as the offence in section 60 (1) of the Crimes Act, which covers harassing or intimidating a police officer in the execution of their duty. It is also consistent with the offence of interfering with a person accessing, leaving or attempting to access or leave a reproductive health clinic where abortions are performed within the safe access zone under part 6A of the Public Health Act 2010. The Government is not aware of any operational issues with those offences arising from the lack of a mental element and considers that the offence is appropriate in its current form. For those reasons, that amendment cannot be supported.

Amendment No. 7 would limit the expanded move on powers to situations where there is an intention to harass, intimidate or threaten a person practising their religion. The bill removes the restriction in section 200 of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act, or LEPRA, for move on directions issued in relation to protests, demonstrations, processions or assemblies that occur in or near a place of worship. Currently police officers can only issue a move on direction in relation to demonstrations, protests, processions or assemblies in highly limited circumstances—for example, where there is a serious risk to safety. The bill will amend that restriction so it will no longer apply where the protest occurs in or near a place of worship.

The bill does not allow a police officer to issue a move on direction to anyone protesting outside a place of worship for just any reason. That is an important point to make. The existing thresholds in section 197 of LEPRA will still apply to move on directions issued to protesters. A police officer must believe on reasonable grounds that the person's behaviour or presence is obstructing another person or obstructing traffic, constitutes harassment or intimidation, or is causing or likely to cause fear to another person, provided it would cause fear to a person of reasonable firmness. Respectfully, the amendment proposed by The Greens would unnecessarily restrict the operation of the expanded move on powers and would cause significant operational difficulties. It would be very difficult for the police to ascertain if a person was engaging in the aforementioned behaviour with the intention of harassing, intimidating or threatening a person practising their religion. Respectfully, the Government does not accede to the amendments.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that The Greens amendments Nos 1 to 3 and 7 on sheet c2025-027B be agreed to. A division has been called for. There being fewer than five members for the question, the question is resolved in the negative. I direct that the names of those members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**Ayes, 3**

Ms J. Leong  
Ms K. Shetty  
Ms T. Smith

**Amendments negatived.**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (22:02):** By leave: I move The Greens amendments Nos 4 and 8 on sheet c2025-027B in globo:

**No. 4 Common law right to protest**

Page 3, Schedule 1[2], proposed section 214B. Insert after line 21—

(3A) To avoid doubt, nothing in this section affects the common law right to peaceful assembly.

**No. 8 Common law right to protest**

Page 4, Schedule 2[2]. Insert after line 23—

(6) To avoid doubt, nothing in subsection (5) affects the common law right to peaceful assembly.

These amendments make it clear that the law will not affect the common law right to peaceful assembly. In the past year there has been an unprecedented number of attacks on the democratic right to protest in New South Wales. The Government has sought to assure us each time that those laws will not undermine common law rights, and that people will still be able to peacefully gather and protest. With those comments in mind, these amendments simply seek to enshrine in law the verbal assurances we have been given time and again in this place.

Civil society groups and legal experts have raised concerns about carve-outs and exemptions for authorised public assemblies under the Summary Offences Act, which relates to the form 1 regime for notifying police of planned protests and demonstrations. Legal experts from the Human Rights Law Centre rightly point out that while notification regimes are meant to facilitate rather than authorise protests, the form 1 regime in New South Wales has been increasingly treated as a requirement for permission. That is a clear violation of international human rights law. In addition, they argue that notification is simply not possible for spontaneous assemblies, which are also protected under international human rights law. These amendments will alleviate those concerns by reinforcing the common law rights that exist and making it clear that the bill will not displace those fundamental rights.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (22:04):** The Greens amendments Nos 4 and 8 are related. They seek to insert avoidance-of-doubt provisions into the bill to the effect that nothing in proposed new section 214B of the Crimes Act or proposed new section 200 (5) of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act affects the common law right to peaceful assembly. That is not necessary. It is already clear from the provisions of the bill that the common law right to peaceful assembly is maintained. That was made very clear in my second reading speech, and there is nothing in the bill that can cast any doubt on that assertion.

In any event, the conduct targeted by the offence is not consistent with the common law right to peaceful assembly. That right does not mean that intentional blocking of persons attending places of worship or harassment, intimidation and threats against persons attending places of worship are condoned or permitted in any way. Protest and debate are key components of a thriving democracy. Members of the New South Wales community do have a right to protest. That right is not in any way removed or impinged upon by this bill. I stress again that this bill will not prohibit or restrict lawful, peaceful protests outside places of worship. Rather, it will operate to ensure faith adherents can practice their faith safely and without undue intrusion.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that The Greens amendments Nos 4 and 8 on sheet c2025-027B be agreed to. A division has been called for. There being fewer than five members for the question, the question is resolved in the negative. I direct that the names of those members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**Ayes, 3**

Ms J. Leong  
Ms K. Shetty  
Ms T. Smith

**Amendments negatived.**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (22:10):** By leave: I move my amendments Nos 1 to 3 on sheet c2025-028C in globo:

**No. 1 Review of amendments by Ombudsman**

Page 3, Schedule 1[2]. Insert after line 25—

**214BA**

**Oversight of certain provisions by Ombudsman**

- (1) The Ombudsman must monitor the operation and administration of the relevant amendments, including the exercise of functions conferred on persons under the relevant amendments.
- (2) The Ombudsman must prepare a report about the monitoring—

- (a) as soon as practicable after the period of 12 months from the commencement of the relevant amendments, and
- (b) every 3 years after the first report.
- (3) The Ombudsman may require the Commissioner of Police to provide information to the Ombudsman for the purposes of preparing the report.
- (4) A report must be tabled in each House of Parliament as soon as practicable after the report is prepared.
- (5) In this section—

*relevant amendments* means the amendments made by the *Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Act 2025*.

**Note—** *The Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Act 2025* inserted sections 214B–214C of this Act and amended the *Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002*, section 200.

**No. 2 Review of amendments by Ombudsman: consequential amendment**

Page 3, Schedule 1[2], proposed section 214C(2), lines 32 and 33. Omit "the period of 2 years from the commencement of the amendments". Insert instead "the report prepared under section 214BA is tabled in each House of Parliament".

**No. 3 Review of amendments by Ombudsman: consequential amendment**

Page 3, Schedule 1[2], line 35. Omit "3". Insert instead "2".

As representatives of a society that upholds civil liberties, it is important that we work through and address potential conflicts between competing human rights. Both the right to practise religion and the right to peaceful protest are fundamental parts of our free democracy. The rise in antisemitism is impacting on Jewish people's sense of safety. Synagogues have been targeted with hateful graffiti and one with an arson attack. Understandably, Jewish people are worried about attending synagogue, and the bill before the House seeks to protect attendance at places of worship. But human rights groups are worried that the bill goes too far and could unnecessarily impinge on the right to protest, capturing peaceful protesters who are demonstrating in public spaces that happen to be outside of places of worship such as Town Hall, where protesters often congregate.

During the marriage equality campaign, ahead of the plebiscite, we held a historic rally in support of love and a yes vote. We met at Town Hall and walked down George Street to Customs House. There were tens of thousands of us, and access to many places was hindered. We worked with police to get authorisation, but not all protests get police authorisation and nor should they. It is a dangerous practice to make protest activity only lawful if it is authorised by police. Community concerns about potential overreach that could see police break up unorganised demonstrations and move protesters on just because they are near a place of worship have merit. The powers are not limited to intentional obstructions based on racial hatred. Independent oversight of the laws would improve community confidence in the bill and help us assess whether any unintended impacts like the impingement on the right to protest need to be addressed.

The statutory review is limited to whether the objectives are being achieved and not to broader concerns about peaceful protest. My amendments would give the NSW Ombudsman oversight of the use of these laws, and the Ombudsman would prepare a report for Parliament on their functions after one year of operations and then every three years. The statutory review would commence upon receipt of the Ombudsman's report. Democracies work when we respect different views and everyone's right to exist. We need to find the right balance in protecting the right to practise religion and the right to protest. Ombudsman oversight of these laws will help us achieve that balance. I commend the amendments.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (22:13):** I will be brief. With the greatest of respect to the member for Sydney, the Government does not support these amendments. These amendments would introduce a requirement that the Ombudsman monitor the provisions and report on the monitoring as soon as practicable after 12 months from the commencement of the amendments and every three years after that first report. The amendments would also require the Commissioner of Police to provide information to the Ombudsman for the purposes of preparing the report and would require the report to be tabled in Parliament. The bill already provides for a statutory review of the move on powers exercised by the police to be undertaken as soon as practicable following two years of operation of the provisions. As part of that statutory review, the Department of Communities and Justice will consult with and invite submissions from the NSW Ombudsman so we do not have the situation—in case any members are wondering what this provision is about—where the Ombudsman is inquiring into the activities of police with respect to move on powers. But they will be invited by the Department of Communities and Justice to make submissions. That is the way it should be in New South Wales.

In addition to that, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, which also has oversight powers of the police, will not be reporting but will be invited to make submissions. So there is already sufficient oversight of police activities. We do not need to add any more with respect to these simple move on provisions. I understand

that the amendments are based on similar provisions in the Mandatory Disease Testing Act 2021 [MDT Act]. However, the measures in that Act are not, with respect, comparable to the move on powers provided for in this bill. The review mechanism included in the MDT Act was appropriate because that Act provided for coercive measures and authorised the undertaking of medical procedures like the taking of blood without consent, in some circumstances. It applies to vulnerable people following interactions with police or people in the custody of Corrective Services, an entirely different species of behaviour and an entirely different seriousness in relation to individual freedoms, if I can put it that way.

The move on power in this bill is different to the measures in the MDT Act. Move on powers, including existing exceptions to restrictions on move on powers in relation to protests, are already well-established. The move on power provided for in this bill does not require the same level of oversight as the MDT Act and it will be subject to a statutory review that will be tabled in Parliament. It will invite and involve feedback, as I have said, from the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the Ombudsman, the NSW Police Force, and other government and legal stakeholders, like Legal Aid. While we appreciate the intention of these amendments to ensure that the move on power is used appropriately, for those reasons the Government does not support the amendment.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that amendments Nos 1 to 3 on sheet c2025-028C of the member for Sydney be agreed to.

**Amendments negatived.**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (22:17):** By leave: I move The Greens amendments Nos 5 and 6 on sheet c2025-027B in globo:

**No. 5 Review of provisions—Joint Select Committee**

Page 3, Schedule 1[2], proposed section 214C(1), line 27. Omit "The Minister must". Insert instead "A Joint Select Committee must be designated to".

**No. 6 Review of provisions—human rights**

Page 3, Schedule 1[2], proposed section 214C(1), line 31. Omit "objectives.". Insert instead— objectives, and

(c) there are any human rights implications arising from the amendments or the implementation or operation of the amendments.

These amendments seek to expand the statutory review provisions so that the review will be conducted by a parliamentary committee and will include an assessment of any human rights implications arising from the new laws. That is good practice for a law that has the potential to infringe on fundamental human rights. It will provide greater transparency and oversight to enable us to understand the effectiveness of the bill as well as any unintended consequences that could result in harm. As mentioned previously, there are valid concerns from faith groups that these new laws could have a chilling effect that may unduly restrict the right of people to protest, including those from faith backgrounds. Providing for a review by a parliamentary committee with scope to investigate any human rights impacts will help to address those concerns. I urge my colleagues to support these amendments.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (22:18):** I will be brief. These amendments would require the statutory review of the amendments in the bill to be conducted by a joint select committee which would explicitly require the review to consider whether there are any human rights implications arising from the amendments, their implementation or operation. The bill already provides that, as Attorney General, I will review the operation of the amendments to determine whether their policy objectives remain valid and whether the terms remain appropriate for achieving those objectives. In effect, this is a garden variety statutory review that is not conducted by me or my ministerial office, but by the Department of Communities and Justice in consultation with other relevant government departments and entities and non-government entities if they see fit.

The review must be undertaken as soon as practicable after two years from commencement, and a report must be tabled within three years after commencement. This is a standard statutory review provision. It is a common function of a ministerial portfolio to undertake such a review. Requiring the statutory review to be undertaken by a joint select committee would be highly unusual and outside the usual functions of those committees. The existing provision enables a comprehensive review to be undertaken by the Government. It is not necessary to specify the matters to be considered in the review beyond what is already contained in the provision. As part of that review, the Department of Communities and Justice will consult with, and invite submissions from, relevant stakeholders, including the NSW Police Force, faith leaders and government and legal stakeholders.

I do not doubt that those stakeholders will provide thorough feedback on all relevant issues, including on any human rights implications arising from the amendments. The Government appreciates that the intention of the amendments moved by the member for Balmain is to ensure that the statutory review is conducted thoroughly

and considers all relevant issues. However, for the reasons I have outlined, the Government does not support the amendments. I give the member for Balmain an undertaking that I too want to heavily supervise the provisions to make sure that they work as intended. As the Attorney General, I have given undertakings to the House on many occasions that I will act swiftly to remedy any deficiencies in any bills that come within my purview.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that The Greens amendments Nos 5 and 6 on sheet c2025-027B be agreed to.

**Amendments negatived.**

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

**Clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 and 2 agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**The House divided.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that this bill be now read a third time. A division has been called for. There being only three members against the question, the question is resolved in the affirmative. I direct that the names of those members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

Noes, 3

Ms J. Leong  
Ms K. Shetty  
Ms. T. Smith

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Business of the House*

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

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (22:24):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended:

- (1) On Wednesday 19 February 2025 to permit the Crimes Amendment (Inciting Racial Hatred) Bill 2025 to proceed through all stages at that or any one sitting of the House.
- (2) On Thursday 20 February 2025 to:
  - (a) give precedence to the introduction of the Health Services Amendment (Splitting of the Hunter New England Health District) Bill 2025 during the time set aside for general business notices of motions for bills;
  - (c) permit and give precedence to the second reading debate on the bill during the time set aside for general business orders of the day (for bills) on the same day; and
  - (d) allow one member of the Government and one member of the Opposition to each speak for up to 20 minutes, after which an amendment to the second reading question, that the bill be referred to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services for inquiry and report, to be put forthwith.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (22:26):** I thank the Leader of the House for sharing this information with the Opposition. The Opposition supports the suspension of standing orders.

**Ms JENNY LEONG:** I seek leave to make a contribution to the debate.

**Leave not granted.**

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Bills*

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

#### **Consideration in Detail**

**Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments.**

*Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 13 February 2025*No. 1 **GRNS No. 1 [c2025-014A]**

Page 5, Schedule 1[12], proposed section 71D(a), line 28. Insert "with a designated inmate" after "correspondence".

No. 2 **GRNS No. 2 [c2025-014A]**

Page 5, Schedule 1[12], proposed section 71D. Insert after line 30—

(2) In this section—

*designated inmate* means an inmate who has been designated, in accordance with the regulations, as belonging to a security or other risk group on the basis that, in the Commissioner's opinion, there is a risk that the inmate may engage in, or incite other persons to engage in, activities that constitute a serious threat to the peace, order or good government of the State or another place, whether or not the inmate also constitutes—

- (a) an extreme danger to other people, or
- (b) an extreme threat to good order and security.

**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) (22:28):** I move:

That the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (22:28):** I acknowledge the contributions made by the Legislative Council members this evening. As the shadow Minister, I also acknowledge the good work done by Constance Piperides from the Minister's office and Jack Robinson from my office. The Opposition supports the amendments of the Legislative Council.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**STRATA SCHEMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024****Consideration in Detail****Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments.***Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 13 February 2025*No. 1 **AJP No. 1 [c2025-020B]**

Page 12, Schedule 1. Insert after line 9—

**[45A] Section 139A Restrictions on by-laws—assistance animals**

Omit section 139A(2). Insert instead—

- (2) A by-law may require a person who keeps an assistance animal on a lot to provide evidence to the owners corporation to show the animal is an assistance animal.
- (3) A person who keeps an assistance animal on a lot satisfies the evidentiary requirement of a by-law under subsection (2) if they provide any 1 of the following to the owners corporation—
  - (a) evidence the animal holds an accreditation referred to in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* of the Commonwealth, section 9(2)(a) or (b), or
  - (b) a statutory declaration verifying the animal has received the training referred to in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* of the Commonwealth, section 9(2)(c), or
  - (c) any 1 form of evidence prescribed by the regulations.

No. 2 **AJP No. 2 [c2025-020B]**

Page 31, Schedule 2. Insert after line 31—

**[40A] Section 130A Restrictions on by-laws—assistance animals**

Omit section 130A(2). Insert instead—

- (2) A by-law may require a person who keeps an assistance animal on a lot to provide evidence to the association to show the animal is an assistance animal.
- (2A) A person who keeps an assistance animal on a lot satisfies the evidentiary requirement of a by-law under subsection (2) if they provide any 1 of the following to the association—
  - (a) evidence the animal holds an accreditation referred to in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* of the Commonwealth, section 9(2)(a) or (b), or

- (b) a statutory declaration verifying the animal has received the training referred to in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* of the Commonwealth, section 9(2)(c), or
- (c) any 1 form of evidence prescribed by the regulations.

No. 3 **AJP No. 3 [c2025-020B]**

Page 45, Schedule 3.1[2], proposed section 26B, lines 8 and 9. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

For the Act, section 130A(2A)(c), the forms of evidence are the following—

No. 4 **AJP No. 4 [c2025-020B]**

Page 48, Schedule 3.7[2], proposed clause 37A, lines 17 and 18. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

For the Act, section 139A(3)(c), the forms of evidence are the following—

**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) (22:29):** I move:

That the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (22:30):** I simply wish to affirm the Opposition's support for the Legislative Council amendments. They are sensible and reasonable, and we are glad to support them.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT (STANDALONE REGULATOR) 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) (22:36):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am proud to introduce the Work Health and Safety Amendment (Standalone Regulator) Bill 2025. The bill will amend the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 to establish a new governance model for SafeWork NSW, facilitating its transition to a standalone executive agency. It is a fundamental right of every worker that their place of work should be safe and that they return home safely to their loved ones at the end of their working day. The fact that I say this all the time should never diminish the truth, power and significance of this statement. The Minns Government believes in this fundamental right, which is why the Premier created the Work Health and Safety portfolio title, one that had not existed for decades. It was a signal to every single business, employer and worker in this State that the Government would be putting the safety of workers and workplaces at the forefront of its agenda.

Every worker in this State also deserves a strong work health and safety regulator. They need a cop on the beat. They need to believe that if an employer is doing the wrong thing, putting safety and lives at risk, the regulator will have their back. Every worker needs to have faith that our work health and safety laws are upheld and, where they are not, that those responsible are prosecuted. The union movement needs to have faith that, if they raise safety concerns, those concerns will be heard, taken seriously and followed up. Employers also need to have a regulator that will be a source of advice, training and support when they require it. To do that we need a regulator empowered with those responsibilities and a leader of that organisation with the authority and standing to make it happen, whose one job is leading work health and safety standards in this State.

When we were elected nearly two years ago, we found the workplace regulator buried within one of the mega agencies. Many of its functions had been excised and were shared amongst other agencies. SafeWork NSW had become disempowered, irrelevant and ignored. It was treated as a form of red tape. Let me be perfectly clear: Workplace safety is not red tape. From opposition we were obviously very concerned with the way the functions of SafeWork NSW were being eroded and what that meant for worker safety in this State. That is why we put pressure on the former Government to conduct an independent review. I am proud that the independent review that the former Government was dragged, kicking and screaming, to establish validated our concerns and has led us to where we are today—restoring the work health and safety regulator as a standalone agency.

Before I turn to the detail of the bill, I will run through some of the other key actions the Minns Government has already undertaken to strengthen the role of the regulator and improve work health and safety outcomes in this State. We increased penalties for serious work health and safety breaches in line with model laws. We introduced 88 new penalty notices and increased fines for breaches of the Work Health and Safety Regulation. We closed the loopholes that allowed businesses to insure against work health and safety fines as a cost of doing business. We introduced an industrial manslaughter offence in New South Wales, including the highest maximum penalties for corporations in Australia.

We led the calls for a ban on engineered stone, which led to the unanimous decision by all work health and safety Ministers across the country and the Commonwealth for a national ban. We boosted SafeWork NSW by \$2.5 million to allow it to deploy more inspectors to enforce the engineered stone ban. We legislated to establish the framework for a silica worker register to track and care for workers exposed to silica dust. We implemented the Work Health and Safety Amendment (Crystalline Silica Substances) Regulation 2024 to provide for stronger regulation of the processing of materials containing crystalline silica across all industries, particularly for processing that is assessed as high risk.

We also appointed an acting deputy secretary, Mr Curtin, to lead SafeWork NSW and begin its transformation into a modern, fit-for-purpose safety regulator. The new structure ensures SafeWork NSW is more effectively allocating resources towards its strategic priorities to improve the health and safety of all workers in New South Wales and realise the opportunities identified in the various reports. This new structure resulted in the following: an increase in the number of inspectors by 48 full-time equivalents, including the introduction of new team coordinator inspector roles to improve supervision and quality assurance; increased capacity and capability to respond in regional New South Wales by having flexible regional teams addressing all harms and industries; refocused research, data and intelligence capability towards SafeWork NSW priorities; the establishment of new functions, including program design and evaluation, program management, regulatory engagement, governance, operational assurance and operational intelligence, resulting in more rigorous and effective regulatory practice; and expanded focus of the high-risk workplaces and repeat offenders program to all industries.

That last point is something that I am very interested in. Particularly over the past year, a number of bigger companies continue to be repeat offenders. This program, the first of its kind in the State, will put them on a list. Repeat offenders are targeted by SafeWork, and we will throw whatever we need to throw at them. I take this opportunity to thank the incredible SafeWork professionals, staff and, in particular, the inspectors. I thank Mr Curtin and his team for improving SafeWork's standing as a regulator, for rebuilding relationships with important stakeholders, including industry, unions, employees, employers, experts and families of those who have lost loved ones, and for preparing the agency for its new, enhanced role. I express my appreciation of the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service, Graeme Head. We value his advice and, alongside Mr Curtin, he has supported the Government's changes. I also acknowledge my amazing, hardworking ministerial staff, who have done an incredible job on the bill.

I now turn to the detail of the bill. The changes contained in the bill will strengthen the identity of SafeWork NSW and restore public confidence in the State's work health and safety regulator by establishing the SafeWork Commissioner as the regulator under clause 1 (1) (a) of schedule 2 to the Act, with a new advisory council to support the commissioner's functions. In October 2022 the former Government commissioned the Hon. Robert McDougall, KC, to carry out an independent review of SafeWork NSW to assess the performance and effectiveness of SafeWork's compliance and enforcement functions. The review made 46 recommendations aimed at enhancing SafeWork NSW's regulatory capabilities. The recommendations addressed several areas, including operational improvements, capability enhancements and structural reforms.

The review highlighted the need for structural reform of SafeWork NSW to increase public confidence and access to the regulator, to allow for appropriate stakeholder representation and voice, and to promote transparency and accountability. The Government welcomed the report's findings and provided support or in-principle support to all recommendations. The bill is an important step to effecting the necessary changes and increasing public confidence in the regulator. The review recommended restructuring the governance of SafeWork NSW to increase its separation from the Department of Customer Service [DCS]. The bill implements that purpose and provides the regulator with the necessary separation and governance to effectively carry out its functions free from departmental control.

SafeWork NSW has been preparing for increased separation and strengthening its identity as the work health and safety regulator for New South Wales. SafeWork NSW previously sat within the Better Regulation Division in DCS, which combined various regulators overseen by a single deputy secretary. Since 1 December 2023, SafeWork NSW has been operating as a standalone regulator within DCS. A key concern highlighted by the review was SafeWork NSW's loss of identity and reduced public face while it was housed

within DCS. Stakeholders noted that the work health and safety regulator should be a separate identifiable regulator removed from DCS.

From 1 July 2025, SafeWork NSW will be established as a public service executive agency by way of an administrative arrangements order. The order will establish the SafeWork Commissioner as the head of the newly formed executive agency. Schedule 1 [5] to the bill amends schedule 2 of the Act by removing references to the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service as the regulator and replaces it with reference to the SafeWork Commissioner. The effect of that is to establish the SafeWork Commissioner as the regulator. The SafeWork Commissioner will hold all necessary functions as the regulator under the Work Health and Safety Act. As head of the executive agency, the commissioner will also hold the functions of an executive agency head under the Government Sector Employment Act 2013.

New section 155E (2) will require the commissioner to take into account advice from the SafeWork Advisory Council when determining the strategic direction and priorities of SafeWork NSW. That will allow the key stakeholders to have more voice and increase transparency and accountability. The advisory council will also provide that advice to the Minister of the day. I also note that, as an executive agency, SafeWork NSW will produce annual reports separately to DCS, which will be tabled in Parliament in line with the requirements under the Government Sector Finance Act 2018. In addition, new section 155F will require a statutory review of these amendments after the first three years of operation to ensure their effectiveness. The requirements will enhance parliamentary oversight of the agency, ensuring information about decision-making, resource use and performance is clear and can be scrutinised by the Parliament and the public.

The New South Wales Government has listened to the views expressed in the review about the regulator's lack of autonomy and independence as a division of DCS. The reforms mark a significant increase in SafeWork NSW as a standalone regulator. I am confident that that will give the regulator more autonomy to address the full suite of recommendations proposed by the Hon. Robert McDougall, KC, including necessary operational improvements to address emerging challenges in the field of work health and safety. The review highlighted the need for the regulator's decision-making to be informed by input from key stakeholders, specifically industry employers, unions, employees, experts in the field of work health and safety and people with lived experience. I strongly agree with the need for insights and expertise from those important stakeholders to inform the regulator's priorities and strategic direction.

The reforms in the bill will ensure SafeWork NSW has that stakeholder input by establishing a SafeWork Advisory Council. Schedule 1 [4] inserts provisions into the Act relating to the establishment and governance of the SafeWork Advisory Council. Under clause 2 of new schedule 1A, the council will consist of three representatives of employer organisations, three representatives from unions to be nominated by Unions NSW, at least one expert in work health and safety and at least one representative of a work health and safety support, advocacy or awareness organisation or a person who has lived experience of workplace injury or death and represents the interests of injured workers and their families. The membership goes beyond traditional tripartite advisory arrangements, which are ordinarily between unions, employers and government because this Government is committed to listening to those affected by workplace incidents.

I thank the families who have lost loved ones in the workplace. Many members in this place have either constituents or have worked with families who have lost loved ones in the workplace. It has affected us personally. We carry that into this place and try to make things better. Members opposite, such as the member for Miranda—a former Minister—and the member for Willoughby, who are in the Chamber, carry those stories of people's experiences. It is important for us to raise the issues that people highlight and make changes to make workplaces safer. We acknowledge the unique insights that those people bring to the effective regulation of work health and safety. That is why the bill gives these important stakeholders a formal role by mandating the inclusion of advocates or people with lived experience of work health and safety matters.

The bill also mandates the inclusion of an expert in the field of work health and safety, acknowledging the role they play in achieving healthier and safer working environments. New section 155E outlines the functions of the advisory council. The functions are to monitor emerging risks and trends in the field of work health and safety, advise the SafeWork Commissioner on the strategic direction and priorities of SafeWork NSW and advise the SafeWork Commissioner or the Minister on any matters referred to the council by the SafeWork Commissioner or the Minister. New section 155E (2) requires the SafeWork Commissioner to consider the council's advice when determining the strategic direction and priorities of SafeWork NSW. I am confident that establishing an advisory council will address the review's concern about improving representation from the important key stakeholder groups. It is an important mechanism to ensure that the regulator considers the diverse perspectives of workers, employers, experts and people with lived experience when setting its strategic direction and priorities.

The New South Wales Government takes worker safety seriously. It is crucial that our State's work health and safety regulator is strong, responsive and accessible. The reforms in the bill aim to foster greater trust and

confidence in the regulator from the public, from industry and from workers. I am confident that the bill will improve the effectiveness of work health and safety regulation in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

#### **MENTAL HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

##### **First Reading**

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

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later time.

#### **HOUSING AMENDMENT BILL 2025**

##### **First Reading**

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

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later time.

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

##### **Returned**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill with amendments. I order that consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments be set down as an order of the day for a later time.

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

##### **Returned**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.

#### **INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AMENDMENT BILL 2025**

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

**Debate resumed from 12 February 2025.**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (22:49):** This evening I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2025. At nearly 11 o'clock on Tuesday night, I place on record that we are debating a bill that, frankly, will make very minor changes to legislation in the purview of the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety. Frankly, the Government cannot get its legislative program in order. Without members still being here at nearly 11 o'clock on Tuesday night, the upper House would run out of work by the end of this week. It is a very sad reflection on the priorities of those opposite that they cannot work out how to run the legislative program to ensure that matters are dealt with at more appropriate times. Last week the Government nearly ran out of work on Wednesday and Thursday yet, lo and behold, today members are all here at 11.00 p.m. because the Government has finally woken up and decided it has priorities. With that in mind, I will move on to talk about the industrial chaos going on around the State.

For the last couple of weeks, all that members have heard about and all our offices are getting is correspondence on the industrial chaos that is reigning on the train tracks, in our hospitals and in our mental health facilities. I really like the Minister for Industrial Relations, as she knows and as I have said in this place, but she has been missing in action. That is why it was such a relief that she turned up at the media conference on Valentine's Day. We were all delighted to finally see her around and it was a veritable proof of life. The Minister was given a walk-on part in the unfolding drama of the disintegrating love affair between the Rail, Tram and Bus Union and the Minns Labor Government, in which the travelling public is bearing the brunt of this love-hate relationship. As I said, today we are considering the very minor amendments the Government is making to seven Acts and two regulations.

I state for the record that the majority of these amendments should have been made in the earlier Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2023 to address the consequences of resurrecting the Industrial Relations Court. For example, the bill provides for appeals for offences under the Industrial Relations Act 1996 or the Work Health

and Safety Act 2011 to be made from the Local Court to the Industrial Relations Court. The bill also empowers the Minister to make regulations dealing with the refund or waiver of fees.

It will be interesting to see if the Minister provides for any fees to be waived for the many unions taking actions in the Industrial Relations Commission; after all, they are alleging breaches by the Minns Labor Government of the requirement under each award for consultation to take place with the relevant union prior to announcing or implementing structural change. The Public Service Association has been obliged to bring several such actions, describing the lack of consultation with the union by this Government as unprecedented. Most recently, we know that the Nurses and Midwives' Association, which is incensed by the cavalier comments of the Premier that nurses would step in to cover for the psychiatrists who resigned, has brought a similar action.

The bill would also amend section 90 of the Health Services Act 1997 to provide for an arbitrator appointed in relation to the remuneration and terms for visiting medical officer contracts to be a judicial member of the Industrial Court and to take into account various matters specified in the Industrial Relations Act 1996. The remuneration and terms for visiting medical officers, or VMOs, is obviously topical, with the VMOs being trumpeted by the Minns Labor Government as part of the robust response to ensure service delivery in the mental health space in the face of mass resignations of psychiatrists. Claims that VMOs were cheaper than staff specialists in this context are laughable. VMOs do play a role in filling a position with a variable workload and can be cost effective. However, where VMOs are being used to plug massive shortages and where demand for services is high, as it is in mental health, it is clearly not a cost-effective solution. VMO rates are significantly higher.

Section 4A of the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989 expires on 30 June this year, bringing an end to a three-year freeze of the base salary for members of Parliament. Another amendment this bill would make would require the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal, in making a determination affecting the base salary from 1 July 2025 onwards, to have regard to "the fiscal position and outlook of the Government, and the likely effect of the making of the determination on the position and outlook". To those of my colleagues hoping for a modest pay increase this is dire news, because the fiscal outlook of the Minns Labor Government, on a trajectory to \$200 billion of gross debt—20.5 per cent of gross State product—by June 2028, is bleak indeed. Government members who are desperately trying to clamber up the ranks will be disappointed. Suffice to say that it should come as absolutely no surprise to all in this House that the Opposition opposes the bill. With that, I commend the bill to the House, at this incredibly late hour.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (22:55):** I speak in support of the Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2025. This legislation is aimed at ensuring the effective and efficient operation of the recently re-established Industrial Court. The bill will make several necessary amendments to the Industrial Relations Act 1996 and other related legislation, reinforcing our commitment to a fair and balanced industrial relations system in New South Wales. As members will recall, the Industrial Relations Amendment Act 2023 reinstated the Industrial Court, restoring judicial functions that were transferred to the Supreme Court in 2016. Since its commencement, on 1 July 2024, the Industrial Court has played an important role in handling cases under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and the Industrial Relations Act. The bill before us today makes additional refinements to ensure that the Industrial Court operates efficiently and effectively.

The bill amends several legislative instruments to enhance judicial processes, to clarify procedures and to ensure proper case management within the Industrial Court. I now outline the key amendments. The amendments to the Crimes (Appeal and Review) Act 2001 will simplify appeal pathways by granting the Industrial Court appellate jurisdiction over matters heard before the Local Court under the Industrial Relations Act or the Work Health and Safety Act. Appeals to the Supreme Court will be permitted only with leave and only on a question of law. Additionally, the bill grants the Attorney General and the Director of Public Prosecutions the right to appeal to the Court of Criminal Appeal against an acquittal issued by the Industrial Court in cases involving offences under these Acts. To reduce delays in Work Health and Safety Act matters, this bill introduces provisions that will enable improved case management. This will align with best practices in judicial efficiency and ensure that workplace health and safety prosecutions are resolved in a timely manner.

In relation to the Health Services Act 1997, the bill ensures that, when an arbitrator is required to determine remuneration and conditions for visiting medical officers, arbitration will be undertaken by a judicial member of the Industrial Relations Commission. The arbitrator will also be required to consider economic factors, including the Government's fiscal position and the objectives of the Industrial Relations Act. In relation to the Industrial Relations Act 1996, several amendments are made to clarify procedures, including enabling the refund or waiver of fees imposed by the Industrial Relations Commission; allowing appeals from the Local Court to be heard by a single judge of the Industrial Court, rather than a full bench, improving efficiency; and aligning procedures for appeals from the Local Court to the Industrial Court with those of the District Court, rather than the Supreme Court, to provide clarity and certainty for litigants.

The bill removes outdated references to the Industrial Relations Act and replaces them with provisions that require the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal to consider the Government's fiscal position and outlook when making remuneration determinations. The bill will also amend the Police Act 1990, as a consequential amendment to the re-establishment of the Industrial Court. The bill updates references to the president of the commission instead of the chief commissioner. In relation to the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, the bill transfers jurisdiction over civil proceedings related to discriminatory or coercive conduct from the District Court to the Industrial Court.

Given the Industrial Court's existing jurisdiction over summary prosecutions under the Work Health and Safety Act, this is a logical step to ensure consistency in handling those matters. The bill includes transitional provisions to ensure smooth implementation. This includes provisions affecting ongoing cases under the Crimes (Appeal and Review) Act, Criminal Procedure Act, Health Services Act, Industrial Relations Act and Work Health and Safety Act. The re-establishment of the Industrial Court was a significant reform aimed at restoring fairness and efficiency to our industrial relations system. Since its recommencement on 1 July 2024, the court has already received 176 lodgements, with the majority relating to Work Health and Safety Act prosecutions.

The proposed amendments in the bill will further refine the court's processes, ensuring that it can continue to serve the people of New South Wales effectively. The changes reflect the Minns Government's ongoing commitment to industrial fairness, workplace safety and judicial efficiency. The amendments address ambiguities, streamline processes and provide certainty for all parties engaging with the Industrial Court. I thank the Minister for Industrial Relations for bringing this important legislation to the House. The bill is a necessary step in ensuring that the Industrial Court operates with clarity, efficiency and effectiveness. It builds upon the reforms of the Industrial Relations Amendment Act 2023 and ensures that our industrial relations framework remains robust and responsive to the needs of workers, employers and the broader community. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (23:01):** I am pleased to speak in support of the Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2025. The primary purpose of the bill before the House is to support the effective and efficient operation of the re-established Industrial Court via new appeal processes and case management processes. It is, therefore, perhaps timely to provide members with a brief history of some of the milestones of the Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales, which members are aware has an extremely proud history. The process of having an Industrial Court commenced at Federation in 1901 with the Court of Arbitration. That was a court of record constituted by a president—a Supreme Court judge—and two members representing employers and employees, respectively.

The court came about as a result of the failure of employers and unions to use a system of voluntary arbitration. That voluntary process was not used effectively because, when one side or the other—the unions or the employers—thought they had the relevant industrial muscle, they would simply refuse to agree to voluntary arbitration. The court had jurisdiction to hear and determine any industrial dispute or matter referred to it by an industrial union, prescribe a minimum wage and make orders or awards pursuant to such hearing or determination. The concept of conciliation and arbitration of industrial disputes was an attempt to civilise the industrial relations landscape in New South Wales. Looking back, it was clearly a key part of the industrial and social history that, within both the State and Federal jurisdictions, there were courts and tribunals that sought to resolve industrial disputes in a fair and impartial manner.

By 1908 we had the first formally named Industrial Court in New South Wales, which was established by the Industrial Disputes Act 1908 and was constituted by a Supreme Court or District Court judge. The court did not require the existence of a dispute to ground its jurisdiction, had the power to arbitrate on conditions of employment, and could hear prosecutions. The Act also established a system of industrial boards consisting of representatives of employers and employees and a chairperson, which continued to be a key part of the industrial relations framework in this State for many years.

There have, of course, been numerous developments in the New South Wales industrial relations system since then, and I know, Mr Temporary Speaker, that you are looking forward to hearing more so I will outline them. They include the Court of Industrial Arbitration, which was established in 1912 and empowered the Minister to establish conciliation committees; and the Board of Trade, which was established in 1918 and conducted a public inquiry into the cost of living and declared an adult male and female living wage each year for industry generally and for employees engaged in rural occupations. Of course, the female living wage was much lower than the male living wage and we still have not reached parity, although we are getting closer.

Further amendments were made in the 1920s and 1930s, but it was the introduction of the Industrial Arbitration Act in 1940 that ultimately became the solid foundation for the Industrial Relations Commission for a good part of the remainder of the last century. The Industrial Arbitration Act consolidated all previous Acts and refined and rationalised the procedures and operation of the industrial commission. It provided for the establishment of an industrial commission, conciliation committees and commissioners, industrial magistrates

courts and an industrial registrar. There is a lot more to say, but I will save it for another contribution in this place. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (23:06):** By leave: In my haste to conclude my second reading contribution I omitted the word "not". I should have said that the Opposition will not be opposing the bill. I thank the House for its indulgence at this late hour.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (23:07):** In reply: I thank all members for their contributions to debate on the Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2025. The former Government, upon being elected in 2011, immediately set about undermining the industrial relations system in this State and in 2016 eventually abolished the important institution of the Industrial Relations Court. Amendments made in 2023 by the Minns Labor Government restored the Industrial Court and ensured 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.

The bill before the House makes a number of amendments to the Industrial Relations Act and other legislation to help support the effective operation of the Industrial Court, which was recently re-established on 1 July 2024. As the industrial relations Minister, I am very proud. I counter what the shadow Minister said. It was quite insulting to her intelligence as well. As the Minister for Industrial Relations, I have introduced a number of very important legislative reforms that have changed the landscape of industrial relations in New South Wales. We are a democracy and there will always be disputes. The shadow Minister has not bothered to understand the current dispute with the rail union. There were myriad issues under her Government. I do not know what Opposition members' solutions were, but they have been ventilated. The rail dispute falls under the Fair Work Commission.

The New South Wales Government's changes and reforms were made under the New South Wales Industrial Relations Act. We made amendments to that Act. This Government was elected on a platform to remove the wages cap. For 12 years from 2011, when Premier O'Farrell introduced the wages cap, the previous Government's industrial relations policy was no bargaining, no productivity, no efficiencies and no reforms. There were massive teacher vacancies. Emergency personnel were moving to Queensland, Victoria and other States. There were myriad issues. Going back three or four years, there were merged school classes because the former Government could not recruit teachers in the appropriate disciplines. Back in 2011, the very small Labor Opposition did the analysis and said the Government would encounter problems trying to recruit important public servants.

I thank the 400,000 public servants who provide services for New South Wales. Since this Government was elected, the Premier has been very clear that New South Wales provides important services. We are one of the greatest and largest economies. We need to provide services to the people of New South Wales. We have great, smart, professional public servants. They absolutely deserved the pay rise they received back in 2023. The Government has conducted a number of multi-year agreements with 90,000 Crown employees, including park rangers, community services workers and a whole range of other public servants. The Government has conducted multi-year agreements with teachers, police and other sectors of the New South Wales public service.

At the moment, firefighters are in arbitration. They are using the new Industrial Court that this Government set up. It is about bargaining. Opposition members fail to understand that the former Government had a lazy system. They did not do the work that we are currently doing. I am not going to be a show pony, but I have stuck it out. Throughout the summer period Government members have had their heads down, going through the important work, line by line. The former transport Minister, other Ministers and the Treasurer have worked together, line by line, day and night. That is in contrast to Coalition members, who did absolutely jack for 12 years. The wages cap was a lazy policy and a lazy system. It left New South Wales with a huge mess.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order—

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** No, I am providing a summary—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** I will hear the point of order from the member for Kiama.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 76. Is it not ironic that at a quarter past 11 the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety is keeping members here while she provides a stream of consciousness history lesson?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** There is no point of order.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** The public servants of New South Wales absolutely deserve a pay rise. The Government established the Industrial Court. It removed the wages cap. It set up a new system of bargaining. We are going through all the awards.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** That's going really well with the rail workers at the moment.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** Yes, and 90,000 Crown employees signed multi-year agreements. What did the former Government do? It put in the 2.5 per cent wages cap. This Government has to deal with outdated awards.

**Mr Tim James:** There is a \$10 billion hole in the budget.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** You cannot read the budget.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** The Minister will direct her comments through the Chair.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** The bill also makes some consequential amendments that are necessary following the passage of the Industrial Relations Amendment Act 2023. I acknowledge the important contribution of the member for Mount Druitt, and Parliamentary Secretary. I acknowledge the member for Lismore for her important contribution, her strong advocacy for working people in her regional community and her hard work, particularly with what has happened in her town over the past few years. I also acknowledge the member for Miranda. I like the member for Miranda; she has stated that she likes me as well. However, I counter her argument and say that we have been working very hard, and we will continue to work very hard.

We will continue to ensure that we have a modernised and reformed industrial relations system that is robust, democratic, amenable and accessible to people. We will reform these outdated awards and clean up the mess that those opposite left for us. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **SERBIAN FESTIVAL SYDNEY**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (23:15):** Zdravo! Anyone who has never tried sizzling cevapi, flaky cheese or meat burek is missing out on some of the best that Serbian culture has to offer. These were just a taste of what was on display at the twelfth Serbian Festival Sydney held at Tumbalong Park, Darling Harbour, which I was delighted to attend over the weekend, on 15 February. Over two days, the festival showcased one of the largest celebrations of Serbian culture outside of Europe. The air was filled with the sounds of folkloric music, the rhythmic stomping of dancers and the rich aromas of Serbian cuisine. With food stalls, cultural exhibits and artisanal products, there was something for everyone on offer. Last year the festival welcomed over 70,000 visitors, and this year's turnout was just as impressive—a testament to the enduring traditions and heritage of the Serbian community. I look forward to seeing Sydney painted red, blue and white once again at next year's festival.

#### **ALICE CLAYTON**

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping) (23:16):** I acknowledge the outstanding contributions of Alice Clayton in her role organising the Whale Rock Trail Run, which will take place this weekend on 23 February 2025. This is an exciting new trail run for the community, which Alice has initiated. It will traverse some of the most beautiful parts of bushland in the Epping electorate. The Whale Rock Trail Run promises to be an exhilarating event, catering to participants of all skill levels and ages. Ms Clayton's dedication to delivering this experience is a testament to her organisational skills and passion for community engagement. I commend Ms Clayton for her remarkable work in organising this event. Her efforts are a shining example of the positive impact that dedicated individuals can have on their local communities.

### LACHLAN HYDE

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (23:17):** With a deep commitment to civic engagement, Lachlan Hyde focuses on serving young people and fostering positive change in the community. His extensive experience in the not-for-profit sector is evident in his impactful roles as a youth adviser to Canterbury Bankstown and Fairfield councils, as well as the South Western Sydney Local Health District. Lachlan's leadership extends beyond youth advocacy. As president and chairman of the Royal Aero Club of NSW, he has demonstrated a strong commitment to aviation and its role within the local community. Furthermore, his collaboration with organisations, including the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, Argyle Youth Alliance and many more, has enriched so many lives. Lachlan's dedication is truly commendable. I look forward to seeing his continued success in his future endeavours.

### GLEN INNES COMMUNITY SPIRIT

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands) (23:18):** I recognise the Glen Innes community for banding together to clean up and put the town right following a large storm that smashed the town in January. I congratulate Richard Gallagher and Bianca Hill on being the driving force behind this initiative and on having a can-do attitude to organise the clean-up. Other members of the community who helped out included Lindsay Hill, Imogen Armstrong, Oliver Armstrong, Suzi Lake, Trey Griffiths, Braedon Griffiths, Keinan Griffiths, Jayden Nugent, Cammo Wood, Anne Vosper and the Glen Innes mayor, Margot Davis. Special thanks also goes to coffee shop the Local of Glen Innes for kindly donating coffees for each of the volunteers. I commend and thank everyone involved in this wonderful neighbour-to-neighbour effort for their hard work, for cleaning up the town and for generously providing their time, utes, trailers and strength. The community spirit in Glen Innes is most definitely alive and well.

### RIVERSTONE HIGH SCHOOL

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (23:19):** I congratulate the 2025 Riverstone High School leadership team. Being elected as leaders by their peers is a truly remarkable achievement, and each of them should take immense pride in that recognition. I offer my special congratulations to school captains Laila Amiri and Shanna Talisau, as well as vice-captains Matthew Clark and Jasmine Tuitupou. Recently I had the privilege of visiting Riverstone High School with the Premier and Deputy Premier, where the leadership team showcased the spirit and pride of their school. It was inspiring to see them all represent Riverstone so passionately. Under the guidance of their dedicated principal, Rosemary Daubney, I have no doubt they will have a profound and lasting impact on their school community. As a former student of Riverstone High, I hold those young leaders in high regard and am excited to see the great work they will accomplish. I wish them all the best as they embrace and promote the core values of resilience, respect and responsibility. As the year unfolds, I look forward to hearing about their continued success and the positive changes they will bring to Riverstone High School.

### NATE BARRETT

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (23:20):** I congratulate an exceptional young athlete from Wakehurst, Nate Barrett, on receiving the New South Wales Government State Representative Award. Nate's achievements in cross-country and track and field are nothing short of outstanding. Competing at the School Sport Australia Track and Field Championship in Launceston, he proudly represented New South Wales and delivered incredible performances on the national stage. His dedication, perseverance and sheer talent make him exceptional. It was great to see his hard work lead to such success. Nate is an inspiration to young athletes and to our entire community. It was my pleasure to nominate him for the award, and I have no doubt that it is just the beginning of an exciting journey in athletics. Excitingly, Nate is gearing up for April 2025, when he will compete again. He has told me his training schedule, and it is insane. Well done to Nate. Our community is incredibly proud of him and I cannot wait to see what he achieves next. The Olympics in Brisbane is a very real prospect for that young man.

### CANTERBURY HOSPITAL

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (23:21):** I recognise the incredible and tireless advocacy of the many locals and community groups who have fought for years for an upgrade to Canterbury Hospital. Many inner west locals rely on Canterbury Hospital for essential services, be they mums delivering babies, elderly patients needing ongoing care or people in crisis accessing the emergency unit. Patient and resident voices have been crucial in pushing for those much-needed upgrades and the expansion of those essential services. Our community has waited 25 years for this, and now the planning for the Canterbury Hospital upgrade has finally begun. The Labor Government is delivering a \$350 million redevelopment of our local hospital to improve health and wellbeing across the inner west and Canterbury communities. It includes an expanded intensive care unit and emergency department, purpose-built inpatient accommodation and more surgical theatres. That milestone could not have

been reached without the efforts of so many advocates and, of course, the work of our healthcare professionals and staff at Canterbury Hospital.

#### **GRAEME WELSH**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (23:22):** I recognise Mr Graeme Welsh for his significant contribution to the Goulburn-Mulwaree region over the past 45 years across both professional and volunteer roles. In his role as group captain with the Rural Fire Service Southern Tablelands Zone during the 2020 bushfires, Mr Welsh was responsible for coordinating the fire brigades responding to the unfolding emergency. That saw him awarded a NSW RFS Life Membership Award. Mr Welsh makes himself available to take on the role of auctioneer at charity fundraisers and supports Can Assist Goulburn. He is always keen to support and be involved in local initiatives such as the hydrotherapy pool and youth sports. Mr Welsh is also a keen advocate for the protection of the environment. He was recently announced as the 2025 Australia Day Citizen of the Year in Goulburn-Mulwaree. I congratulate and thank Mr Welsh and acknowledge the accumulated years of service that he has dedicated to our community.

#### **LUNAR NEW YEAR**

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (23:23):** Lunar New Year 2025 has recently concluded with the lantern festival. I recognise and acknowledge the many community associations that have been involved in this year's celebrations, including the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, led by president Sheldon Mak, director Ricky Chong and deputy director Timothy Chau; the Australian Chinese Charity Foundation, under chairman Dr Michael Tse and vice-chair Annie Tang; the Friendship Association in Homebush West, led by Dr David Tang; and the Australia China Business Council, led by New South Wales president Helen Zhi Dent, who brought together 500 leaders for a super-successful Lunar New Year gala. Special thanks go to Patrick Mayoh for his efforts in organising that event. Burwood Council and Mayor John Faker also hosted a vibrant Lunar New Year street party. Those celebrations remind us that multiculturalism is more than an idea; it is a lived experience that unites us.

#### **CLARENCE VALLEY SPORTS AWARDS**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (23:24):** I congratulate the winners of the annual Clarence Valley Sports Awards, held at the South Grafton Ex-Servicemens Club last Saturday night. The Holly Butcher Memorial Volunteer of the Year was Adam Brown. Club of the Year went to Grafton Netball Association. The Senior Team of the Year was the Yamba Football Club women's division north team. The Junior Team of the Year was the Grafton girls hockey under-18s. The Junior Male Sportsperson of the Year was William Tait. The Female Sportsperson of the Year was Breanna Robertson. The Senior Sportsperson of the Year was Shannon Moran. The People's Choice Award went to Tamar McHugh from Redmen. The Sportsperson of the Year was Laurelea Moss. The Coach of the Year was Matt Mawson from the Junior Rebels. The Max Godbee award went to Brooke Burton. The Ernie Muller award winner was Mark Skippings from the Yamba Breakers Football Club. Finally, the Bruce Green and Col Marsh memorial trophy went to Brian Ferrie. I congratulate all of the winners.

#### **COBALT WALSH**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (23:25):** I recognise an exceptional and hardworking student in my electorate, Cobalt Walsh. He has shown consistent effort and made contributions to both his school and the wider community. His achievements span academic pursuits, leadership, sports, music and volunteering. Cobalt has been frequently acknowledged for his leadership. He received the prestigious Australian Scout Award and a grant from the Dick and Pip Smith leadership fund. Additionally, he was named leadership winner at the Canterbury-Bankstown council youth awards. His activities have seen him granted a bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award for his dedication to personal growth and community service. Cobalt is an integral member of the 1st Picnic Point Scout unit and has represented youth voices on the Scouts NSW youth council. His influence has reached far and wide, including being a guest speaker at prestigious NSW Scouts events. I thank Cobalt for his active involvement and invaluable contributions to the East Hills community.

#### **TRIBUTE TO DOROTHY JOAN HANBRIDGE**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (23:26):** Tonight the Parliament of New South Wales honours the life and remarkable contributions of Dorothy Joan Hanbridge, a true champion of our community, for her service. For over 51 years Dorothy dedicated herself to raising funds for the Children's Medical Research Institute through creative initiatives. She founded a quilt show that brought together sewers and volunteers to create and raffle quilts, fostering a spirit of collaboration in her community. In addition to her fundraising efforts, Dorothy organised cake stalls where she baked around 30 Christmas cakes each year, delighting families who cherished her creations. Her compassion extended further, as she transported cancer patients to Sydney for treatment,

offering support during their most challenging times. Dorothy also made several visits to Mayflower Village and Nowra, bringing joy and companionship to residents. As a member of Berry Rotary, she helped raise funds for a linear accelerator and co-founded the annual Celtic festival with her husband, Col. In recognition of Dorothy's dedication, Kiama Council named her citizen of the year for her legacy of kindness and commitment. Vale, Dorothy Hanbridge. We will miss her.

#### **NELLIE AHRENS**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (23:27):** I acknowledge Nellie Ahrens, a young Engadine local who devotes her time to raising money for the Sydney Children's Hospitals Foundation. Nellie has a knack for fundraising and has been consistently supporting Sydney Children's Hospitals year upon year. Since she began fundraising for the children's hospital when she was 10, Nellie has raised \$7,800. She was awarded the 2024 Southern Sydney Young Volunteer of the Year award in recognition of her exceptional efforts and commitment to making a significant impact on the lives of children in need in her community. Her actions show us that no matter how old we may be, we can always make a positive impact on those who need it most. I am very proud to represent such a kind-hearted young woman. On behalf of the Heathcote electorate, I congratulate Nellie on her selflessness and compassion in her mission to support the Sydney Children's Hospitals Foundation.

#### **HAWKESBURY SCOUT GROUPS**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (23:28):** I acknowledge the several Hawkesbury Scout groups that attended the twenty-sixth Australian jamboree in Queensland this year from 6 to 15 January. It was a great way for Scouts and leaders alike to meet, learn and collaborate with peers in a unique experience. The jamboree, which attracts Scouts from across Australia and overseas, enabled various groups of ages 11 to 18 to meet up and take part in several activities spread over a four-day period. Hawkesbury, Glossodia, Oakville and Grose Vale were among the many attendees, supported by the Rover Scouts and adult leaders. Activities included surfing, swimming, climbing and dancing—I want to go there. Participants also enjoyed archery and robotics, challenging their intellect and critical thinking in a fun and cooperative manner. I congratulate all the participants of the 2025 Australian jamboree. It was excellent that so many groups were able to come together to learn, build confidence and develop skills whilst forming lifelong friendships.

#### **SOUTH COAST MARINE RESCUE VOLUNTEERS**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (23:29):** I recognise and congratulate the dedicated volunteers of NSW Marine Rescue right across the South Coast for their record-breaking efforts in 2024. The Shoalhaven's boating community has had a huge year, with local Marine Rescue units responding to unprecedented activity. The Jervis Bay unit conducted 131 search and rescue missions, surpassing its previous record of 111, while the Sussex Inlet unit matched its record of 60 missions and the Shoalhaven unit completed 79. Volunteers at Marine Rescue Ulladulla carried out 43 missions, including 33 emergency responses, returning 75 people safely to shore. Kioloa volunteers responded to five missions, safely returning six people. Those efforts were part of a record-breaking year for Marine Rescue in the Illawarra, where seven units conducted 495 missions and returned 1,125 people to safety. I congratulate all the volunteers.

#### **BEN SEMMLER**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (23:30):** I congratulate Dubbo local Ben Semmler on his selection in the New South Wales Men's Deaf and Hard of Hearing team for the National Cricket Inclusion Championships. Ben has been on a cricket pitch since he was 11, starting out playing for his primary school team and then joining the RSL Colts in 1998. Over the years, Ben's natural sporting ability has seen his trophy cabinet fill with plenty of shiny accolades, alongside great friendships and memories. In 2021 Ben became the president of the Dubbo District Cricket Association, and he is still a committee member today. The national championships I mentioned were held in Brisbane in January, when 22 State and Territory teams competed in five divisions: Blind and Low Vision, Women's Blind and Low Vision Exhibition Matches, Men's and Women's Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Cricketers with an Intellectual Disability. Whilst New South Wales did not take home the national trophy this year, the honour of being selected in a State side for a sport he loves goes to show Ben's real passion and commitment to the game. I congratulate Ben on the wonderful recognition of the selection. Keep up the great work.

#### **JO O'BRIEN**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (23:31):** One of the great events in Camden every year is Australia Day. It starts with a traditional parade down Main Street and often leads to citizenship ceremonies in Camden Civic Centre. This year, however, due to the upgrade of Camden Civic Centre, the ceremony was held on the Friday before Australia Day. On that day, amidst a fantastic breadth of volunteers in the Camden community, Jo O'Brien was celebrated as Camden Citizen of the Year. Jo is president of the Camden Area Family History

Society, vice-president of the Camden Historical Society, and works very hard researching, planning and organising community events, workshops and articles. Jo has long been my friend, ever since I taught her son the clarinet. I am very proud of Jo. She does an amazing job and she is truly a great representative as the 2025 Camden Citizen of the Year.

#### TRIBUTE TO UNCLE JAMES INGRAM

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (23:32):** It is with great sadness that I inform the House of the passing of Wiradjuri Elder and First Nations knowledge-holder Uncle James Ingram. Born in Leeton, Uncle James lived in Wagga Wagga for 40 years, during which time he earned great respect for his championship of reconciliation and dedication to sharing cultural knowledge. A famed storyteller and educator, he operated a business, Bidya Marra, through which he generously shared ancient knowledge of the land, waters and history of Wiradjuri country. Among his many achievements, Uncle James was instrumental in having Aboriginal artefacts returned to the Museum of the Riverina. He championed the recording and preservation of history and lore, and helped the Rural Fire Service incorporate cultural burning into its work. Thoughtful and caring, Uncle James loved his community and was passionate about improving the lives of Aboriginal people. He was a real leader and advocate, and his legacy will continue for generations to come. I appreciated his advice very much. He was also a strong family man, and my condolences go to his wife, Belinda, and his entire family. I hope they find comfort in celebrating his vision, care and achievements. Vale, Uncle James.

#### BETTY BROWN

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (23:33):** I congratulate my constituent Betty Brown on receiving the Senior Citizen Award in recognition of her outstanding dedication to our local community. Betty, now 96 years old, has a distinguished background in teaching, specialising in sciences and geography. Even after retiring, her passion for education never waned. She pursued further learning through computer courses and became an active member of the Long Jetty Senior Citizens Club, where she soon began sharing her knowledge by teaching computer classes. Betty's drive for learning and community involvement does not end there. She also took on leadership roles at The Entrance District Sporting and Community Centre Croquet Club, serving as secretary for 12 years before stepping into the role of publicity officer. Betty's commitment and contributions have made a meaningful difference and her receipt of the Senior Citizen Award is truly well deserved. I am sure the House joins me in congratulating Betty on her outstanding achievement. I thank her for her contribution to The Entrance electorate and community.

#### SERBIAN FESTIVAL SYDNEY

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (23:34):** Recently I had the pleasure of attending the Serbian Festival at Darling Harbour, the largest of its kind outside Serbia. Run by the Serbian Orthodox Youth Association, or SOYA, the Serbian Festival is now in its twelfth year and offers the best Serbian dance, food, music and celebration of Serbian culture. The two-day festival was well patronised, drawing a diverse crowd to celebrate the richness of Serbian heritage and traditions. The festival is more than just an event; it is a testament to the strength and vibrancy of the Serbian community in Australia. I extend my thanks to SOYA chair Mihailo Mijatovic and all the team that made the wonderful event happen, including Aleksandar Uzelac, Ljiljana Mijatovic, David Petkovic, Iliana Uzelac, Tiana Cupac, Aleksandra Miljkovic, Mateja Vasic, Nemanja Bakic, Bojan Petkovic and Milutin Gavrilovic. I look forward to attending the event next year and witnessing the wonderful festival go from strength to strength.

#### MANGROVE MOUNTAIN RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (23:35):** It is with much excitement that I acknowledge and congratulate everyone involved in the organisation and construction of the beautiful new memorial garden at Mangrove Mountain Fire Station. I was truly honoured to join retired and active firefighters of the Mangrove Mountain Rural Fire Brigade and beautiful members of our community to celebrate the opening of this stunning new sandstone memorial. The memorial was adorned with the *Firefighters Prayer* and is surrounded by beautiful natives that were generously donated by our own local nurseries. I give a special shout-out to our new brigade captain, Taryn Nestor, for her work as one of the few female brigade leaders on the Central Coast. The brigade truly is a lovely community in every sense of the word. They volunteer to serve and protect. Mangrove Mountain Rural Fire Brigade is truly appreciated.

#### BOWRAL HIGH SCHOOL

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (23:36):** On the evening of 11 December 2024 I had the pleasure of joining Bowral High School for its presentation night. It was a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the students' outstanding achievements across academics, sports, performing arts and music, as well as their growth as learners and individuals. The evening was a true celebration of talent and achievement, with exceptional musical

performances by year 10 and 11 musicians. It was wonderful to finally meet the new Bowral High School principal, Ms Safija Bristina. It was great to share the spectacularly good news that Bowral High School was selected as one of 13 to benefit from a share of \$50 million in infrastructure funding under the High Potential and Gifted Education Policy. That funding will deliver important upgrades to specialist school facilities at Bowral High School and will assist it to deliver talent development and extension opportunities across a range of subject areas.

### **CORRIMAL FIRE STATION**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (23:37):** Recently Corrimal Fire Station celebrated its centenary of serving and protecting the people of Corrimal and the surrounding suburbs. That incredible milestone for both the station and wider community was celebrated on Saturday 1 February, bringing together past and present firefighters, their families and colleagues from across the Illawarra, and members of the community. A book detailing the station's rich 100-year history, written by Deputy Captain Graham Yates, was also launched at the event. The station was founded in 1925, when the then Northern Illawarra mayor met with a Fire and Rescue divisional inspector and agreed that the growing suburb of Corrimal needed protection. Ten members were signed on as part of two related brigades at Corrimal and Balgownie. In 1929 a permanent station was established and is still in use today. Corrimal Fire Station is now led by Captain Paul Dorin, AFSM. It employs 17 firefighters and, on average, tends to 300 or 400 incidents a year. I thank the team at Corrimal for ensuring the history and contributions of firefighters at the station were marked with the respect, dignity and celebration that such a milestone deserves.

### **BOB MORRIS**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (23:38):** It is a privilege to acknowledge Bob Morris, an exceptional member of our community who lives in the Kincumber Nautical Village. I was delighted to nominate Bob for a NSW Government Community Service Award in recognition of his tireless advocacy for fairer regulations for land lease communities. It was an honour to present him recently with that well-deserved award. Bob has been a fierce and unwavering voice for residents, actively lobbying for changes to the Residential (Land Lease) Communities Act 2013 to ensure better protections for some of the most vulnerable members of our society. When the opportunity arose to nominate someone for this award, there was no doubt in my mind that Bob was the right choice. His passion, commitment and deep understanding of the challenges faced by residents in land lease communities have been invaluable. He provided me with detailed insight into the real-world impacts of legislation, helping to drive meaningful change. Bob has never sought recognition for his efforts, which is precisely why he is so deserving of this honour. His advocacy has made a difference not only to our local community but also across New South Wales. I congratulate Bob.

### **HOLSWORTHY AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE CADETS**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (23:39):** On a sweltering Saturday just before Christmas, I had the pleasure of joining the Australian Air Force Cadets 309 Squadron for their end of year parade at Holsworthy Barracks. The organisation facilitates the development of strong leadership skills and provides a safe environment for young people interested in pursuing a career in aviation or a life of service in the Royal Australian Air Force. The parade was a fitting celebration of Flight Lieutenant Rod Hobson's last as commanding officer of the 309 Squadron. I acknowledge Keerthi Ganapathy, who was named Cadet of the Year. I also acknowledge all of the other cadets, officers and volunteers for fostering such a positive and safe environment of comradery and discipline. The cadets of the 309 Squadron frequently volunteer their time for community events such as the Liverpool RSL Remembrance Day ceremony. I have seen the incredible talent they offer and know that, in service of our community and the squadron, the sky is the limit. They broaden the horizons of young people across our community.

### **ROTARY YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARDS**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (23:40):** In January 2025, 49 individuals aged 18 to 30 from across Rotary District 9685 participated in the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, also known as RYLA. That is a very valuable, life-changing week, and I know that because I did RYLA in 2008. The saying "What happens at RYLA stays at RYLA" is very true. Participants are not told what to expect, but I will give members a sneak peek behind the curtain. RYLA is an opportunity for participants to challenge themselves, learn new skills, show teamwork, exercise leadership and, importantly, develop new friendships. In 2025 I was honoured to present on a framework of adaptive leadership. I recognise the wonderful facilitation team of chair Keira North, director Samuel Glazebrook, and assistant director April Hassall. I also recognise Denzel, Viviana, Luke, Andrew, Wilson, Chris, Samantha, Aerin, Nikki, Claudia, Beth, Josephine, Jessica, Judy and Mark.

**CRAIG CLARKE**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (23:41):** I recognise the incredible tenacity of Merewether marathon swimmer Craig Clarke, who successfully crossed the New Zealand Cook Strait last Friday to raise awareness and funds for organ donation. Motivated by the recent death of a friend, Craig swam an incredible 50.5 kilometres over 13 hours in 14-degree Celsius water, battling the wind, tides and uniquely strong currents. At 60 years of age, Craig has joined the Guinness Honour Roll as the second oldest person to successfully swim the Cook Strait. Although Craig was unable to complete his initial plans to swim back across the strait, his remarkable achievements are a testament to his resilience and commitment. I thank Craig for his contributions to our community and wish him all the best as he embarks on his coaching career.

**MULWALA PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (23:42):** I congratulate three students from Mulwala Public School—Nevaeh Rosmulder, Zali Mathieson and Harper Mathieson—who recently performed in the State Auslan Choir at the Elevate the Stage concert in Sydney, alongside 14 other students from across the State. Elevate the Stage is a wonderful celebration of performers with disabilities, offering a platform for those students to showcase their skills alongside professionals. Nevaeh, Zali and Harper incorporated Auslan singing, which captivated the audience and highlighted the importance of representation in the arts. That achievement adds to the earlier success of these students in the Sydney Schools Spectacular. Their commitment and passion for performance is truly commendable. I give a special mention to their teacher, Michelle Rosmulder, whose hard work and support were important leading up to the student's performance. Well done, Nevaeh, Zali, Harper and Michelle.

**GISELLE THENET**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (23:43):** I congratulate Nimbin Central School HSC student Giselle Thenet, who recently attended the Seymour Centre in Sydney and received an award for her OnSTAGE nomination. As members know, OnSTAGE is a selection of HSC drama projects from around New South Wales, and the strongest ones are chosen. Giselle was successful with her critical analysis project titled *Dreamtime Alive*. It is being displayed alongside other agency drama projects from the 2024 cohort. The Nimbin Central School's Facebook post says, "This is a remarkable achievement. Your school community is incredibly proud of you, Giselle." Likewise, we in the community are proud of her. Nimbin Central School is wonderful.

**NORTH SHORE ELECTORATE BUS SERVICES**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (23:44):** Delays, cancellations, overcrowding and record queuing are plaguing bus services in my community and have left constituents stranded, facing ridiculous wait times and seeing a huge reduction in the services they so heavily rely on. This morning was the worst many have seen in decades, and we need the Government to act. Labor's changes to bus routes have only worsened the situation. Commuters are now facing 200 metres queues and are forced to leave home earlier and earlier to ensure a spot on a city-bound bus—only to wait in the queue for more than 30 minutes, in many cases. While Labor claims they aim to improve the bus network—

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** Point of order—

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** —the reality for North Shore residents tells a starkly different story. I have brought up this issue over a dozen times in this place in the past 18 months, and I am once again urging the Government to restore reliable services to the North Shore.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** The member for North Shore will resume her seat. I will hear the point of order. The Clerk will stop the clock. I call the member for Leppington on a point of order.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** That is well outside the remit of a community recognition statement. It is speaking on policy and on the Government. It has nothing to do with the member's community.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** The member for North Shore spoke to relevance at the start of her statement.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** To the point of order: Community recognition statements are about our communities. When I start speaking about bus services in the North Shore, I do not expect Labor members—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** The member for North Shore will resume her seat.

[Interruption]

I call the member for North Shore to order for the third time.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** Point of order: The member for North Shore is being quarrelsome.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** I have called the member for North Shore to order. The member will continue with her statement.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** Shall I start from the beginning, Mr Temporary Speaker, as you have ruled that my statement is in order?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** No. We have stopped the clock. The member will continue giving her statement.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** If I may, Mr Temporary Speaker, the member for Leppington intentionally—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** I will not engage in debate. The statement will appear in *Hansard* exactly as the member has given it so far.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** It is depressing that Labor members interject and prevent my community from having their say in this House.

**Mr Tim Crakanthorp:** But you don't do it as recognition of your community—cheap political points.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** The member for Newcastle should also recognise that the Minister himself is addressing this issue with me. Maybe the Labor members can recognise that this issue is of genuine concern for communities.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** Point of order—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** The member for North Shore has completed her statement. There is no point of order.

*Private Members' Statements*

**MACQUARIE FIELDS ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE**

**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) (23:47):** I am proud of Labor's track record for my local community in Macquarie Fields. Successful community campaigns have achieved real results. I will list a few: new schools, including in Edmondson Park and Bardia, and the special school in Passfield Park; multi-deck commuter car parks at Edmondson Park; and saving Hurlstone Agricultural High School at Glenfield. It took a Labor Government to right a wrong by delivering an accessibility upgrade for Macquarie Fields station. It was a major win for our community, which came after years of advocacy—a joint community campaign by the Federal member for Werriwa, Ms Anne Stanley, MP, and me, sustained by our community's perseverance and dedication to not give up until we got our fair share.

The recent Federal redistribution placed suburbs like Macquarie Fields and Glenfield into the Federal electorate of Hughes. Either the current member for Hughes, Ms Jenny Ware, has not visited Macquarie Fields station or has deliberately omitted the facts. She misled my local community in her parliamentary speech on 5 February 2025 about Macquarie Fields station upgrades. The member for Hughes is right when she says, "It is a disgrace. It is an absolute disgrace." I am glad she made those comments, which have been captured in *Hansard*, because I am going to give the member for Hughes a quick history lesson to set the record straight.

The member for Hughes completely overlooked the fact that Labor is delivering for the people of Macquarie Fields and south-west Sydney. I am proud to say that the station upgrade works are now underway. In the past 12 years of the former Liberal Government—that is right: 12 long years—the Liberals never delivered a lift for Macquarie Fields. They never made the station accessible for people with disability. That is what I call an absolute disgrace. The Liberals did not prioritise communities based on need but blatantly politicised and pork-barrelled station upgrades. It is an absolute disgrace. The Liberal Party ignored its own transport data and departmental advice to bump up and pork-barrel Hawkesbury River Station, which has fewer than 1,000 trips a week, compared with Macquarie Fields Station, which has more than 8,000 trips a week. That is more than eight times the need, but there was no funding for a lift at Macquarie Fields Station because it was in a Labor electorate. Pork-barrelling rorts and skullduggery were committed at the expense of my local community. My community's hard-earned taxes were used like a Liberal Party slush fund.

As Ms Ware said, this is an absolute disgrace. Misleading the public with this sort of behaviour points to a simple fact, but the member for Hughes will omit the facts because she doesn't care. I have lived in south-west Sydney for more than 40 years. I have seen it change dramatically. Areas that were once farmland are now filled with families, homes, schools and shops. Single-lane roads are now multi-lane arterial networks connecting highways and railways. Market gardens are now mortgage belts where people work hard, look after their family

and friends and take great pride in their community. It is no surprise then that it grates on me when I see ill-informed stereotypes about our local community. I read the speech the member for Hughes gave on 5 February with great interest. Ms Ware said:

... the communities in the south-west are quite different to the Sutherland Shire ... there are a lot of attendance awards given out in year 11 and year 12. That's not something that usually occurs down in the Sutherland Shire ...

Anyone reading this can clearly see what Ms Ware is insinuating. How are we different? What is she saying about our local students? I have a quick news flash: Our area has high-achieving students in all fields of learning. We have great teachers and a strong community spirit. Making condescending remarks about my community is unacceptable. It is clear from her statement that Ms Jenny Ware doesn't care. I am proud to be part of the Minns Labor Government, which is delivering long-overdue infrastructure for our growing communities.

Macquarie Fields Station is one of seven stations that will receive upgrades as part of an \$800 million commitment to accelerate accessibility upgrades at stations across New South Wales. This is on top of the Government's \$769 million investment to deliver 100 new public preschools, including preschools at Sackville Street Public School in Ingleburn and Curran Public School in Macquarie Fields. The New South Wales Labor Government is delivering a long-awaited high school in Edmondson Park which is on track to open on the first day of term 1 in 2027. Our Government is focused on the future and on a fair go. Our Government that cares about fast-growing communities in south-west Sydney and is getting on with the job of delivering vital infrastructure for all.

### NORTH SHORE MEDAL RECIPIENTS

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (23:52):** I often talk about how my community is fortunate to have some of the best schools in New South Wales, not only because of their first-rate academic performance but also because of their emphasis on raising the next generation of well-rounded and forward-thinking leaders. I thank all of our amazing teachers, staff and parents who are always giving unreservedly of their time for the betterment of our students. The North Shore Medal is awarded to one student at each of the schools across my community. Recipients must demonstrate excellence in their attitude, and their behaviour must exhibit a commitment to the ethos of the school. My heartfelt congratulations go to all the students who received the North Shore Medal in 2024.

Zak O'Hara, from Mosman High School, was selected for his outstanding leadership and contribution to his school community. As a student leader, Zak is a voice for his peers. He raises funds for charity and organises school events. Sophia, from North Sydney Girls High School, has demonstrated a commitment to the values of respect, resilience, compassion, integrity and excellence. Her work behind the scenes for the collective good of the school community makes her a deserving recipient. Zak and Sophia have now both graduated from their respective schools, and I wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Amelie Emerton, from North Sydney Demonstration School, was chosen for consistently reflecting the school values of care, respect and ownership. Her dedication to her school and her positive attitude makes her an exceptional student and role model. Victoria Zhu, from Queenwood, was selected for demonstrating a can-do attitude in all areas of her life. She is a strong leader who chairs meetings and organises school activities while demonstrating kindness and compassion. Victoria's involvement in numerous extracurricular activities reflects her commitment to personal growth and to her community.

The Loreto Kirribilli senior nominee, Georgia Thompson, was nominated for embodying excellence both academically and socially. She is a consistent participant in school and community activities, and her sense of social justice and leadership makes her a strong role model for others. I met with Maggie Mulveney, also from Loreto Kirribilli, who received Loreto's junior nomination for exemplifying the school's values of freedom, justice, sincerity, verity and felicity. Maggie's dedication to learning and positive contributions to extracurricular activities demonstrate her commitment to both the school and the wider community. Heidi McNally from Beauty Point Public School was chosen for her academic excellence and exemplary leadership qualities. As vice-captain, Heidi has actively participated in extracurricular activities, including dance, choir and debating. Her kindness and willingness to help others have made a lasting impact on her school community.

I joined Middle Harbour Public School at its end-of-year ceremony to congratulate North Shore Medal recipient Amelia Silvester. Amelia is a hardworking and dedicated learner who strives to achieve her personal best. She approaches every task with care and perseverance and treats others with empathy and respect. Amelia's strong ethical values and commitment to helping others make her a very deserving recipient. I have been told that Emma Douik from Mosman Public School is a joy to teach, making her an excellent nominee for the North Shore Medal. She was chosen for the way that she approaches learning with a positive attitude and always demonstrates an awareness of others. Nicholas Popplewell Arevalo from St Aloysius' College was nominated as a student who exemplifies excellence through his actions. He is highly involved in Independent Schools' Debating Association

debating, sports and his local parish. Nicholas is always ready to help others and is always spreading kindness and positivity.

I joined Marist Catholic College's awards assembly to congratulate Elsie Duggan, who has consistently demonstrated excellence in both attitude and behaviour. She is an active participant in school and community activities and always demonstrates care for others. I was fortunate enough to meet Archie Grace from Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary School. He has participated in my North Shore Bear Pit Public Speaking Competition. It was clear to me why the school had nominated him for the medal. Archie is a model student who demonstrates courtesy and respect to others. His involvement in the environment club and his efforts in community clean-up activities show his commitment to the environment and his values.

Lachlan Taylor from Neutral Bay Public School was nominated for being an effective leader who stands up for what he believes in. He is instrumental in creating activities for his peers and has been actively involved in sports and other school activities. Lachlan's positive attitude, maturity and commitment to his school's values make him a worthy recipient of the North Shore Medal. I am proud of all of those students. They exemplify leadership, dedication and positive attitudes. There is a theme of contribution to their community and kindness and empathy towards others, which will ensure that they inspire others for years to come. I congratulate Zak, Sophia, Amelie, Victoria, Georgia, Maggie, Heidi, Amelia, Emma, Nicholas, Elsie, Archie and Lachlan. We are proud of them and look forward to seeing what they contribute in the future.

### LIVERPOOL ELECTORATE LOCAL MEDIA SERVICES

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (23:57):** Newspapers have been an essential component of democracy's fourth estate for centuries. However, as audiences increasingly shift online, the viability of traditional news media, particularly local newspapers, has declined. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated those trends, with over 200 local news contractions or closures across Australia since 2019. In April 2020 News Corp announced the suspension of print editions of several local newspapers due to declining advertising revenue. Liverpool has not been immune to that decline. We have lost two local mastheads over the past five years, with the *Liverpool Champion* ceasing publication entirely and the News Corp-owned *Liverpool Leader* becoming entirely digital and being put behind a paywall. Local news organisations play a crucial role in fostering informed and engaged communities. They encourage people to support local businesses, attend community events and stay up to date with hyperlocal current affairs.

In societies like Australia, where many powers are devolved to the local government level, accessible and independent local news is essential for ensuring transparency and accountability of councils and elected representatives. Without robust local journalism there is a real risk that community members may be less aware of local government decisions, reducing transparency and civic engagement. It strikes at the heart of local democracy. Beyond their role in providing information, local news outlets contribute to community connection and cohesion. A 2023 study by Sora Park, Jee Young Lee and Caroline Fisher found that people in areas impacted by local news closures reported feeling less attached to their communities. They concluded that trust in local news was the most significant predictor of community attachment—more so than even participation in local organisations. That suggests that local news not only informs but also reinforces a sense of belonging and identity within a community.

The effects of local news extend beyond readers. Information is mediated through discussions about issues of the day with other members of the community. Those conversations motivate participation in civic life and increased ownership of what happens within the community. Liverpool is fortunate enough to still have access to local community radio—89.3 2GLF Liverpool-Fairfield Community Radio. 2GLF is run by a fantastic group of local residents. You will find them at every community event, covering local news. There are also programs in a range of local community languages. I have been privileged to sit down with the team to chat about all things Liverpool, including at the recent brand-new Busby Fire Station open day.

However, the community radio industry faces a fraught outlook. Cost-of-living pressures, increased competition for grant funding and a decline in volunteer numbers are hitting stations hard. The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia found that 59 stations are at risk of becoming financially unviable, a 40 per cent increase in just over a year. With the decline in the provision of local news, more and more Australians are turning to alternative outlets. A recent study by the Australian Communications and Media Authority found that 20 per cent of Australians nominated social media as their main source of news, with a significantly higher percentage in younger age cohorts.

However, Stefan Stieglitz and Björn Ross showed that social media can be a double-edged sword when it comes to community cohesion. The literature finds that some practices on social media increase community cohesion and reciprocal support. Those include neighbourhood Facebook groups. On the other hand, some of the harms associated with social media include fuelling ideological divides and increasing user reliance on politically

aligned sources. That phenomenon, sometimes referred to as echo chambers, can reinforce political and social polarisation, making constructive dialogue across different viewpoints more difficult. Additionally, misinformation spreads rapidly on social media, often outpacing fact-based reporting, which further complicates efforts to maintain an informed public. All those things corrode community connection and cohesion.

Indeed, social media can both bring people together and deepen existing divides. While it provides a platform for discussion and community building, it also poses risks of misinformation, polarisation and reduced trust in traditional news sources. As Liverpool and other communities navigate the evolving media landscape, it will be critical to find ways to support local journalism, whether through independent newspapers, community radio or innovative digital platforms. We are lucky to have the South West Voice and now Local Pulse Press in that space. Without those efforts, the decline of local news may have far-reaching consequences for community engagement, accountability, cohesion and, indeed, democracy itself.

## REGIONAL CRIME

### REGIONAL RAIL SERVICES

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (00:02):** Tonight I speak in the New South Wales Parliament about two issues that are resonating as important issues in my electorate of Clarence. I have spoken about the first in this place before, and that is the scourge of youth crime in regional New South Wales. Unfortunately, no town, village or electorate is unscathed by the uptick in regional youth crime. There is also an uptick in violent regional youth crime. In fact, our way of life in the bush is slowly being eroded. I have seen some horrific crimes perpetrated in my electorate during my time in this place.

I have attended public meetings at Coraki. I held a crime round table in Casino. I recently held a day with our hardworking police in Maclean—Coffee with a Cop. The same Coffee with a Cop was held this week in Grafton, and I will be attending a meeting in Yamba in a couple of weeks. The issues remain the same across my electorate. There is an uptick in youth crime, which needs the full attention of the Government and the Parliament. Juvenile crime in my electorate is increasing. The New South Wales rate of residential juvenile crime is 339, and in my electorate it is 490. In my electorate motor vehicle theft is double the State average. The New South Wales rate of stealing from a dwelling is 15.9, and in my electorate it is 113.1. The New South Wales rate of juvenile break and enter is 175.1, and in my electorate it is 207.3. That must attract the attention of the Government and the House.

This Sunday in Kempsey the member for Oxley has organised a community rally at the racecourse. I will be there to support him as we draw attention to the issue, not only in our electorates but also in the House. I believe that we should come to this place with solutions and not just problems. I will be advocating for the Bail Act to be further amended to ensure that perpetrators on bail get one or two chances. The House should consider a review of the Young Offenders Act, which includes a review of doli incapax in New South Wales. We must also ensure that young people have access to the programs they need to divert them away from a life of crime. That is very important to my community.

It has also been brought to my attention that two of six North Coast XPT services have been suspended for 12 months due to major upgrades to the XPT fleet. I welcome that. You cannot make an omelette without breaking an egg. I appreciate that. That decision will leave XPT and rail workers up to \$753 out of pocket per fortnight. It is up to the Government to ensure that no worker is left worse off because of that decision. The travelling public will also be inconvenienced. They will book what they think is a train fare, only to turn up to a bus. I call on the Minns Labor Government to introduce 50¢ fares on those buses, but not on the trains. That is fair and reasonable; passengers should pay for freight. For the 12 months that impost is delivered for XPT workers in and out of Grafton and also the travelling public on that route, 50¢ fares are a fair and reasonable compensation. Those are sensible measures.

I implore the Government to at least consider that relief for those who book a daily XPT service from Grafton to Sydney or Sydney to Grafton. There is an impost. Train lovers love their trains and they want to travel on them. I urge the Government to consider that measure for cost-of-living relief and for compensation for the suspended service.

### NEWCASTLE ELECTORATE SPORTING EVENTS

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (00:07):** Newcastle sports fans have hit the jackpot, with our city set to host several big-time international sporting matches over the next few years. In a world first for Newcastle, McDonald Jones Stadium will host four pool matches for the Men's Rugby World Cup in 2027. The third largest sporting event in the world, the Rugby World Cup is set to be Newcastle's biggest sporting event and is expected to inject tens of millions of dollars into our local economy. In addition to hosting four pool matches for the 2027 Rugby World Cup, Newcastle will host two Wallaroos and Wallabies 2025 home tests. Both home

tests will be held at McDonald Jones Stadium, with the Wallaroos taking on the Black Ferns in May and the Wallabies taking on Fiji in July. With local Wallaroo star Layne Morgan set to take centre stage, those home tests will undoubtedly inspire the next rugby union stars in Newcastle.

We have also been selected to host the first ever NRLW Magic Round in July this year, thanks to the partnership between the Minns Labor Government and the NRL. Over 40,000 fans are expected to flood McDonald Jones Stadium over one weekend in July as our city hosts all 12 teams for every single game. The good news for Novocastrians does not stop there. Following the record attendance at last year's NRLW State of Origin match, which saw an incredible 25,782 fans brave torrential rain to watch our girls play at the McDonald Jones Stadium, Newcastle has been chosen to host the third and final NRLW State of Origin match later this year.

Last but definitely not least, the CommBank Matildas will also be returning to McDonald Jones Stadium in April to face the Republic of Korea in preparation for the 2026 Women's Asian Cup on home soil. The Tillies have been Novocastrian favourites for many years, with record crowds attending the International Friendlies against Brazil and the United States of America, held in 2017 and 2021 respectively. Newcastle has already produced two of the most capped players in Matildas' history, so to be able to inspire the next generation of female players in Newcastle again is pretty special. With homegrown legends Tash Prior, Emily van Egmond and Clare Wheeler as part of the current squad, this home game will be one to remember.

Newcastle has proven time and again how much we love our sport regardless of gender, delivering multiple record-breaking crowds to women's sporting events in recent years. Dubbed by the *Newcastle Herald* as the "mecca of big-time women's sport", these announcements confirm Newcastle as a premier sporting destination and leading advocate for women's sport. As the father of two daughters, who play several sports, I have seen firsthand just how much the increased visibility of women's sport has inspired young female athletes. Following the Matildas incredible success in the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, female participation rates in Australia increased by a whopping 16 per cent, highlighting how increased access to women's sport on the national level directly impacts the rates of female sporting participation at the local level.

However, despite the increased coverage of women's sport, teenage girls still participate 23.5 per cent less in sport than boys. The Minns Labor Government is committed to reducing that gender gap and has implemented several measures to increase opportunities and avenues for female athletes in New South Wales. Building upon the foundational pillars of She Belongs, She Plays and She Wins, the New South Wales Government's Play Her Way strategy aims to get more women and girls playing and staying involved with sport through increasing approaches to dismantle systemic participation barriers. Further, the New South Wales Government has supported \$868,000 in grant funding to the University of Newcastle program to keep teen girls in sport and has committed up to \$30 million to the Level the Playing Field Program to ensure women and girls have equitable access to sport and recreational facilities.

I congratulate the New South Wales Government on its commitment to provide more avenues for women in sport. My constituents can be assured that I will continue to advocate for gender parity in sports across Newcastle. Newcastle is used to kicking goals, we have broken the attendance record for soccer and rugby league, and now it is time for rugby union.

### MONA VALE ROAD

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater) (00:12):** In my inaugural speech last week I called myself not just the member for Pittwater but also the member for Mona Vale Road. While that remark was met with some laughter, I am completely serious because Mona Vale Road has been abandoned, left as a dangerous bottleneck, a congestion zone, a road safety hazard and a bushfire evacuation risk. Over 20 years ago a tragic accident claimed the lives of two young students and changed the life of the surviving driver of that vehicle forever. That was something that was close to home. I had only just got my licence, and the students, who went to a neighbouring school, were only in the year below me, so it really hit home. Then just this week, another teenage girl had a close call when her car flipped and caught fire near Mona Vale Road and Powderworks Road, which is a section of Mona Vale Road that is yet to be updated and upgraded. They are just two incidents.

Between 2010 and mid-2024, the road has had many more incidents. It has seen 448 serious crashes, over 1,000 crashes in total and more than 10 fatalities. We cannot keep losing lives. My community is completely outraged that the Mona Vale Road West upgrade has been left in limbo. Every day, multiple times a day, constituents ask me when the road will be upgraded and when the money will be in the budget. They have every right to be frustrated. In 1966 the Askin Government—and Premier Askin was the member for Pittwater at that time—promised a four-lane road, soon to be six, for Mona Vale Road. Nearly 60 years on, after almost continuous Liberal representation in Pittwater, we are still waiting for Mona Vale Road to be a continuous four-lane road.

The former Government delivered the 3.2-kilometre Mona Vale Road East, which opened to traffic in March 2024, but the west upgrade promised in the 2022 budget with a \$340 million allocation has effectively been abandoned. In September 2023 the current Government pulled the funding. Although \$5.5 million was provided for a detailed design for works, it is now time to get the real works happening, which is the 3.4-kilometre upgrade between Ingleside and Terry Hills, known as the Mona Vale Road West upgrade. There is a half-finished site there now and people drive past it every day. It poses new dangers, with sand and debris blowing onto the road surface, creating hazardous conditions for 37,000 cars that drive past it every day.

As a peninsula, Pittwater relies entirely on road transport. We have just three main routes to the city: Wakehurst Parkway, which often closes due to flooding—though I acknowledge and thank the Minns Government for its \$13 million contribution to improving that road—the A8 corridor, which is on the Infrastructure Australia list due to congestion, and we will face ongoing congestion on that road as the Beaches Link tunnel has been scrapped, leaving us permanently with the Spit Bridge, which regularly opens to let boats through; and Mona Vale Road, a bottleneck with four lanes dropping to two and then back to four, causing gridlock and accidents. Beyond congestion and road safety concerns, there is an even greater risk. After the devastating wildfires in California, we must recognise that Mona Vale Road is a critical evacuation route for Terrey Hills, Ingleside, and Duffys Forest.

Its current condition will put lives at risk in the event of a bushfire. When I saw the Los Angeles fires on TV recently, I noted the gridlocked cars being bulldozed out of the way because they had been abandoned by people fleeing bushfires. I immediately thought that this could be Mona Vale Road in a bushfire. I am grateful for the progress that has been made by the Minns Government since I was elected. I thank the Premier for visiting Mona Vale Road and the Minister for Roads, who has confirmed there will be updates on the broader network review and that the detailed design of Mona Vale Road West will be continued. That is progress, but we need more action. I call on the Government to prioritise the Mona Vale Road West upgrade and allocate funding in the budget. The people of Pittwater have been patient, but we cannot wait any longer. Constituents drive past an abandoned Mona Vale Road West every single day, and they want action.

#### **MAGDALENE CATHOLIC COLLEGE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE STUDENTS**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (00:17):** Our Camden community is home to some incredibly talented individuals. This month our academic high achievers from the 2024 graduating classes of our local schools are being celebrated for their remarkable achievements in last year's HSC. Magdalene Catholic College is recognising its high achievers tonight. Although I cannot be there in person, I acknowledge their efforts. The process of getting the HSC is incredibly daunting. For students, preparation has not stopped for two whole years. They chose specific subjects they were likely to excel in or enjoy in year 11 and studied them rigorously in class before sitting preliminary exams in year 11 in preparation for the real deal later on.

They hunkered down further in year 12, studying after school, before school, on the weekends and on school holidays. I am sure that, for these students, education became their full-time job, and then some. Well done to Laura Rixon, Angelina Bampton, Chelsea Clapson, Katie Donaldson, Mya Donahue, Sidney Fisher, Zoe Gill, Micaelar Kennedy, Andraya Librand, Jasmine Mihok, Aleksandar Moore, Molly Moretti, Elissia Moshi, Taylee Passlow, Kosta Patroklou, Chloe Rice, Zach Ritchie, Alana Sawyer, Grant Spinks, Jack Turner, Olivia Upfill, Ava Wisbey, Olivia Young and Michael Zhang. They went above and beyond what was expected of them, achieving results that have now opened doorways and opportunities that will change their lives. I am so incredibly proud of each and every one of them for maintaining that drive, motivation and dedication throughout senior school to produce such excellent results.

The education they received from kindergarten to year 12 has given them tools that will remain in their arsenal for their entire lives. Their sharpened writing, reading, critical thinking, organisation and time management skills will open up wider career paths, and enable them to navigate life after graduation with ease. I give a special mention to the 2024 Dux of Magdalene Catholic College, Laura Rixon. This is an especially proud moment for me as I taught Laura when she was in primary school. To see her go above and beyond in her studies and achieve excellent results across the board is so incredibly special. Congratulations, Laura.

My time teaching senior students was very brief, but I know how taxing the job is. I thank all the teachers and non-teaching staff at Magdalene Catholic College for their hard work and support in elevating those students to achieve their incredible results. Their efforts do not go unnoticed. I congratulate all the 2024 Magdalene high achievers. Now, the world awaits. Some of them may already be enrolled in or have started university. I wish them the best of luck in their studies. Some may be exploring full-time work, apprenticeships or TAFE—or taking time off. Whatever they choose to explore in the next years, I know they will excel at it. I urge them to enjoy it and have fun where they can. My door is always open to any of them who would like to have a chat or a coffee.

## RURAL WATER CHARGES

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (00:22):** Governments are treating water as a political football. They see it as a tool to garner city-based votes at the expense of rural communities and are more focused on a political outcome than on a pragmatic one. So says Richard Sargood, a farmer on irrigation country between Howlong and Corowa, who knows a thing or two about water—as do his neighbours and his neighbours' neighbours. The latest challenge they are facing in an ever-ongoing battle sees the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, or IPART, proposing an eye-watering 142 per cent increase in rural water bills for irrigators within the southern basin. That decision threatens the viability of both small and large farming operations and, if implemented, risks crippling primary producers, many of whom are already operating on tight margins and struggling with rising input costs.

A medium-size farm with a 500-megalitre general security licence will see its annual water bill jump from \$8,215 to \$19,875 by 2030. For farmers who cannot simply absorb those costs, the only options are to pass them on to consumers—exacerbating the cost-of-living crisis—or be forced out of business entirely. That is a direct threat to our food security. How can we expect New South Wales households to buy local, eat fresh and support Australian farmers when we are pushing our own producers to the brink? The stark reality is that many of those farms are already competing with just under \$30 billion worth of imported food each year. Continuing to hike costs, restrict access to water and burden farmers with policy after policy actively undermines their ability to compete and produce.

Geoff Moar, chair of the Murray Regional Strategy Group, a coalition of farming and community organisations in the Murray region in New South Wales, says that it is time to identify shortcomings in current water policy and take proactive steps that will help the environment, farmers and Australian families. He said:

Recently released data shows that through numerous programs the water used by farmers in New South Wales and Victoria has declined by about 50 per cent in the past three decades.

It has reached the point where we are forced to import more staple foods, and some farmers have stopped growing fruit and vegetables. We need sensible policy to turn this around, or there will be less clean, green Aussie-grown food at the supermarket, and the prices will continue to rise.

The challenges do not stop there. The Federal Government's continued push for water buybacks risks seeing another 450 gigalitres of water permanently removed from productive agriculture in the southern Murray-Darling Basin. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, or ABARES, has already warned that these buybacks will drive up water prices for the farmers who remain, making it increasingly difficult for key industries such as rice farming, dairy and even horticulture to remain viable, particularly during times of drought. Our rural communities and farmers have already shouldered the burden of water recovery reforms under the Basin Plan, yet they continue to face new regulations, new restrictions and ever-increasing costs. They are being forced to produce more with less, while Government policies make it harder for them to access the resources they need.

If the New South Wales Government is serious about protecting our farmers and securing our nation's food supply, it must push back against these reforms and put the interests of primary producers first. Irrigators and landholders deserve better consultation, better science and better policy decisions, not one-size-fits-all regulations that do little to support agriculture or the environment. Water service pricing need to be fair and reasonable to not drive farmers out of business, and the Government needs to take a strong stand against reckless water recovery policies that threaten food production and push up costs for consumers.

Farmers and regional communities cannot afford to wait. They are seeing policies that push them to the limit. They are seeing decision-makers in Sydney and Canberra making choices that ignore the realities of life on the land. Richard Sargood said to me, "It is time New South Wales Ministers and Plibersek started showing more care for rural jobs than their own and, instead of manipulating water policy for ill-conceived and misguided political gain, work with rural communities to strengthen the lifeblood that agriculture provides." Our farmers are not asking for special treatment; they are asking for fair treatment. They are asking for a level playing field and for a government that supports productivity instead of pricing them out.

## THE ENTRANCE ELECTORATE AND GAS POLICY

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (00:27):** Food manufacturing is a big part of the Central Coast economy, and well-known names like MasterFoods, Sanitarium, Ingham's and Sara Lee have their factories located in The Entrance electorate. They are important local employers and some of the biggest private sector employers on the Central Coast. They are also big consumers of energy, particularly gas. They gain most of their energy from gas. Tonight I will talk about gas policy and how it impacts on my electorate and these major employers. Australia has an abundance of gas. Alongside the Middle Eastern state of Qatar, we are one of the

biggest gas exporters in the world. In New South Wales, even though we have an abundance of gas underground, locked up in coal seams, we tend to obtain most of our gas from other States, mainly Queensland.

But we are about to become a 100 per cent importer of gas, some probably from overseas, and that will be disastrous for my region. International gas prices are inevitably higher than for locally sourced gas, mainly because of the obvious reason that gas transportation costs a lot of money. First the gas must be liquefied, which means reducing its volume 600 times, at minus 160 degrees, and then transported long distances before being regasified after the transport process. It is also expensive because, in the international market, countries without indigenous gas resources—such as most Asian countries—are willing to pay higher prices for gas than we have typically been expected to pay in this country. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission found that customers in the southern States of Australia, including New South Wales, pay at least \$2 to \$4 more per gigajoule of gas based on transport costs alone.

Gas export terminals opened in Australia at Gladstone in Queensland in 2014. That meant that, for the first time, gas could be exported overseas and gas companies had the option to sell their gas into the higher priced Asian markets. This in turn meant that Australians suddenly had to pay world prices instead of domestic prices for their gas. Suddenly Australian wholesale prices tripled from \$3 to \$10 per gigajoule. Gas prices currently fluctuate between \$10 and \$15 per gigajoule. In 2021 the former Liberal-Nationals State Government released the *Future of Gas Statement*. The statement was issued by the then Minister for Natural Resources, John Barilaro. It did not really qualify as a thought-out document; it was more a statement of aims. The aims were noble: to ensure a secure, reliable and affordable gas supply for New South Wales. But the aims of the statement have not been achieved.

The statement and the former Government's policy gave the green light to develop gas import terminals at Port Kembla and Newcastle, and reduced the area available for gas exploration in the State, but it supported the development of the Narrabri Gas Project. As of December last year, Squadron Energy's gas import terminal at Port Kembla is ready to receive international gas. Newcastle has not progressed and the proponent of the Narrabri project, Santos, has announced that its final investment decision will not be made anytime soon. Importantly, the Narrabri project has the potential to supply half the natural gas we need in this State. Without Narrabri, we will soon be importing 100 per cent of our gas, which will cost us all a whole bunch more money.

Santos has committed to reserve the Narrabri gas for the domestic market, which is an important commitment in terms of price. Narrabri gas is located deep and does not require hydraulic fracturing to release into wells to supply the community. I think we need to rethink gas policy in this State. These are my views and my views only: We need to tear up the Barilaro gas statement and prepare a proper gas strategy. We need to support the Narrabri project and encourage gas exploration in the State. We need to legislate so that any gas produced in this State is reserved for domestic use only. If we do that, we will provide lower cost gas for consumers of the State and the employers of my region.

### WARIALDA WATER SUPPLY

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands) (00:32):** In December last year the small township of Warialda, which is located in my electorate, discovered that two of its four bores were contaminated with PFAS. Warialda is a small township of approximately 1,400 people. It is situated 600 kilometres north of Sydney and 400 kilometres south-west of Brisbane. As part of the Government's ongoing testing regime for PFAS, our Warialda township water was tested. Two of four bores were detected to have quite high PFAS levels. That resulted in our water supply being shut down immediately.

The council, under the leadership of our very hardworking mayor, Tiff Galvin, and our very experienced and hardworking general manager, Max Eastcott, immediately jumped into action and organised for bottled drinking water to be handed out to residents while the township waited for the results. The township went through one or two weeks of uncertainty immediately prior to Christmas. It was probably the worst possible timing we could have had. Thankfully, the results came back that two of our bores were clear and the two bores that contained the PFAS were in a separate aquifer. They were shut off, isolated and taken out of the supply.

The township is now running on two bores, known as the top yard and sales yard bores. They provide only around 45 per cent to 50 per cent of the town's usual water supply, so our township is under water restrictions. The township of Warialda dug deep and got through a very testing few weeks leading into Christmas. If members ever want to see community spirit in action, they should go to a country town that is going through something like this. All of the town got together. There was very little whingeing and complaining. There was an acceptance that we had to get on with it and fix it, and that is what happened.

One of the best examples of that was when I was chatting to the local butcher at Warialda, Larry McPherson of Gwydir Meats. An elderly constituent—who I will not name because he will get quite embarrassed—walked

in, saw me and came over and we had a chat about the water. I said, "How are you getting on?" He remarked to me, "Mate, I'm fine. I only drink Coke and beer." That was the attitude of the township and we got through it with great work from our mayor and our GM. The State Government, to its credit, was very helpful. I thank the Government for its assistance. I thank the water Minister for all of her assistance through this time. She was on the phone constantly to the GM, the mayor and me. The help that the Government gave us was fantastic. We are still not out of the woods yet. We still need two bores sunk. We need a streamlined approval for those two bores. We also need some funding, and I am working with the Government on that and also asking the Federal Government to chip in.

I would like to get in *Hansard* a number of people who really helped out. Ben Perry, Nerrissa Jackson, Helen Sege, Sarah Butler, Sarah Scrivener and Councillor Rachel Sherman helped hand out water bottles. Carmen Southwell, Courtney Loosemore and Robyn Phillips helped with media and comms. Our engineer Alex Eddy did a fantastic amount of work all through the process. I also acknowledge Michael Bone, Todd Doney, Stan Fletcher, Mick Todd, the front office staff at council, Paul Hall, Murray Rose, Riley Marle, Councillor Adrian Willmot and all of the staff at the IGA at Warialda, who at very short notice arranged for additional bottled water to be shipped into the town. Councillor Willmot, who is our IGA manager, and his staff handed those out under very difficult circumstances leading into Christmas.

Andrew Cooper, Joe Luckett and David Barwick all assisted as well. Nathan Clark also assisted with moving water from the depot to the places where we were distributing them. There was also Darren Churchland, Brad Rolfe, Ray Laughlan, Mark Odell, Madison Sargeant, Lachlan Wood, Jayden Kellett, Wraith Rowan, Michael Coleman, Yuri Gomez, Kate Bradshaw, Sharon Edwards, Alyse Steiger, Trish Clynych, Karen McCarthy, Sue Smoothy, Terri Hickman, Ange Plain, Cindy Brooker and Anthony Francis. It was a great community effort. As I said, we are not completely out of the woods yet but we are in a much better position than at the start of December. Again, I thank the Government for its help.

#### PLASREFINE PLASTICS RECYCLING FACILITY

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (00:37):** It was the announcement that residents of the Southern Highlands in my electorate of Wollondilly had been waiting four years for. The adjoining suburb of Moss Vale was the site for a proposed plastics recycling plant, Plasrefine, a State significant development, which threatened not only to pollute the air and waterways but also to permanently disturb the tranquil semi-rural lifestyle that the Highlands is known and loved for. So there was a collective sense of relief and justice when the Independent Planning Commission announced that the project was refused consent. The IPC found that the project was, as the community had long been arguing, deeply flawed in regard to its design, operating procedures and, importantly, the selected site.

On 24 January the IPC announced its finding that Plasrefine would "unreasonably conflict with other land uses in the area". Those include the Garvan Institute, which conducts critical biomedical research; residential homes located 200 metres away; and businesses such as childcare centres a mere 100 or so metres beyond that. The IPC found that the significant impacts of noise and vibration during the 24/7 operating hours would be detrimental to the nearby residents and existing adjacent developments, along with the traffic impacts of the hundreds of heavy vehicle movements to and from the factory daily and the visual impacts due to the excessive size and bulk of the factory. It also conflicted with the future land use of the surrounding industrial zone, which the Wingecarribee Shire Council has designated as the Southern Highlands innovation precinct, designed to attract sustainable and innovative businesses.

I am relieved that the IPC came to the same conclusion that the residents had stated since day one: This is not the right site. I am thankful to those residents and the action group Moss Vale Matters, who took on the massive task of proving that the project was incorrectly located. The IPC's refusal is a prime example of the effectiveness of people power. Along with relief, however, I do feel a sense of frustration that the project made it so far. It was inappropriately huge in scale, inappropriately located and potentially damaging. The council and residents opposed it for good reasons. It should not have made it past the first approval stage of the Department of Planning, but it did.

On paper, the project did meet the Government's need to deal with the New South Wales plastic problem. New South Wales produces 800,000 tonnes of plastic waste each year, 90 per cent of which currently goes to landfill. Both sides of the Plasrefine debate agree that New South Wales has a plastics problem. But this project was never a solution. Plastic is not a problem for only the current Government. Plastic did not stockpile in the past 18 months. Previous governments also failed to address the issue. Their inaction in the past continues to create problems now. We need innovative, real solutions to the problems created by plastic usage. We cannot simply dump our plastic waste in our regional areas, hoping that no-one will notice.

The residents of the Southern Highlands have proven once again that our regional towns have the courage and insight to stand up for what is right. The incredible dedication of my community cannot be understated. I acknowledge and thank the members of Moss Vale Matters, including Heidi Fagan, David Baxter, Jean McKern, Bev and Graham Hordern, Vanessa Harcourt, Danuta Hulajko, Sam Sevieri, Skye Pope, Sharan Kennedy, Anna Phillips, Duncan Wood and Derek White. I acknowledge also the Wingecarribee Shire Council, which stood alongside residents the whole way. I thank newly elected Wingecarribee Mayor Jesse Fitzpatrick, Deputy Mayor Erin Foley, Councillor Rachel Russell, Councillor Heather Champion and Councillor Nicole Smith.

I thank the more than 2,900 residents of Wollondilly and beyond who made verbal and written submissions to the IPC. Without their sustained efforts over the past four years, the project would have gone ahead and we would have all been subjected to the consequences. This truly is a case of people power and I am so proud to represent the residents of Wollondilly who have made such a difference.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (00:42):** Residents of my electorate of Lismore, particularly parents, are concerned about social media and its impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of young people—their children and grandchildren. My grandson is 10 years old and in grade 5, and I share those concerns. Social media is now the norm for communication. The Minns Labor Government's ban on mobile phones in schools across the Lismore electorate and the State has had a very beneficial impact. Teachers and even students say that it has been really beneficial. The Federal Government Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024, which will restrict access to social media platforms for young people under 16, will also have a beneficial effect. Some provisions of that bill will not come into effect until the end of 2025, but it was a good move.

I speak with many parents, teachers and different people in my electorate who are concerned. On 8 February *The Sydney Morning Herald* ran an opinion piece on page 4 of the business section by economics writer Millie Muroi that made me want to dig more, do more and undertake more research into social media. In her article, the writer drew heavily on a research article entitled *The Rise of Social Media and the Fall in Mental Wellbeing Among Young Australians*, published in CESifo Working Paper No. 11563 in December 2024. It was co-authored by Andrew Leigh, a former colleague of mine and Federal parliamentary member, and Stephen Robson, former head of the Australian Medical Association. The article is well researched, well evidenced and written eruditely. The op-ed raises the following salient point about young people—and the writer includes herself in that group:

If the latest research is anything to go by, my risk of developing a mental health disorder is rather high compared to much of the population. I'm in my mid-20s, female, and I can't remember a day in the past decade that I've gone without social media.

The writer raises five more salient points, drawing heavily from the article written by Leigh and Robson. Firstly, kids between the ages of 11 and 17 spending long hours online correlated with their high levels of psychological distress. Secondly, the fact that young women's mental health dropped off more significantly than young men gives weight to the idea that social media is causal, as young women use it more heavily. The writer again cites Dr Andrew Leigh's evidence-based contribution on what young people themselves think as to why their mental health has worsened. Their answer was that, above cost of living, drugs and alcohol, it was due to social media.

The next salient point goes to what is called a "natural experiment", which is covered in the research article, "where no-one has intentionally designed conditions to test and observe a theory" but the results are evident in a natural environment. For example, as Facebook was rolled out across universities in the United States, a parallel development was the worsening mental health and increased use of mental health services on campus among students. Those who partook in the randomised experiments over three weeks became less lonely and depressed as they reduced their social media use. At the end of article by Leigh and Robson, they also say that the findings provide them with more research and policy options to take further action.

### CASTLE HILL ELECTORATE BUS SERVICES

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (00:47):** Tonight I raise concerns of my community concerning the bus services that service the Castle Hill electorate, which forms part of region 4 and region 7, the majority of it being region 4. The operator of region 4 is Busways. The transport options for residents in my electorate, depending on the point of departure or the destination of the journey, include the north-west metro or, otherwise, bus services. Large parts of the electorate require bus services. Over the past few months, my electorate office has received correspondence from parents of schoolchildren who travel on the bus network and from residents who simply have asked for a reliable bus service. I will shortly provide details of some of the complaints raised by my constituents. Before I outline the complaints, I should record that the Audit Office of NSW has recently confirmed that the Government is not adequately managing the private contracts. The Audit Office recently noted:

The number of customer complaints about bus services across all Greater Sydney Bus Contract regions has increased over time. The number of complaints per 100,000 boardings in May 2024 was approximately double that in April 2022, reflecting increasing customer dissatisfaction with the services delivered.

It would appear that during the Minns Government regime, the number of customers dissatisfied with bus services throughout Sydney has doubled. The finding by the Audit Office demonstrates that the Government has been asleep at the wheel when it comes to managing private bus contracts. My electorate office has received numerous complaints. To highlight the problems, I will outline some of those complaints. On 18 September 2024 one resident stated:

I am writing to raise concerns regarding the persistent delays of the school bus service for route 2013 which serves Baulkham Hills, Castle Hill to James Ruse Agricultural High School.

I wrote to the Minister. The Minister responded:

Transport for NSW has investigated this matter with bus operator CDC. I am advised that the investigation showed there have been delays experienced over the last two months due to traffic congestion.

On 13 November 2024 my office received a further complaint from a different parent. The parent informed my office that his daughter attends St Gerard's Catholic Primary School in Carlingford. The parent stated:

Over the past few months, particularly, the 3.19pm, route number 630 service pickup at St Gerard's has been cancelled on an increasingly frequent basis.

The parent further stated:

Last week alone, another two days have been primary school children, including my daughter, left standing out front of the school for a service that was cancelled minutes before without notice.

I wrote to the Minister about my constituents' concerns. The Minister replied on 12 January 2025 and wrote:

Transport for NSW has reviewed this route with bus operator CDC. I am advised that there has been an increase in the number of cancellations on this route in the past six months.

He added:

Unfortunately, the bus industry is currently experiencing a bus driver shortage, causing services to run late or be cancelled.

He then stated:

Route 630 services have also been impacted by other factors including vehicle availability, accidents and road network congestion.

The only conclusion that can be reached is that the Minister was not watching what was going on with those bus services. We are losing an increasing number of bus drivers on the Minns Government's watch. Another resident contacted my office on 3 February and expressed these concerns:

I am writing to express my concerns about the consistent delays and cancellations of the last 652X service home from the city in the evenings, which departs at 7.53pm from Wynyard Station (Kent Street) and usually gets me home just after 8.00PM.

The resident further stated:

This bus has been cancelled six times since the beginning of this year, making it highly unreliable for those of us who depend on it.

I have written to the Minister about the delay on that bus route to try to relieve the frustration experienced by many residents in my electorate. Whilst my electorate has two metro stations, namely Castle Hill and Hills Showground, and the Cherrybrook metro station is also close to residents who live in West Pennant Hills, the success of the north-west metro has meant that parking stations are full. That means that many residents rely upon those bus services.

The delays in bus services—and, I might add, train services—have a human toll on residents. Those who use the transportation system rely on the network to travel to their place of employment, to social engagements, to health appointments and perhaps to catch a flight at the airport. Delays and cancellations add to the stress on our residents and to the economic costs for our society. As I have indicated, customer satisfaction has declined over the past two years. The public, particularly in the north-western suburbs of Sydney, deserve more frequent and more reliable services. I trust the new Minister for Transport will ensure more frequent and more reliable services for our community.

## RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (00:52):** I bring to the House's attention the approval of renewable energy projects and the subsequent resale of projects to foreign investors post-approval. My electorate of Goulburn has a proposal for a solar factory at Gundary. The project is proposed to be built on the Gundary Plains—prime agricultural land, zoned RU1—a mere 9.6 kilometres south-west of the Goulburn town centre. The

proposal is to build a 700-hectare, 400-megawatt solar project and an 800-megawatt battery energy storage system, with approximately 750,000 five-metre-high solar panels.

The proponent is Lightsource bp, which ostentatiously advertises that it has been named "the world's largest solar developer". BP purchased Lightsource outright in 2024 and almost immediately sought to divest 51 per cent of the business. I have been advised that Lightsource bp struck a deal to sell five utility-scale solar farms to BJEI Australia, a subsidiary of Beijing Energy International. That was agreed to in December 2023 but has collapsed after failing to meet the Foreign Investment Review Board approval deadline. The board noted that the risks to Australia's national interest, particularly our national security, have escalated due to rapid technological change and shifts in the international security landscape.

Foreign investment poses inherent risks regarding the level of access and control that external entities may obtain over Australian organisations and infrastructure. It is imperative that we safeguard our critical infrastructure. The Australian energy sector provides an essential service that Australians rely on for their wellbeing, and the ongoing availability of energy is essential to maintain Australia's national security. If the energy sector were impacted by a significant disruption, through sabotage or foreign interference activity, it would lead to cascading consequences for a range of other sectors, significantly impacting Australia's economy, society and security. The reality is that by permitting the sale of Australia's renewable energy projects to foreign entities, we may be sacrificing control over our own energy future.

What assurances do we have that foreign investors will prioritise the interests of local communities over their own? What will happen when foreign investors prioritise profit over local needs? I believe that it risks the loss of control over vital resources that should remain in the hands of Australians. Furthermore, we must also consider the environmental implications of onselling renewable projects. Are we sure that foreign investors will adhere to the same rigorous environmental standards that we strive to uphold? Our commitment to preserving the environment must be paramount, but there remains unanswered questions around contractual obligations of these entities and decommissioning of infrastructure, particularly if a project changes ownership.

My point is not about foreign investment in projects; it is about Australia's energy independence. By outsourcing our renewable energy objectives, we risk placing our country at the mercy of foreign interests—a precarious position for any State or nation to find itself in. Let us not forget the risk of cultural and social impacts on our communities. When foreign entities take charge of our local resources, our values and priorities may be overshadowed by different business practices and profit-driven motives. This could lead to a disconnect between energy developments and the very communities they are meant to serve. While the allure may be lucrative for proponents to onsell their investment in solar projects, it is the duty of the Government to remain vigilant in representing our constituents—our citizens'—interests. This includes the careful evaluation of long-term implications for our energy independence, local job creation, environmental integrity and the wellbeing of communities.

We must ensure that Australia retains control over its renewable energy for the benefit of our people, our economy and our national security. We have a responsibility to future generations to make decisions that prioritise our country's sustainability and self-sufficiency. The choices we make today will define our nation's ability to lead in the renewable energy sector tomorrow. I urge the Government to act decisively to protect Australia's interests and secure a future that reflects our nation's values.

#### HAWKESBURY ELECTORATE TRANSPORT

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (00:57):** The Hawkesbury electorate covers an area of over 3,000 square kilometres. It is a stunning expanse of urban, semi-rural and rural developments. Travelling distances in Hawkesbury is necessary for many constituents, with many opting for private vehicles to access various day-to-day services and destinations. For those who need to utilise other means of travel, there are currently several options. These include the T1 and T5 lines of the Sydney rail network, running services every half-hour. Public bus services are also available, with routes connecting constituents to suburbs west of the Hawkesbury River. The river also has ferries linking roads and communities.

Recently, Hawkesbury has faced several transport issues, impacting daily routine and productivity for many. Train delays and cancellations, intensified by the current industrial action by the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, have left commuters stranded. Given that trains run only every half-hour between Windsor and Richmond, this is problematic for commuters with tight schedules. Several constituents have spoken of the unreliability of buses, with some services being cancelled or significantly delayed, especially on the North Richmond side of Hawkesbury River. Ferry services aim to operate every day of the year, with operation interrupted due to maintenance or during times of floods, which Hawkesbury constituents are no strangers to, particularly in recent times.

Disruptions to travel services make for a chaotic community, particularly in suburbs located west of the river, which are already distanced from central areas. Future construction of the New Richmond Bridge and the Grose River Bridge will take several years and will cause further disruption to everyday travel, but the end result will be worth it. Just this week I attended a community forum to discuss issues that residents raised about the New Richmond Bridge. One of the suggestions was to ensure smooth travel when crossing the Hawkesbury River on the New Richmond Bridge, and a flyover was recommended instead of the installation of traffic lights at the proposed intersection of Bells Line of Road and Kurrajong Road, near Old Kurrajong Road in Richmond.

My initial investigation of that option when the bridge routes were announced indicated that an additional cost of around \$26 million would be added to the project. I expect that that cost will have increased over the years, but I think the flyover has merit and I intend to advocate for that improvement. The Box Hill and Gables area of Hawkesbury is fast outgrowing the existing public transport links. Many aspirational families want to ditch their vehicles and opt for public transport when commuting to and from work, especially when travelling by train. If only there were smart options like more frequent bus services. I acknowledge there has been some tweaking of the bus services in recent months, but what really needs to happen is the introduction of a swift trip to the two closest metro stations of Tallawong and Rouse Hill. The metro has trains running every five to eight minutes. Why can buses from the Box Hill and Gables locations not match that frequency?

Let me pose another solution to the current ordinary public transport options. How about a park and ride system in Box Hill and Gables? I would like to collaborate with the Hills Shire Council and Transport for NSW to identify suitable land that could be converted to car parks. Locals could drive there, park their vehicle and board a bus to the metro, and return the same way. Let us get more vehicles off the road and support easier, affordable and environmentally friendly options for Hawkesbury commuters in Box Hill, Gables, McGraths Hill, Pitt Town, Kurrajong and throughout the electorate. My constituents deserve better access to vital transport services, allowing connections to their workplace, school, medical appointments and other destinations without hindrance.

It would be negligent of me not to also mention the go-slow approach the Minns Labor Government has taken on the upgrade of Richmond Road. I note that earlier today in his contribution to the public interest debate the member for Riverstone talked about improving that road. I am still waiting for that shovel to hit the ground so that Hawkesbury travellers can have some hope that there might be progress on the project. People who travel that route to the M7, the M2 and the CBD know what I am talking about. Connectivity in and out of and around Hawkesbury is vital. Let's get people moving.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 01:01  
on 19 February 2025 until 10:00 the same day.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

**JARVIS EARLE – SUTHERLAND SHIRE YOUNG SPORTS CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Cronulla's rising star of surfing Jarvis Earle on being named the Sutherland Shire Young Sports Citizen of the Year. After learning his craft at Cronulla's shallow reef break known as Sandshoes, Jarvis rose quickly through junior surfing ranks and was crowned World Surf League junior champion in 2023. This was an impressive achievement as he's only the fourth Australian to win the junior title. Jarvis' many other achievements include winning the Australian Junior Championships, the Australian Open of Surfing and the Oz Grom Open and several of the World Surf League Qualifying Series events. Last year, when aged only 19, he was inducted onto the Surfing Sutherland Shire Walk of Fame, joining a select group of local surfing champions. He has also earned a scholarship with the Australian Institute of Sport at the High-Performance Centre for Surfing. Jarvis' achievements have come through much hard work in and out of the water and I wish him success as continues his quest to qualify for the world tour.

**JAMES BARKELL**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Burraneer's James Barkell who was recognised at the 2024 Rugby Australia Awards for his work in community coaching. James has been a mainstay of coaching in the community for more than 15 years and was rewarded with the Geoff 'Bunter' Shaw Community Coach of the Year Award. His CV is impressive, coaching across juniors and seniors, sevens and 15 a side, and male and female teams. James has been influential across the grades, coaching in Sydney's premier Shute Shield competition, under 15s, women's reps, suburban, schoolboy and state rugby, as well as touring sides. One of his most recent assignments was coaching the NSW junior team at the Australian Schools and U18s Championships. James is passionate about rugby and coaching and this has seen him pursue extensive qualifications, including a PhD that focused on high performance rugby. NSW Rugby says "James is a highly respected member of the

Community Rugby Coaching fraternity. He is considered, hardworking and committed to his teams and players." I join with NSW Rugby in congratulating James – he has made a massive contribution to rugby and is an asset to the game.

#### **DAN MICHEL – SUTHERLAND SHIRE SPORTS CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Cronulla's inspirational Dan Michel who is Sutherland Shire Sports Citizen of the Year. Dan has suffered Spinal Muscular Atrophy since birth, a condition that affects almost every muscle in his body such that he has very little strength and mobility in his limbs and torso. He was introduced to the sport of boccia in 2011 and it gave him an outlet to express his love of sport. He started representing Australia in 2013 and over three years built his world ranking to where he qualified for the 2016 Rio Paralympics. Dan became Australia's first Paralympian in boccia in 16 years in Tokyo and won the nation's first ever boccia medal in the mixed BC3 category at the 2020 Paralympic games. He then gave Australia our best result in boccia at the Paralympics, claiming a silver medal in the BC3 category in Paris. His Paralympic success is on top of a haul of two gold medals at the World Championships in 2022 and silver and bronze medal wins at the 2018 World Championships. The Shire community is proud of Dan and he's a deserving winner of this award.

#### **CANLEY VALE HIGH SCHOOL END OF YEAR 2024 PRESENTATION**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—I am delighted to have visited Canley Vale High School on the 12th of December 2024 to present leadership awards for students from Year 7 to Year 12. These student recipients were recognised for their outstanding dedication to enhance the great reputation of Canley Vale High School and exemplary leadership qualities. I note the recipients of the awards I presented and congratulate them on their achievements. The recipients of these awards from Year 7 were: Ethan Lim and Quynh Nguyen; Year 8 were: Raiden To and Joanne Tran; Year 9 were: Collin Q L Trang and Angela Huynh; Year 10 were: Qy Minh Truong and Diana Nguyen; and Year 11 were: Ryan Le and Katie Nguyen. I would like to personally thank Ms Effie Niarchos, the Principal at Canley Vale High School and Ms Julie Nguyen for inviting me and for coordinating these presentations. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the teachers, students, and parents for welcoming me into their school, and I look forward to attending more school events at Canley Vale High School.

#### **BOSSLEY PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL END OF YEAR 2024 PRESENTATION**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On the 12th of December 2024, I had the distinct honour of visiting Bossley Park Public School to present various awards to students from Kindergarten to Year 6. Every year Bossley Park Public School recognises the accomplishments of students at their end of year Presentation ceremony. I note the recipients of the awards I presented and congratulate them on their achievements. The recipients of the awards from Kindergarten were: Ethan Yalda and Mia Ponnuswamy; Year 1 were: Diego Hanoka and Jasmine Emeish; Year 2 were: Ilias Stavropoulos and Amora Murphy; Year 3 were: Oliver Minasian and Mira Somo; Year 4 were: Marcus Maroun and Leyla Yildirim, Year 5 were: Oliver Morabito and Anastasia Piromalli and in Year 6 were: Ramsin Qoda and Inana Yalda. I would like to personally thank Mrs Tracey Betts the Principal at Bossley Park Public School and Ms Frances Nobilo Assistant Principal for organising this Award Ceremony and for inviting me. I would also like to personally thank the teachers, staff, students, and parents for welcoming me into their school, and I look forward to attending many more events at Bossley Park Public School.

#### **BONNYRIGG HIGH SCHOOL – 2024 END OF YEAR PRESENTATION DAY**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 11 December 2024, I had the privilege of attending Bonnyrigg High School's end of year presentation to congratulate students for their remarkable accomplishments. I had the honour of presenting various awards to students from each year who have demonstrated exceptional achievement. The Consistent Effort Award was presented to Tram Bui, Ami Ishimwa, Patrick Thai and Jessie Tran. The Citizenship award was presented to Trinity Pham and Jayden Zou. The Leadership Award was presented to Zvonimir Andonov, Orlando Benci, Tijana Kovacevic and Sara Chiem. Their hard work, dedication and perseverance are truly commendable. I would like to extend my gratitude to Principal Mr Reece Hooke and Deputy Principal Ms Judy Harris for the kind invitation. I also want to commend Bonnyrigg High School, all the teachers and school community on their strong commitment to promote academic excellence and passion for lifelong learning. Congratulations to the school, teachers, staff, parents and all students on their excellent achievements.

#### **KAREN MURPHY**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Karen Murphy, from Shell Cove, for being inducted into the prestigious Sport Australia Hall of Fame. Having brought home gold medals at both the Commonwealth Games and World Championship levels, Karen has donned the green and gold on more than 660 occasions over an incredible career spanning two decades. She says her favourite bowling greens

in the Illawarra would have to be in Warilla, closely followed by Kiama. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Karen on this this wonderful achievement.

#### **KAILEENA BJELANOVIC**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Kaileena Bjelanovic, from Lake Illawarra High School, for being awarded the Photography Prize at the annual "Every Artist was once an Amateur" exhibition which was held at the Project gallery art space in Wollongong. Kaileena received a special mention as the photograph she captured on a recent excursion to Sydney, 'Pink Shop', won the prize. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Kaileena on this wonderful achievement.

#### **ANDREW DANIELS**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Andrew Daniels, from Albion Park Rail, for more than 40 years of service to the community as a local veterinarian. Andrew had been around animals from a young age and, after setting up his own business, became the go-to for community members who needed to trust someone with their treasured pets. The close-knit clinic attracts lifelong clients, with all kinds of pets and situations coming through over the years. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Andrew on this this wonderful achievement and wish him well in his retirement.

#### **DOUG MEYER - HENTY**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge Doug Meyer for his dedicated service as a councillor for Greater Hume Council from 2012 to 2024, with seven years as Deputy Mayor. During his tenure, Doug's commitment to improving the quality of life for residents in the Greater Hume area was reflected in improvements in community facilities, in particular in his local community of Henty. These improvements included a new railway crossing north of Henty, a new swimming pool in Henty, a new skate park, a fire station, and improvements to the main street of Henty. He never missed a council meeting and enjoyed being around a group of people trying to get things done for the good of others. In stepping down from Council, Doug as spoken of missing the debates with his colleagues and his hopes of encouraging younger candidates to commit to local service. Doug – thank you for your service. Your legacy is one of commitment to local community, practical development, and a genuine passion for improving the welfare of your rural community. May you enjoy retirement!

#### **FEDERATION COUNCIL – AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS CEREMONY**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate the following outstanding individuals and groups recognised at this year's Federation Council Australia Day Award Ceremony, held on January 26, 2025, at Lowe Square in Howlong. These awards celebrate the dedication and contributions of those who go above and beyond in our community. Award Recipients: Citizen of the Year: Wayne Lamb; Young Citizen of the Year: Daniel Hateley; Local Hero Award – Community Group: Howlong Local Thrifty Store; Special Judges Award – Inspirational Young Person: Dayna Carter; Local Hero Award – Sports – Zoe Owen, Oaklands Cricket Club; Local Hero Award – Individual – Cathie Sutcliffe, Elizabeth Kerr, Peter Ornsby. Additionally, Student Achievement Awards were presented to: Boree Creek Public School: Leilani Foster and Jason Shields; Corowa High School: Ella Webb and Franklin Murray-Wright; A special thank you to Australia Day Ambassador David Bitton, for delivering an inspiring address at the ceremony. Congratulations to all award recipients! Thank you for your commitment, hard work and contributions in our community.

#### **GREATER HUME COUNCIL'S 2025 AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate the following award nominees and winners of the Greater Hume Council's 2025 Australia Day Awards: Citizen of the Year: Alison Schuster, Henty Youth Empowerment Award: Lucy Grills, Holbrook Individual Volunteers of the Year (joint winners) Kerry Small, Henty, Colin Barrett, Henty and Andrew Kotzur, Walla Walla Group Volunteers of the Year: (joint winners) Holbrook Meals on Wheels and Rural Care Link Op Shop Volunteers, Jindera Sports Person/Team of the Year: Ashley-James Bender, Holbrook Sports Volunteer/s of the Year: (joint winners) John Mullavey, Walla Walla and Debbie Mills, Holbrook Community Event of the Year:(joint winners) Brock-Burrum Big Freeze and Walla Walla Lutheran Church Centenary. School Citizenship Awards: Billabong High School: Iilysh Retalick; Brocklesby Public School: Gracie Buckingham; Burrumbuttock Public School: Taylor Hawkins; Culcairn Public School: Maddison Lloyd-Wilson; Gerogery Public School: Mollie Cornell; Henty Public School: Charlie Chambers; Holbrook Public School: Lachlan Saunders; Jindera Public School: Isaac Thompson; St John's Lutheran School: Molly Ginnivan; St Joseph's Primary School: James Thomson; St Patrick's Primary School: Heidi Hulme; St Paul's Lutheran Primary School: Zoe Lieschke; St Paul's College: Jaiah Disher; Walbundrie Public School: Dylan Phillips.

### NORTHLAKES HIGH SCHOOL LEADERS 2025

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Taj Hendy, Isabella Matthews, Alexis Hughes, Ben Wasson, Ashleigh Charge, Corey Harris, Edward Lewis, and Kaiah McWilliams on being named as the Northlakes High School leadership team for 2025. These students have consistently demonstrated a strong work ethic and a deep commitment to their school community. They represent Northlakes High School with exceptional pride and integrity. Throughout their time at school, each of these students have 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 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 Taj, Isabella, Alexis, Ben, Ashleigh, Corey, Edward, and Kaiah on this well-deserved achievement. I also wish them all the best with their final year of high school.

### REDHEAD PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERS 2025

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Bailey McFarland, Asha Gearsides, Cooper Kelly, Olivia Hayden, Stella Stuart, Akira Pullman, Addison Sherry, Jamie Donaldson, and Willa Conrick on being named as the Redhead Public School leadership team for 2025. These students have consistently demonstrated a strong work ethic and a deep commitment to their school community. They represent Redhead Public School with exceptional pride and integrity. Throughout their time at school, each of these students have 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 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 Bailey, Asha, Cooper, Olivia, Stella, Akira, Addison, Jamie, and Willa on this well-deserved achievement. I also wish them all the best with their final year of primary school.

### ST BRIGID'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE LEADERS 2025

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Lilly McFadden, Elly Abbott, Jermone Pongi, Abigail Tomblin, Xuela Faasisila, Bella Elwell, Sam Louis, and Miabella Spina on being named as the St Brigid's Catholic College leadership team for 2025. These students have consistently demonstrated a strong work ethic and a deep commitment to their school community. They represent St Brigid's Catholic College with exceptional pride and integrity. Throughout their time at school, each of these students have 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 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 Lilly, Elly, Jermone, Abigail, Xuela, Bella, Sam, and Miabella on this well-deserved achievement. I also wish them all the best with their final year of high school.

### KEITH SAWDY

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the life of Keith Sawdy and his attainment of the Order of Australia Medal. From the years of 1971 to 2010, Keith was the director of Sawdy and Black Architects and has been a Fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects since 1970. His first commission was to build the Church of Christ chapel in Bryant Street before then working on the Mint Building in Canberra with John Whitlock and the Mail Handling building in Cleveland Street. But it was at this point Keith would begin his most important work. Keith then began designing aged care villages nursing home, and it was here that he found his passion for designing homes for the elderly and disabled. Keith has also served as an advisor to the Social Services Department from the 1970s to 1990s, a member of the Building Planning Advisory Committee of the NSW Council on the Ageing from 1976 to 1991, and a past board member of the Australian Council for Rehabilitation of the Disabled. Keith exemplifies not only our country's dedication to hard work, but also to a care for others in their community.

### INTEGRICARE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES ROCKDALE

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport)**—I would like to take this opportunity to

congratulate Integricare Family and Community Services Rockdale, who recently received an exceeding rating for the national quality standards. This incredible achievement reflects Integricare's dedication and commitment to community service. Integricare is a non-for-profit community-based charity dedicated to delivering services to Children and Families based on a Christian ethos of practical giving, faith based teaching and pastoral care. This community-based approach allows Integricare to deliver childcare services in an integrated and collaborative way that allows them to adapt their service to the individual needs of children. Integricare acts not just as an educator, but as a supporter and collaborator with parents in delivering high-quality childcare services. Integricare staff are known for being passionate educators, always going the extra mile for children and always delivering a first-class service. Integricare's impact on the wider Rockdale community makes them well deserving of an exceeding rating, and all the staff there should be incredibly proud of the nurturing, enriching environment they have created for the children under their care. I once again congratulate the whole team at Integricare Rockdale for their achievement and wish them the best of luck moving forward.

#### **WILLOUGHBY 2024 HSC ACHIEVERS**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—Congratulations to the Willoughby Class of 2024 on their outstanding performance in the HSC. Several students in my community of Willoughby topped the State in their respective subjects. I congratulate Yawen Wang of Chatswood High School who topped the state in Chinese and Literature; Ashley Ziyi Cheng of the Secondary College of Languages Chatswood Campus who came first in Chinese in Context; Monei Takeuchi of the Secondary College of Languages Chatswood Campus who was first in Japanese in Context; and Anthony Alexander Ivanov of the Secondary College of Languages Chatswood Campus who came first in Russian Continuers. The outstanding success of these four students attests to both the academic brilliance and ethnolinguistic diversity to be found in Willoughby. My community is one of many tongues, yet all united as proud Australians eager to contribute to our country and its success. I again congratulate all our students on their exceptional achievements, they have done Willoughby and NSW proud.

#### **PRE-CHANUKAH CELEBRATIONS AT GORE HILL PARK**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I had the pleasure of attending the Pre-Chanukah Celebrations at Gore Hill Park on 22 December 2024. Organised by the Cremorne Synagogue, the celebrations featured a live concert and party with something for all the family including a BBQ, jumping castles, face painting, live music performances, donuts and special Chanukah treats. Though ancient in origin, the spirit of Chanukah is enduring with its celebration of light triumphing over darkness, and freedom prevailing over bondage. The meaning of Chanukah is particularly poignant with its call to faithfulness and perseverance in the face of adversity. I reaffirmed my dedication to a tolerant, harmonious and respectful society in which we work together to address and remove antisemitism in all its forms. I thank Rabbi Chaim and the community of Cremorne Synagogue very much for organising such a wonderful festival at Gore Hill Park. To the Jewish community in Willoughby and beyond, I hope this Chanukah was a special celebration of faith, light and hope.

#### **50TH ANNIVERSARY OF 2MBS RADIO**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—A special cultural institution in my community of Willoughby reached a significant milestone with 2MBS Radio celebrating its 50th anniversary. Founded in 1975, 2MBS was the first community radio station in Australia and our first FM stereo broadcaster. Reaching an audience of over 650 000, 2MBS broadcasts a plethora of musical genres including classical, chamber, jazz, blues, sacred, ethnic, and experimental contemporary music. The station broadcasts from Chandos Street St Leonards and is a well-established, cultural fixture of Sydney's lower north shore. On 1 February 2025, I had the pleasure of briefly visiting the St Leonard's studio to celebrate its half-century anniversary. Special Guests at the celebration included Her Excellency, the Hon Margaret Beazley, Governor of NSW, who serves as the Vice Regal Patron of the station. Open to members of the public, the celebrations included guided tours of the studios and a live jazz performance by the 2MBS Weatherly Scholar. I thank Simon Moore and all at 2MBS and again congratulate this community radio station on celebrating its landmark anniversary.

#### **AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I'd like to recognise the Illawarra recipients of this year's Australia Day Honours. From the 732 inspirational Australians recognised, four Medals of the Order of Australia and one Australian Fire Service Medal were awarded to Illawarra residents. A Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] in the General Division was awarded to Corrimal resident Philip Driscoll for services to sport through medical roles, and former Helensburgh resident and Australian Olympic Gold Medallist, Saya Sakakibara, for her 2024 Paris Olympics efforts. Wollongong's Hong-Phong Le and Huong Thuy Tran both received their OAM's for service to the Vietnamese Community in the Illawarra. Stanwell Park resident, Superintendent Gregory Houston, received an Australian Fire Service Medal for his distinguished service as a member of an Australian Fire Service – one of

the highest honours an Australian firefighter can receive. These locals are outstanding members of their communities and have represented their region, their state, and their nation with great honour. I congratulate them all on their wonderful achievements and wish them the very best for their future endeavours in their respective fields.

#### **THE LATE FRANK DAVIS**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It is a pleasure and honour and celebrate the life and legacy of the late Frank "Max" Davis, who has been posthumously awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his outstanding service to veterans and their families. Max's commitment to Brisbane Water Legacy spanned over 14 years, during which he held numerous leadership roles, including chair of the board of directors, president, vice-president, and board director. His passion for Legacy was not just in his titles, but in his everyday actions—writing personal messages in birthday cards, supporting veterans and their families, and ensuring the organisation thrived. A proud ex-military man, Max saw Legacy as a way of giving back, dedicating himself to improving the lives of those who served and their loved ones. His energy, kindness, and gentlemanly presence made a lasting impact on all who knew him. His dedication extended beyond Legacy, serving as a veterans' representative at Brisbane Waters Private Hospital and actively contributing to his community. Max's passing in January 2023 was a great loss, but his spirit and contributions will never be forgotten. We honour his legacy and express our deepest gratitude for his service.

#### **AMANDA NOFFS**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It is a privilege to stand here today and acknowledge the incredible contributions of Amanda Noffs, who has been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for her dedicated service to youth through health programs. Amanda's life's work has been defined by her unwavering passion for helping young people, particularly those facing mental health and substance abuse challenges. She has been a powerful force in pioneering treatment programs for at-risk youth, working alongside her husband Wesley at the Wesley Life Education Centre and playing a crucial role in stabilizing and expanding the organisation. In the 1990s, when there were no dedicated mental health treatment services for young people under 18, Amanda was a driving force for the Ted Noffs Foundation, which has since grown to become Australia's largest youth drug treatment agency. Her commitment extended beyond health—studying law at the University of NSW and establishing a partnership to provide free legal services to young people in need. Amanda's impact is immeasurable, and while she has faced personal health challenges in recent years, her legacy continues to change lives. We thank her for her tireless dedication to supporting vulnerable youth. Congratulations, Amanda, on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **DANIEL VAN KEIMPEMA**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It is an honour to be here today to celebrate the outstanding individuals who have been recognised in this year's Australia Day Honours. Across the Central Coast, seven exceptional locals received AMs and OAMs, while three dedicated individuals were awarded medals for their service in fire, ambulance, and emergency services. I would like to take this moment to extend my sincere congratulations to Daniel van Keimpema, who has been awarded the Emergency Services Medal. Daniel has been a dedicated member of VRA Rescue NSW since 2005 and currently serves as the captain of the Central Coast Volunteer Rescue Squad. His 19 years of service, across multiple roles including training officer and deputy captain, have been marked by his unwavering commitment to public safety and his exceptional leadership. His expertise in delivering rescue training and managing operations has greatly enhanced the effectiveness of rescue efforts across our region. Beyond training, his dedication to frontline rescue operations has saved countless lives, leaving a lasting impact on our community. Daniel, your selflessness, professionalism, and dedication to public service inspire us all. Congratulations on this well-deserved honour and thank you for your continued service to our community.

#### **GUNAMARAGANG BURRAAY BJINDJINGARA PLAYGROUP**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—One of the highlights of a very busy Wednesday in December 2024 was stopping by to congratulate and connect with the wonderful families and children at the Gunamaragang Burraay Bjindjingara Playgroup at Community Links Wellbeing. This amazing playgroup, known as Little Child Stars, is only a year old and continues to grow from strength to strength. It was heartwarming to see so many kids enjoying their Christmas party - a festive luncheon picnic on the lawn under a beautiful shady spot, surrounded by proud parents, elders, carers, and guardians. Although my visit was brief, I cherished the opportunity to share a quick hug with Aunty Karen Adams, Aunty Leann Dykes, and Frances Bodkin & Gawaian, Frances, Dharawal Elder of the Bidiagal Clan. Thank you to Leann and everyone who makes this playgroup such a success.

### **HILL TOP RAIL PARK PLAYSPACE OPENING**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—On the morning of 14 December 2024, I had the absolute delight of attending the official opening of the new playspace in Hill Top. Located in the heart of the village on West Parade, this wonderful park is set to become a favourite community hub. Congratulations to Hill Top Community Association [HTCA] for their incredible perseverance and hard work in securing funding through the Australian Government's Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Fund and additional support from Wingecarribee Shire Council. It was great to see many families and locals, representatives from the village store and shops, representatives from the Australian Government, the Rotary Club of Bowral-Mittagong, and staff and councillors from Wingecarribee Shire Council—all vital contributors to this success. HTCA continues to amaze me with their dedication, positivity, and teamwork. Their efforts make Hill Top a fantastic place to live and raise a family. A big well done to the Council teams who made this project a reality. It was impressive to see kids enjoying their first runs in the park, and I hope that the community explores the new playspace, which has something for everyone.

### **HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY JAN WESTERHOF**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Monday 16 December 2024 was the 100th birthday of Jan Westerhof, a resident of Bargo. Later that week, Jan and some of his family and friends came to my office in Tahmoor for a visit. We rarely get the chance to spend time with anyone who has had a life like Jan's. Jan was born in Zutphen, Netherlands, in December 1924 as the third of four children. Every day, he would walk up to five kilometers to and from school and he had an amazing teacher who read books about Australia, which sparked an interest in the country. After his experience in the underground resistance, losing contact with his family, and serving valiantly in the army during World War Two, Jan worked several jobs and came to Australia in 1966 with his wife and their two children. He has had an amazing and exciting life here and Jan says he is 'an Aussie with Dutch heritage'. After his wife's passing, he moved closer to his children and they are a huge and constant part of his life. Happy birthday to Jan and here's to many more.

### **AFRICAN-AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I was absolutely delighted to attend the Multicultural World Cup hosted by the African-Australian Football Association & the Rydalmere Lions Football Club. It was great to present the winners medals for the Women's Competition & watch the Youth final in which Algeria defeated South Sudan. The AAFA aims to improve the wellbeing of African Australian and culturally and linguistically diverse youth through the unifying power of soccer. Rydalmere Lions FC has been serving its community members of all ages since 1979. The two organisations joined together to host the Multicultural World Cup. This initiative empowers youth from all backgrounds to connect with their local community through the healthy and nourishing outlet of sport, specifically soccer. Through such events, kids & young people can make new friendships, strengthen their cultural identity and achieve a sense of belonging within their local community. Thank you to the AAFA & the Rydalmere Lions for hosting this inclusive & unifying event. I was deeply inspired by this Multicultural Cup. After all, embracing diversity & community is what the Granville electorate is all about. We can work together as a stronger team not in spite of, but because of, our differences.

### **GUILDFORD ANGLICAN CHURCH FOR THEIR ANNUAL CAROLS IN THE CARPARK - CHRISTMAS 2024**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—It was great to join Guildford Anglican Church's Annual Carols in the Car Park on the 16th December. This event showcased the church's dedication to its diverse community, a commitment it has held since 1934. The vibrant atmosphere reflected the true spirit of Christmas. Talented local musicians from the Granville electorate provided beautiful live music, filling the air with festive cheer. The selection of carols, both traditional and contemporary, created a joyful backdrop for the evening. Children enjoyed the creative activities at the popular kids' craft stalls, while everyone savoured the delicious halal sausage sizzle. Rev Roger Hokin and the Guildford Anglican Church deserve immense credit for organising such a fantastic community event. Their efforts in maintaining this inclusive Christmas tradition are truly appreciated. Carols in the Car Park is a testament to the church's vital role in bringing people together. It was a truly memorable evening. Merry Christmas!

### **AUSTRALIAN RAPTORS RUGBY ACADEMY**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I was delighted to attend the fundraiser held by the Australian Raptors Rugby Academy held at the Holroyd Sportsground, Merrylands on the 7th of December. The funds raised contribute to the Under 12's team to play Rugby in Japan, which is a fantastic opportunity for our young & local Rugby players. The Academy was only established in 2022 but has already created fantastic opportunities for kids to play in Japan, Europe and the USA, as well as comprehensive training on local soil! It aims to promote cultural immersion, rugby skill development & holistic resilience in all students. The Academy was only established in

2022 but has already created amazing opportunities to play in Japan, Europe and USA. It is run entirely by passionate and experienced volunteers, which is a testament to the vision, hard work & community-centredness of the Academy. A massive thank you to the Australian Raptors Rugby Academy for their continuous efforts to provide our local community with invaluable opportunities. Good luck to the Under 12's playing in Japan, we are all rooting for you!

#### **FAIRFIELD CITY COUNCIL 2025 AUSTRALIA DAY CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—This Australia Day, I had the honour of attending Fairfield City Council's 2025 Australia Day Citizenship Ceremony and welcoming our newest citizens to our diverse Australian family. It was an honour to join with dignitaries to share in this significant occasion in the lives of our newest citizens and their family and friends. There was immense pride and joy throughout the ceremony. I congratulate our newest Australian citizens, including those who now call the Badgerys Creek community their home. They are now citizens of the greatest country on earth and Australia and the Badgerys Creek community are enriched by their inclusion.

#### **ORAN PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate and commend Oran Park Public School for winning the national sustainability schools' competition 'Circular Champions', which saw them win a share of \$20,000 worth of prizes. The competition is part of the Australia-wide Aussie of the Month Award, which is a student recognition program that recognises and rewards the attributes of personal endeavour, teamwork and service to the community. The Circular Champions competition invited the school students to collaborate to create ways of reusing plastic bottles whilst demonstrating the values of fair go, respect, inclusion and mateship. The students achieved the competition's outcome and conveyed the prescribed values by using discarded plastic bottles to create a piece of art, with a focus on the Galapagos Tortoise, with the Galapagos Island being a topic of their study for the past term. I congratulate and commend all students and staff on their outstanding work and initiative.

#### **OFFICIAL OPENING OF ARDEX OCEANIA HQ**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—On the 3rd of December 2024 I was pleased to join the team at ARDEX for the official opening of their Oceania Headquarters in Kemps Creek. The ARDEX Group is a solution and service provider of innovative building systems. This \$140 million investment is a great benefit to local employment and the economy and supports local manufacturing and Australian made supplies, as well as sustainability and innovation. With the opening of the Western Sydney International Airport fast approaching, I'm excited to welcome ARDEX into our area and am thrilled that we have this type of investment within our growing region. I congratulate Fabian Morgan, ARDEX Regional Managing Director – Oceania and the entire ARDEX team on this extraordinary accomplishment.

#### **RYDE PROFILE IN COURAGE AWARD: CHRISTOPHER YAU - EASTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—Mr Speaker, I ask the House to join me in congratulating Christopher Yau, who is Eastwood Public School's recipient of the 2024 Ryde Profile in Courage Award. This esteemed recognition celebrates Christopher's remarkable strength in overcoming challenges and standing by their principles to make a meaningful impact within their school community. By prioritising what is right over what is easy, Christopher has exemplified integrity, leadership, and compassion. Navigating the complexities of youth while remaining steadfast in one's convictions is no small feat. Christopher's courage has not only advanced the values of fairness and justice but also inspired their peers and educators alike. Their actions remind us of the power of a single individual to foster, change and uplift those around them. On behalf of the Ryde community and this House, I commend Christopher for their extraordinary efforts and wish them continued success in all future endeavours. May their courage and determination continue to shine brightly, encouraging others to follow their example. Congratulations, Christopher, on this well-deserved recognition. Always be courageous.

#### **RYDE PROFILE IN COURAGE AWARD: DOMINIC MINO - RYDE PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—Mr Speaker, I ask the House to join me in congratulating Dominic Mino, who is Ryde Public School's recipient of the 2024 Ryde Profile in Courage Award. This esteemed recognition celebrates Dominic's remarkable strength in overcoming challenges and standing by their principles to make a meaningful impact within their school community. By prioritising what is right over what is easy, Dominic has exemplified integrity, leadership, and compassion. Navigating the complexities of youth while remaining steadfast in one's convictions is no small feat. Dominic's courage has not only advanced the values of fairness and justice but also inspired their peers and educators alike. Their actions remind us of the power of a single individual to foster, change and uplift those around them. On behalf of the Ryde community and this House, I commend Dominic for their extraordinary efforts and wish them continued success in all future endeavours. May their

courage and determination continue to shine brightly, encouraging others to follow their example. Congratulations, Dominic, on this well-deserved recognition. Always be courageous.

#### **RYDE PROFILE IN COURAGE AWARD: GEORGE KRIKETOS - RYDE SECONDARY COLLEGE**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—Mr Speaker, I ask the House to join me in congratulating George Kriketos, who is Ryde Secondary College's recipient of the 2024 Ryde Profile in Courage Award. This esteemed recognition celebrates George's remarkable strength in overcoming challenges and standing by their principles to make a meaningful impact within their school community. By prioritising what is right over what is easy, George has exemplified integrity, leadership, and compassion. Navigating the complexities of youth while remaining steadfast in one's convictions is no small feat. George's courage has not only advanced the values of fairness and justice but also inspired their peers and educators alike. Their actions remind us of the power of a single individual to foster, change and uplift those around them. On behalf of the Ryde community and this House, I commend George for their extraordinary efforts and wish them continued success in all future endeavours. May their courage and determination continue to shine brightly, encouraging others to follow their example. Congratulations, George, on this well-deserved recognition. Always be courageous.

#### **CAVE FAMILY OF GLEN INNES**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the Cave family of Glen Innes, on celebrating 50 years of continuous ownership of their tyre and mechanical business. Today the business is known as Tyrepower and has been trading under this name since 1977. I congratulate both past and present generations on this significant milestone, with the business being started by Allan and Gail Cave in 1975 and taken over by their son Matt and his wife Jacqui in 2002, whom operate the business to this day. Thank you also to past and current staff, for their support and contribution to the success of this strong and dependable local business. I commend the Cave family on this significant anniversary, which is a credit to the family's hard work and excellence in service to the community. We wish Matt and Jacqui many more successful years ahead!

#### **ARTIST ISABELLE DEVOS**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Armidale artist Isabelle Devos, for being selected as a finalist in the esteemed national art prize, The Fisher's Ghost Art Award, for her painting titled 'The Corner Shop Held a Certain Significance.' This award in an annual art award and exhibition open to artists across Australia, with works form a variety of artistic categories and mediums. I congratulate Isabelle not only on this award, but also on her previous accolades, including being a finalist in the 2023 Glover Art Prize; 2022 Paddington Art Prize; 2024 Lethbridge Landscape Prize; and the 2024 PLC Armidale Signature Art Award. I commend Isabelle on this impressive selection and the calibre of artistic talent crafted throughout her accomplished career.

#### **RECOGNITION OF THE QUAST FAMILY**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of David and Grace Quast from Crooble, on being named northern region winners of the Suncorp Bank AgShows NSW Championship Dryland Field Wheat Competition, announced at Dubbo recently. I congratulate the Quast family on achieving an impressive 100 years in farming, with this major milestone topping off news of the award. Congratulations to all involved with producing the winning crop, with special thanks to McGregor Gourlay Senior Agronomist Scott Rogers for his expertise and support, along with the whole team behind the operations of crop production on 'Domang', Crooble. I commend David and Grace on this prestigious award and thank the generations of the Quast family, for their valuable contribution to Australian agriculture.

#### **NEWCASTLE NEW CITIZENS**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—In late January, I had the opportunity to attend a City of Newcastle Citizenship Ceremony, and I want to take a moment to reflect on how special these events are. More than 170 people hailing from fifty different countries across six continents took the pledge to join our Australian community as citizens at that event. They came from countries as far afield as Cambodia, France, Latvia, Nepal, Pakistan, Syria and Uruguay; the oldest new citizen was eighty-five and the youngest was just two years old. Citizenship ceremonies are such a significant moment in many people's lives, and it's always heartwarming to see so many proud new citizens and their families celebrating together. It was fantastic to see so many smiling faces, all excited to take this step and become part of our community. These new Australians bring with them a wealth of diverse cultures and traditions, adding even more richness to Newcastle and our nation. Every ceremony is a reminder of how much our community continues to grow and evolve, and it's always a joy to be part of. Congratulations to all the new citizens and welcome to the next chapter of your Australian journey!

### MADE AT THE PLACE

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—The Place is Charlestown's wonderful community centre. Made @ The Place is one of the many programs they run, providing young people with the opportunity to learn, create, exhibit, and even sell their creative work. Participants learn specific creative skills over four weeks. More than that, the initiative facilitates positive growth and artistic confidence of local youth. The program provides a safe and nurturing environment where young artists can explore their creativity, learn new techniques, and develop their unique artistic style. On 5 December 2024, the Place hosted an exhibition of the works produced by these talented young artists, an opportunity for the young artists to showcase their artwork, gain exposure, and receive feedback from the community. It was also an opportunity for the community to see the incredible talent of these budding artists and to support their creativity and growth. My congratulations to all the young artists involved in Made @ The Place, the experienced individuals who helped grow their skills, and of course the fantastic staff at The Place for making it happen.

### JAN BYNON, GOT YOUR BACK SISTA

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Westfield Kotara is a major shopping centre in the Charlestown Electorate, and I am glad to see them giving back to the community with their Local Hero program. I am pleased to report that the 2024 Westfield Kotara Local Hero is Jan Bynon of Got Your Back Sista. Got Your Back Sista is a Newcastle registered charity that empowers women and children to thrive after escaping domestic violence. They offer support to women who have escaped a violent relationship and must start their lives again. Jan is one of Got Your Back Sista's longest-serving volunteers. Through her work with Got Your Back Sista, she has supported hundreds of women and children with lived experience of domestic and family violence. She volunteers in the op-shop, helps with fundraising events and provides essentials to those in need. Along with the recognition comes a \$20,000 grant, which will support Got Your Back Sista's programs including work readiness, financial goal-setting and emotional healing. My congratulations to Jan and Got Your Back Sista, and my thanks to Westfield Kotara for giving back to the community.

### JILL LUDFORD

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—A journey that began in nursing and midwifery and continues today in a senior health leadership role has been officially honoured, with Murrumbidgee Local Health District chief executive Jill Ludford receiving a Public Service Medal in the Australia Day Honours list this year. As a former colleague I am delighted that her dedication and leadership have been recognised. She has brought invaluable "hands-on" experience as a nurse and a frontline clinician to her leadership, and this has led to innovations such as the "Murrumbidgee Single Employer Model" to recruit and retain rural generalists. She has been a champion of improved health for First Nations people and a leader who has driven the development of government and non-government partnerships, especially in primary care. As a former health executive, I know that leadership in this field can be challenging but can also deliver great rewards through making genuine differences in public health. Furthermore, Jill's decade of leadership at the Murrumbidgee Local Health District is itself a remarkable achievement. Jill has been dedicated to the great cause of public health all her working life and her award is a fitting tribute to her work for our community.

### UNCLE JAMES

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—It is with great sadness that I acknowledge Wiradjuri elder and First Nations knowledge holder, Uncle James Ingram, who has recently passed. Born in Leeton, Uncle James lived in Wagga Wagga for 40 years during which time he earned great respect for his championship of reconciliation and dedication to sharing cultural knowledge. A famed storyteller and educator, he operated a business, Bidya Marra, through which he generously shared ancient knowledge of the land, waters and history of Wiradjuri country. Among his many achievements, Uncle James was instrumental in having Aboriginal artefacts returned to the Museum of the Riverina, championed the recording and preservation of history and lore, and helped the Rural Fire Service incorporate cultural burning into its work. Thoughtful and caring, Uncle James loved his community and was passionate about improving the lives of Aboriginal people. He was a real leader and advocate, and his legacy will continue for generations to come. He was also a strong family man, and my condolences go to his wife Belinda and his entire family, and I hope they find comfort in celebrating his vision, care and achievements. Vale, Uncle James, and thank you for doing so much for so many.

### TERRIFIC TRIO

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—It takes special people to dedicate countless hours to helping those less fortunate and in John Craig, Julie Logan and Robbie Nolan, Wagga Wagga can boast some of the biggest

hearts in the business of caring. Last year the trio announced their retirement from Meals on Wheels after almost 90 years of combined service. President John, manager Julie and committee member Robbie all began with the service in the 1990s and in late 2024, the good Samaritans decided to step down. Over the years, they have ensured thousands of healthy meals and welcome companionship were provided to clients, many of whom were elderly and sometimes isolated. Together, they have made a real difference to those in need, with their efforts helping many older people to remain in their homes. Congratulations and thank you to John, Julie and Robbie for your hard work and compassion. Now that the baton is being passed, I would like to wish all the best to the new president, Ruth Bailey, and manager Christine Brewer. They have big shoes to fill but I'm sure that like their predecessors, they will rise to the challenge, and our community's tradition of caring will continue to shine.

#### **BRENT WHITER**

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega)**—Congratulations to Bega Valley resident Brent Whiter who received the Bega Valley Shire's Australia Day Citizen of the Year Award for 2025. Brent was recognized for his horticultural knowledge and advice, and for his contributions to the community. Listeners to ABC South East NSW radio would be familiar with Brent's weekly garden talkback program which is full of useful information and advice on all things horticultural. Brent has written articles for Pip magazine and has worked on a video project with ABC South East about citrus tree planting. He is the inaugural patron of the Far South Coast Garden Club. Brent enjoys helping local schools with their indigenous gardens and has assisted the Twofold Aboriginal Corporation and Jigamy Farm. Brent says "I love to impart my knowledge and nurture local garden clubs in our district. I have been involved in local communities who have been through bush fires, that need help in regenerating their gardens and land." For the last 39 years, Brent has owned and managed the Tura Bach Garden Centre in Tura Beach, NSW.

#### **LEGENDS OF CRICKET TWENTY20 MATCH SHOWCASES LISMORE'S RESILIENCE**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—A Celebrity cricket match at Lismore's revamped Oakes Oval at the weekend was further proof that the city is making strides in its recovery from the floods of February and March 2022. The opposing teams were led by former Australian Test wicket keeper-batsman and cricket commentator Adam Gilchrist AM and Lismore Mayor Cr Steve Krieg. My colleague, NSW Minister for Planning and Open Spaces Paul Scully played in Gilly's XI. The Mayor's XI won the match. Former Powderfinger frontman Bernard Fanning and Grinspoon guitarist Pat Davern, who live on the Northern Rivers, added some rock 'n' roll star power to the event. It was fitting that Adam Gilchrist, who grew up in Lismore, was back home to see the pavilion complex between Oakes and Crozier ovals named in his honour last Friday. Grandstands at Oakes Oval recently were named after former Australian women's cricket captain Lyn Larsen AM and another Far North Coast cricketing legend, the late John McMahon OAM. The upgraded Oakes Oval includes improved change rooms, an upgraded grandstand, new coach boxes and dedicated media spaces through a \$12.4-million joint investment by the Commonwealth and NSW government and Lismore Council.

#### **STATE AWARD FOR SHEPHERD'S PURSE THEATRE COMPANY, TYALGUM**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—It was my pleasure late last year to present the prestigious NSW Government Community Service Award to Shepherd's Purse Theatre Company in Tyalgum in recognition of their significant contribution to the cultural life of Tweed Shire. The presentation ceremony was held at Flutterbies Cottage Café, where I commended Solar Chapel and his fellow theatre company members for their dedication to enriching their local community through the arts. Shepherd's Purse has fostered unity, resilience and cultural pride through staging immersive Shakespearean productions that engage and uplift the community. Since 2015, Shepherd's Purse has captivated audiences with their innovative dinner theatre experiences, transforming local spaces like Flutterbies into enchanting open-air stages. Their commitment to involving the village's residents in every aspect of theatre – from set design to music – has created a strong sense of community ownership and pride. Their creativity, drive and resilience, particularly in the aftermath of the devastating 2022 floods that isolated Tyalgum, have made them a beacon of hope and inspiration. I fully supported the third-party nomination for this award which came from a community member who had been impressed by the professionalism and community spirit shown by this talented group.

#### **SUMMERLAND GIANT PUMPKIN AND WATERMELON FESTIVAL 2**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I Congratulate organisers of Kyogle's Summerland Giant Pumpkin and Watermelon Festival 2025, which, despite changeable weather, attracted more than 2,000 people before noon. Committee members include Rob Cullen, Anne Reardon, Joan Hayman and Maureen Pederson. They were helped by Gloria and Athol McQueen and Kay Skennar. A highlight this year was the Arts & Crafts Exhibition's inaugural Caroline Fisher People's Choice Award, won by artist Mario Sanchez Huertas. This prestigious trophy is in honour of former festival dynamo, the late Caroline Fisher, who passed away aged 62 in May 2024. Huertas, from The Leather Shop, wowed visitors to Kyogle's Roxy Gallery with his leather pumpkin sculpture, inspired by a giant

pumpkin grown in his own garden. Runner-up by just one vote was David Tham's brush turkey sculpture. Artists Ladi Witowski, Jennifer Densely and Luke Oliver tied for third place. Pumpkin results: Open pumpkin – 1. Dale Oliver 671kg, 2. John Leadbeater 536.5kg, 3. Lillian Cox 428.5 kg; Under 250kg pumpkin – 1. Geoff Frohloff 220kg, 2. Chris Pike 145kg, 3. 'Ettrick' 67.5kg; Junior Pumpkin – 1. Matilda Cox 124kg. The Aviv Callaghan, 17, from Blackhorse Creek, was a third time winner of the Watermelon Eating Contest.

### **BELLINGEN SHIRE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—The Bellingen Shire celebrated the outstanding contributions of local individuals at the 2025 Community Awards Ceremony. Among the many deserving nominees, the Citizen of the Year award was presented to Sara Hankin in recognition of her exceptional service. Since joining Rotary in 2017, Sara has become an integral part of the club, holding key leadership positions, including President and Treasurer. Her dedication is evident in her work on significant projects, such as the upgrade of the Dorrigo Medi-vac Helipad, which greatly enhances local safety. Sara has also played a central role in events like the Rotary Mother's Day Ball, which raises vital funds for community causes. Sara's impactful initiatives include leading projects such as the Dorrigo Medi-vac Helipad upgrade, the Rotary Mother's Day Ball, and the Lift the Lid community walk, which raised significant funds for mental health research. Sara's service has earned her the District Rotarian of the Year award and recognition as a Paul Harris Fellow. Her recognition as Citizen of the Year reflects her generosity, leadership, and unwavering dedication to Dorrigo. Sara's passion for service continues to inspire and positively impact her community.

### **CELEBRATING RECONCILIATION**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—The 2025 Kempsey Australia Day Awards were a celebration of individuals, whose unwavering commitment and dedication has made great benefit of our community. These awards honour those who work diligently behind the scenes, offering their time, energy, and expertise to support others and strengthen the social fabric of our region. This year saw the introduction of the Reconciliation Award for Kempsey Shire Council, established to recognise those who have made outstanding contributions towards fostering respect, trust, and unity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. The first recipient of this distinguished award was awarded to Aunty Vicki Taylor, a proud Dunghutti woman, celebrated for her outstanding work as a preschool educator and her deep commitment to preserving and sharing the Dunghutti language and culture. Aunty Vicki plays a pivotal role in educating young minds while ensuring the transmission of cultural knowledge to future generations, enriching the lives of many through her teachings. I send my congratulations to Aunty Vicki for her well-deserved recognition. Her dedication to reconciliation, through both education and cultural advocacy, highlights the vital importance of promoting mutual understanding and respect between communities.

### **RECOGNITION IN TIMBER INDUSTRY**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—In a celebration of advocacy and leadership, Kirsty Parker has been named Female Leader at the prestigious Australian Forest Contractors Association Awards. Based on the Mid North Coast of NSW, Kirsty has been a relentless advocate for the hardwood timber industry, championing its sustainability and future. Kirsty's passion stems from her family's deep-rooted connection to timber. Her husband Mathew's family has worked in timber harvesting for over a century, beginning in 1906 when his great-grandfather first selected land at Megan, NSW. Mathew continues this proud tradition, harvesting the same forests as his forefathers, with Kirsty by his side, sharing in the family's enduring commitment to the industry. For the past 14 years, when native timber harvesting faced threats under the current government, she acted, becoming a key voice for the industry. Kirsty engaged tirelessly with industry bodies, contractors, and state and federal politicians to ensure their concerns were heard. Beyond advocacy, Kirsty has mentored and supported many in the industry, offering guidance and encouragement. Congratulations, Kirsty, on your outstanding contribution and for standing as a true leader in the timber industry!

### **MASO CUP 2025**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—Over the Australia Day long weekend, I joined the Macedonian community from across Australia to celebrate their culture and enjoy soccer at the Maso Cup. This year the tournament was hosted by our local team Bankstown City Lions FC. Bankstown City Lions FC has been a pillar of our community for the past 50 years and it was amazing to celebrate their Jubilee year hosting their sister clubs across the country. There was a lot of music, dancing, singing and cheering which brought our local community together. From Kepabi to Burek, there was a wide variety of food for players and families to enjoy. Congratulations to Rockdale City Suns who won this year's Maso Cup. Special thanks to Robert Mileski, Goce Mitrevski and Zac Guleski, who made sure I was welcomed and introduced me to the players. I appreciate the efforts of Rob Mileski and the board members in building Bankstown City Lions into the successful

community-based team it is today. Thank you to the volunteers, staff and members for putting together such an important event in our community's calendar. Hopefully next year we'll take the cup home, "Napred" Bankstown City Lions!

#### NSW SES CANTERBURY UNIT

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I would like to acknowledge the services of the NSW SES Canterbury Unit for their dedication to ensuring the safety of our community was again highlighted. This was evident in their response efforts to severe weather events across Ashbury, Hurlstone Park, Earlwood and Campsie to Lakemba, Riverwood and Punchbowl in January. Attending to more than 158 incidents, the Canterbury SES Unit have worked alongside a local team of police and fire services to complete a strong majority of its emergency flood and storm damage missions. Their tireless efforts have provided essential relief to residents impacted by severe weather events, ensuring that homes, businesses and lives are safeguarded during times of crisis. As the Minister for Emergency Services, it is a privilege to be a part of the extraordinary workforce of volunteers. I would like to thank the dedicated work of all our volunteers and recognise the hard work of Canterbury SES unit in supporting my electorate. The efforts of these volunteers exemplify a spirit of service and solidarity, making a profound difference to those who need it most. Thank you and keep up the good work!

#### DINA KHEIR- CBC AUSTRALIA DAY VOLUNTEER 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 congratulate Dina Kheir for winning the Canterbury Bankstown Australia Day Volunteer of the Year award. The Canterbury-Bankstown's Australia Day Awards are to honour and recognise selfless locals who go above and beyond and make a real difference in the community. Dina's award reflects over 30 years of dedication to supporting charitable organisations and promoting women's empowerment across our city. Dina is a successful florist and a respected advocate and role model, particularly to Muslim women. Through her active involvement in Sydney Community Connect [SCC], she has participated in key initiatives such as the "Honorary Dinner Event" for newly arrived Palestinians, the "Let's Talk Addiction" program, and the "Ramadan Alkhier" daily food distribution. Thank you Dina for the amazing work that you do in our electorate and for your continuous effort in making sure people in the Bankstown community are supported. Dina your hard work and effort does not go unnoticed. Once again congratulations on this well-deserved award.

#### JONATHAN WILTSHIRE

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Congratulations to Wyong Christian Community School student Jonathan Wiltshire for being awarded the John Bell Scholarship at Bell Shakespeare. Four chosen talented young actors across the Country will participate in intensive week of acting masterclasses, train with Bell Shakespeare artists, undertake mentoring sessions, observe rehearsals for the Company's first major production for 2025, Henry 5 – directed by Marion Potts and featuring breakout star JK Kazzi – and attend live performances. It is great to see young talent in the local area being one of four actors to be awarded a scholarship to work with Australia's actors, directors, and educators. Jonathan is excited to take this opportunity to explore human expression practically, through language and non-verbal communication. I wish Jonathan all the best in his path of performing arts.

#### MATILDA TAYLOR

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Congratulations to Matilda Taylor from Noraville for her outstanding achievement as the Young Person Award Winner at the Central Coast Council 2025 Australia Day Awards. At age 21, she has made history by being appointed Deputy Captain at Toukley Fire Station, becoming the youngest Deputy Captain in both Fire and Rescue NSW history and at Toukley, showcasing her dedication and leadership in the firefighting community. Ms Taylor, who joined FRNSW at 18 in 2021, has quickly made a name for herself as a skilled firefighter and respected station leader, demonstrating her proactive attitude and eagerness for leadership. She not only excels in her firefighting duties but also serves as a mentor to her peers, particularly in incident management, showcasing her commitment to community service and safety. Her journey is a powerful testament to how ambition and perseverance can inspire younger women to pursue leadership roles in male-dominated fields, reinforcing the importance of dedication in achieving success.

**TARRYN AIKEN**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Congratulations to Wyong Roos Rugby League senior player Tarryn Aiken for being awarded the 2024 Golden Boot, the international rugby league Player of the Year award. The 25-year-old is the first Australian player to win the Golden Boot since 2019. The award caps a season in which Ms Aiken helped Australia to victory in the Pacific Cup, Queensland to an historic State of Origin series win and Sydney Roosters to NRLW premiership glory. Ms. Aiken was also awarded the Karyn Murphy Medal as grand final Player of the Match and won the Player of the Match in the Pacific Cup final defeat of New Zealand. This recognition is a testament to her hard work, dedication, and exceptional talent on the field.

**THE UNFORGETTABLES COMMUNITY CHOIR**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—Congratulations to this year's Community Group of the Year recipient, The Unforgettables Community Choir. Co-founded by Dr Helen English & Associate Professor Michelle Kelly, The Unforgettables Community Choir were recognised for their invaluable support to people living with dementia and their carers. Recognising the significant connection between music and memory, the dedicated choir gather at the Newcastle Conservatorium of Music every weekend to provide a welcoming space for dementia participants to connect with music. In addition to their weekly gatherings, the group also host an afternoon tea during the week, offering another opportunity to connect and support one another in a relaxed setting. The Unforgettables Community Choir have brought joy to many Novocastrian dementia participants and their carers, and I commend them for their contributions to our community.

**NEWCASTLE PERMANENT**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and recognise Newcastle Permanent's tremendous contributions to Hunter Surf Life Saving and the wider Newcastle community. Newcastle Permanent recently celebrated the 43rd year of their partnership with Hunter Surf Life Saving by sponsoring the 2025 Newcastle Permanent Branch Championships. This event gave more than 300 young competitors the opportunity to demonstrate their incredible skills in surf awareness, rescue techniques, and teamwork. Additionally, Newcastle Permanent has continued to support the Newcastle community and strive to create lasting change through there other sponsorships such as the annual Newcastle Permanent Primary School Mathematics Competition held late last year that exposed 15,000 primary school students some of the opportunities STEM subjects can offer. I would like to thank Newcastle Permanent for their ongoing contributions to our community.

**JENNY HAZELTON**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to acknowledge the enormous contribution Jenny Hazelton has made to the City of Orange. Palliative Care is an uncomfortable conversation that needs to be had. There is no easy way to navigate a death that has been forced upon families by an advanced and incurable disease, yet it's here Mrs Hazelton has risen to the challenge. Leading a small yet dedicated committee, Mrs Hazelton tackles the palliative care issue with sensitivity for those caught in its heartbreak, but with a firmer hand when advocating for the families that will face this issue. Orange's branch of Push for Palliative was established in March 2015, a time when there were no dedicated palliative care services in our city with patients placed in acute wards. While the group's goal is a stand-alone hospice, it has made enormous progress in Orange with a dedicated six-bed unit which includes two cuddle beds. Prior to her involvement with Push for Palliative, Jenny was involved in the swimming community's successful campaign for an indoor pool, extending its swimming season to year-long. Jenny Hazelton is a wonderful and formidable advocate for her community and I thank her on its behalf.

**JAM ORANGE**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to acknowledge Orange's music collective, Jam Orange, reaching a significant 10-year milestone in October 2024. A not-for-profit initiative, Jam Orange was formed by a group of local musicians and music enthusiasts to create performing and recording opportunities across all styles and genres. In its first 10 years, Jam Orange has fostered the live entertainment scene, through jam sessions, concerts and open mic nights. It also strives to encourage local venues to host live music and provide mentoring and support in a collaborative environment. Jam Saturday, held in March 2018 and featuring 50 local artists, the Winter Jazz Festival and a CD featuring 10 of its best open mic artists are among some of its achievement in the last decade. Coming up this year will be the Festival of Small Halls 2025, for a tenth year. I would like to congratulate Jam Orange on reaching a significant milestone and I look forward to watching its progress through the next decade.

### LIZ LYNCH

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I would like to congratulate Liz Lynch on the dedication and commitment she has given to the education of Orange's children through a 30-year career at the Canobolas Rural Technology High School. Liz retired at the end of 2024 after 37 years in education, which started with stints at Cowra and Dubbo before moving to Canobolas High in 1995 to take up the role of head teacher of support. She held that role until six years ago when she moved to a learning and support teacher which gave her more one-on-one work with the students and their families. As expected with a career spanning almost 40 years, Liz has helped 100s of kids with challenges in their lives to lead independent lives, hold down jobs and raise families of their own, no doubt one of the rewarding aspects of her work. Education, including basic math and literacy, gives kids with learning difficulties and other challenges, more tools to navigate and grow and it is professionals like Liz who enable them to fulfil their potential. It takes patience and persistence, and I thank Liz for her commitment and dedication to her students.

### BERYL AND WALTER PHELPS

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On 19th December 2024, two long-term Prospect Electorate residents, Beryl and Walter Phelps, celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary. It was an honour to join Beryl and Walter to mark this momentous occasion. Beryl and Walter were married in All Saints Anglican Church, Parramatta in 1964. During the first years of married life, Beryl and Walter bunked in with their relatives. They strived and saved, to give their family a head start. With a nest egg in hand, they purchased their first home in Smithfield, which has grown into the family's forever home. Beryl and Walter met at work. Beryl first noticed Walter's pants – ironed and perfectly pleated. Beryl knew his mother was taking good care of him. She had a hunch that meant he was a good man, and he was right. A bachelor, Walter was waiting for the right woman. When he saw Beryl, hard at work, he knew instantly, she was the one. Congratulations once again Beryl and Walter on this wonderful occasion. I thank you for including me in your special day, and sharing your wisdom, so that I can look forward to celebrating my 60th wedding anniversary too.

### THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE – JEWISH COMMUNITY LAW SERVICE

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Wednesday 12th February, I was pleased to join judicial officers and legal practitioners to celebrate the commencement of the 2025 Law Term at The Great Synagogue, Sydney. This service has been conducted by our local Jewish community every year since 1956 and marks the beginning of the legal year, making the occasion the Jewish community's tribute to those who ensure that we are governed by law, fairness and justice. This year, the service included a tribute to the late Judge Ron Solomon on the District Court, who passed away in 2024. More than 500 guests witnessed the procession of Judges, Barristers and other legal professionals, led by the Hon. Andrew Bell, Chief Justice of New South Wales. It was great to be joined by my Parliamentary colleagues Michael Daley MP and Ron Hoenig MP for the service, which was followed with a traditional meal in the Israel Green Auditorium, directly below the Synagogue. My heartfelt thanks go out to Dr Benjamin Elton, Chief Rabbi and David P. Lewis, President, for your words of wisdom and solidarity, and to all our dedicated Great Synagogue community for a moving service and wonderful hospitality.

### ST JOSEPHINE BAKHITA MASS

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was wonderful to join our South Sudanese Community to celebrate the Feast of Saint Bakhita at St Patrick's Church, Mary, Queen of the Family Parish, Blacktown, on 16th February 2025. Patron Saint of slavery, human trafficking and South Sudan, Saint Josephine Margaret Bakhita is symbol of strength and resilience. Born in 1869, St Josephine was abducted as a child, forcibly converted to Islam and made to walk almost 1,000 kilometres barefoot before enduring a decade in slavery. She was bought and sold several times until she finally secured her freedom. Saint Bakhita's story of deliverance is an example that transformation is possible through suffering, with endurance, self-sacrifice and genuine faith. Her legacy resonates with people from all walks of life. Her story holds special significance to the many vibrant Equatorial African families who have triumphed through adversity to settle and call Western Sydney home. Though we may not hold the cure to war, trauma, exploitation or displacement, our Church will always stand as a safe, welcoming and supportive space. Thank you to Rev. Vincent Long OFM Conv, Bishop of the Diocese of Parramatta and the South Sudanese community for celebrating the St Bakhita Mass.

### THE WORLD ON WHEELS – CPA AT SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On 29 November 2024, I attended the Performing Hearts Theatre's production The World on Wheels at the Sydney Opera House. Created, written and staged by performers from the Cerebral Palsy Alliance St Ives, The World on Wheels is the culmination of two years of dedicated work by the players and all who have supported them in bringing their stories to life. It tells the story of a group who plan a journey but end up stranded together in the outback. The journey begins in turmoil and ends with the discovery

that they all have much in common with each other. It is an uplifting story of relationships, loss, isolation and ultimately the importance of connection. I recognise Samantha Bing of Cerebral Palsy Alliance St Ives and the talented troupers of the Performing Hearts Magsy, Graham, Will, Cheralyn, Veronica, Claudia, Chris and Virginia, together with their support staff Maddy, John, Lucas, Chloe, Leah, Kate and Maggie. I applaud a wonderful performance from amazing performers and I am very proud to represent them and the Cerebral Palsy Alliance St Ives in the Parliament of NSW.

### **WALK THE TALK FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Wednesday 27 November 2024, I joined our community for the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai domestic and family violence walk the talk, including a minute of silence. As part of the United Nations 16 Days of Activism campaign against gender-based violence, we walked the streets of Waitara and Hornsby to spread the message to the community that "we do not tolerate inequality and domestic and family violence". I recognise Ku-ring-gai Council, Hornsby Council, Women's Shed, Ku-ring-gai Neighbourhood Centre, Hornsby Ku-ring-gai PCYC, Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Women's Shelter, Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Domestic Violence Network, NSW Police Force Ku-ring-gai, NSW Government and Rotary District 9685. Special thanks also to Hornsby Girls School, Knox Grammar, Normanhurst Boys High School, Pymble Ladies College. I recognise Mala Mehta OAM, Chair of Women's Shed Hornsby Ku-ring-gai, for her work in bringing this important event to the community. Violence in all its forms is unacceptable. We must all do our part to bring domestic and family violence related acts of violence to an end and support those impacted.

### **KU-RING-GAI ROTARY – GIVING TREE FOR CHRISTMAS 2024**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Saturday 30 November 2024, I joined members of Ku-ring-gai Rotary at the launch of the Giving Tree Appeal for Christmas 2024 at the Gordon Centre. The Giving Tree is a wonderful annual appeal. In 2024, Rotary partnered with the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Women's shelter by giving wrapped gifts to women and children at the shelter. I was heartened by the generosity of our community, whose gifts will bring some joy to those who have had their lives upended by the violence they have experienced in their homes. I recognise and thank the Rotary Club of Ku-ring-gai President Warwick Cumming and board members Judy Shepherd, John Hepburn, Chris Hoch, Gary Keating, Ted Price and Malcolm Braid, as well as Councillor Barbara Ward. Together, they bring the spirit of Christmas to those most in need. It gives me pride to support the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Women's shelter and to represent the members of Ku-ring-gai Rotary in the Parliament of NSW.

### **NORTH HEAD SANCTUARY FOUNDATION**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I draw the House's attention to the excellent work undertaken by the North Head Sanctuary Foundation. The focus of the Foundation is to enhance the flora and fauna on Sydney Harbour's North Head, which has long been an attraction for sightseers, bushwalkers, joggers, and history buffs with an interest in the historic defence facilities. Over the past year, the Foundation's nursery has been successful in propagating a number of local plant species, with the plants now ready for growing in appropriate locations. The nursery mostly grows Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub plants for degraded areas of North Head. A new project for the Foundation in 2025 is to transform part of a grassed bank into an extension of the remnant bushland. At approximately 400 square metres, this will be a big undertaking with great opportunities for anyone interested to contribute from conception to establishment and maintenance. I thank the Foundation for its tremendous work in maintaining North Head for the enjoyment of locals and visitors alike, and for generations to come.

### **MEL THOMAS**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to recognise the incredible work of Mel Thomas from Clontarf, whose passion for community safety and empowerment is making a real difference across the Northern Beaches. As the founder of the KYUP! Project, Mel has been a driving force in helping women and young people build confidence and learn vital self-defence skills. Her commitment to preventing domestic violence and fostering confidence in the community should be commended. Mel's impact goes far beyond education - she's hands-on, running workshops in schools, community centres, and local events like the popular Mums and Daughters sessions in Dee Why, which last year brought together over 100 participants. In the same year, she raised an impressive \$100,000 to fund free self-defence programs in schools, raising awareness and ensuring more young people have access these essential skills. Mel's dedication in this space has not gone unnoticed, with the Northern Beaches Council honouring her with an Outstanding Community Service Award at this year's Australia Day Awards. Through KYUP!, Mel continues to empower, educate, and inspire positive change. I congratulate Mel on her amazing work and look forward to seeing the ongoing impact of KYUP! in our community.

### SENIORS' STORIES - BERNADETTE ASTILL

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to acknowledge Bernadette Astill of Manly, whose entry was selected for this year's Seniors' Stories publication. Bernadette's wonderful piece focusses on her love of reading. She recalls her early days of 'story time' in a single-room schoolhouse with eleven other students of mixed age, and how their "young teacher read effortlessly, bringing the story to life with his animated intonation – his enthusiasm instantly contagious." Returning home from school one day, she saw a two-tiered bookshelf for five pounds. She had just enough in her piggy bank to buy it and installed it in her bedroom – her very own library. Bernadette ultimately opened a children's bookshop which she says enabled her to provide appropriate books for each child and pass on her passion for reading to the community. She credits her early classroom experience with instilling her love of books and the reader she is today. She says, "I have read happily ever after." I congratulate Bernadette on her inspiring contribution to the 10th edition of Seniors' Stories.

### RELOCATION OF THE GREEK CULTURAL LANDMARK - DISCOBOLUS

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to inform the house about the Discobolus sculpture at Sydney Olympic Park, which has significant cultural ties to our Greek community in NSW. I was shocked to learn recently that the impressive sculpture would be demolished as a part of the Government's Draft Masterplan for Sydney Olympic Park. As a gift from the Greek community to Australia ahead of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, the sculpture carries great cultural significance, designed by renowned artist Robert Owen. However, thanks to the support of our fantastic Greek community, I have been advised that the statue will be preserved for generations to come. The Sydney Olympic Park Authority said it is committed to making sure the Discobolus is "relocated in a way that respects the original intent of the artist and the Greek community." This is fantastic news and I am so proud of everyone who has championed to make this a reality. Together, we have ensured that this important symbol of heritage and identity will continue to stand proudly for future generations. This is a reminder of what we can achieve when we work together.

### SAYING GOODBYE TO MASIS ELECTRONICS

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to thank and congratulate Matthew from Masis Electronics in Penshurst, who has recently announced that he will be shutting up shop after over 50 years of service to the local community. Whether you needed a coffee machine, vacuum cleaner, electric razor or even just your watch repaired – Matthew was your guy! His expertise, reliability, and friendly service made Masis Electronics a much-loved local institution. Small businesses like Masis Electronics are the backbone of our local economy and deserve our full support. Matthew's fantastic customer service and passion for his work has set a high standard for local businesses in Penshurst and beyond. Whilst it is sad to see him go, Matthew's service to our local community truly cannot be underestimated. I would like to thank Matthew for running a fantastic local business for over 50 years and his commitment to our local community during this time. I wish him all the very best in his well-earned retirement and hope he enjoys this next chapter of his life.

### VALE BRENDAN DONOHUE

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I was deeply saddened to learn of the recent passing of Brendan Donohue, a pillar of the AFL community here in Sydney and a true St George local. Brendan's dedication to the growth of Australian football, particularly in the St George area, has left an enduring legacy that will be felt for generations. He loved the game and wanted others to share in that same passion. As Club President of St George AFL from 2009 to 2019, Brendan played a crucial role in revitalising the club, securing grants, and improving facilities at Olds Park, ensuring the future of AFL in our community. I also had the opportunity to award Brendan a Senior Volunteer Achievement Award at my 2023 St George Community Awards. This was for his fantastic achievements during his time as club president, improving drainage and the playing surface at Olds Park. Our thoughts are with Brendan's family, friends, and all those who had the privilege of knowing him. He will be sorely missed and this loss will leave a great void in the AFL and St George communities. Vale Brendan Donohue.

### BART HELLEMANS

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and commend Bart Hellemans, a local volunteer for the Kingsgrove Community Aid Centre, who has been nominated for the Premier's Volunteer Award for his exemplary service to the community. Mr Hellemans has been serving the centre for 5 years as a member of its board, working as both its director and treasurer. He ensures the organisation is compliant with all Prudential Financial responsibilities and accountable to all funding bodies and members of the organisation. Mr Hellemans' service has helped the Kingsgrove Community Aid Centre remain viable in its role in assisting those who rely on its initiatives, especially the most vulnerable in our local community. The Kingsgrove Community Aid Centre is immensely appreciative of Bart's work and service, and on behalf of the entire community, I would like to commend Bart's incredible community focused values that drive him to give back,

inspire and contribute to our community. Thank you for your service and congratulations on your nomination for the Premier's Volunteer Award.

#### **DR GRAEME GWILLIAM**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to take the time to acknowledge Dr Graeme Gwilliam for his many contributions to the Kogarah community, and congratulate him for receiving the distinguished Medal of the Order of Australia Award [OAM]. Born in Carlton and raised in the Kogarah area, Dr Gwilliam has dedicated his life to his passion, electrical engineering. After receiving his degree from the University of New South Wales he worked as an engineering consultant and project manager in the construction industry for over a decade. From there he transitioned into teaching, bestowing his vast knowledge unto the younger generation, teaching electrical engineering at a variety of colleges and universities until he retired from full time employment in 1997. During his career he was heavily involved in researching the applications of solar energy and other sources of renewable energy. He is also an expert witness in the Supreme and Federal court of NSW, where he shares his knowledge within legal contexts. I would like to thank Dr Gwilliam for his many contributions to the Kogarah community, and congratulate him on receiving this esteemed honour.

#### **ALICE KWONG**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to recognise and congratulate Alice Kwong on her nomination for the Premier's Volunteer Award after providing an invaluable service to Kingsgrove Community Aid Centre in her capacity as a volunteer. Ms Kwong is currently employed as a lawyer, generously dedicating spare time on the Board of the Kingsgrove Community Aid Centre as a Director, Secretary and Legal Advisor. In her over six year tenure at the Community Aid Centre, Ms Kwong has played a vital role in keeping and recording the Board's business minutes, supporting the CEO on all governance related issues, and reporting to the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits [ACNC] on all matters to do with the centre's charitable status and reporting. The Kingsgrove Community Aid Centre is immensely grateful for Ms Kwong's ongoing contribution as a volunteer. On behalf of the entire community, I would like to once again congratulate Ms Kwong on her well-deserved nomination.

#### **NORM LEWIS**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge Norm Lewis who has been awarded Life Membership of the Narromine Veterans Golf Club. An extremely dedicated member of the Veterans Golfers, Norm has given a great deal of his time to ensure the club continues to prosper. Norm played a vital role in bringing the NSW Veterans 4BBB State Championships to Narromine, making it such a success that the club has now retained the event. This is a significant achievement that benefits not only the club but the entire community. Norm also dedicates his time to keeping the community informed about "Gerries Golf" through his weekly column in the Narromine Star. Congratulations on this well-deserved honour Norm! This recognition is a testament to your years of hard work and dedication in ensuring the clubs success – and I am sure with your passion you are not done yet!

#### **BERYL HALEY**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge Beryl Haley who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] as part of Australia Day Honours List on 26 January 2025. At ninety-eight years of age, this inspirational lady is this year's oldest living recipient of an OAM! Beryl is a familiar face in Gulgong and regularly seen volunteering in the community, whether it be at one of many stalls for Red Cross or helping at the Gulgong Methodist Church. A Gulgong local who has always lived in the district, Beryl has dedicated much of her life to volunteering, even while raising her five children! Growing up on a farm, she developed a strong work ethic and applies the same pragmatic approach to her volunteering: if a job needs doing, she gets it done! Beryl has contributed to countless local, artistic, and historical projects, including being an early member of the Henry Lawson Society. We are truly fortunate to have someone as passionate and committed as Beryl in the community. Her dedication has made a significant impact on the Gulgong region. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition Beryl.

#### **GEORGIA MCMASTER**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge Georgia McMaster who was recently awarded the National Herd Improvement Association of Australia's 2025 Young Achiever. The Young Achiever Award champions the next generation of leaders, under thirty-five who demonstrate exceptional potential and celebrate their dedication as trailblazers in their industry. Although only two years into her career in sheep and cattle reproduction, Georgia's passion, enthusiasm, and commitment are truly inspiring. Winning this award is an incredible achievement for someone so young and just beginning her career. Remarkably, Georgia is also the first recipient to come from outside the dairy and beef sectors. With a Bachelor of Veterinary Biology

and a Bachelor of Veterinary Science, Georgia's commitment to continuous learning and personal development is evident as she currently pursues a Double Diploma in Business. Georgia currently works with Central West Genetics and aims to expand her expertise to provide advanced ovine and bovine reproductive services. Congratulations Georgia! With the qualities the industry needs to thrive, I look forward to following your journey and future achievements.

#### **SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR – SCOTT LAMBETH**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—Congratulations to Scott Lambeth, winner of the Richmond Valley Sportsperson of the Year. Scott has been a relentless advocate for female rugby league in Casino, playing a key role in encouraging and promoting the sport for women to ensure rugby league is no longer seen as just a male sport. For more than four years, Scott has been a member of the coaching staff at the Casino Cougars. Scott has become a valuable mentor and guide and has had a transformative influence, particularly in women's tackle rugby league. Within Scott's first year as a coach, he took on the responsibility of coaching three different teams – 13-17 league tag girls, under 14 girls and under 17 girls. Scott trained all three teams twice each week, showcasing a strong commitment to working on helping the players to grow and succeed. Scott was also notably the first coach at the Casino Cougars Junior League Club to lead a female tackle team. In recognition of Scott's efforts, the club named an award after him. Well done on your invaluable contributions to the sporting community Scott, and congratulations on being named Richmond Valley's Sportsperson of the Year.

#### **YOUNG SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR – TRAVIS DHU**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—A warm congratulations goes to Travis Dhu, the Richmond Valley Young Sportsperson of the Year. Travis has shown an unwavering commitment to his personal Go Karting success, while showing dedication to uplifting his fellow competitors in the go karting community. Travis is a valuable asset to his go karting club, offering guidance and encouragement to new karting competitors to work on their strengths and build confidence. Travis is also a member of the Lismore Kart Club and regularly assists in maintaining the facilities to a high standard to ensure the environment is comfortable and welcoming for the public. In 2024 Travis was crowned the 4SS Junior Queensland State Champion, achieved second place at the 4SS Junior NSW State Championship and won the City/Country Series as the 4SS Junior Champion. Additionally, within his own club, Travis was awarded the title of 4SS Junior Club Champion and was recognised for his dedication with the Club Appreciation Award. Travis' ability to willingly help others shows a great sense of sportsmanship and mentorship. Great work Travis and congratulations on your outstanding achievements so far.

#### **VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR – STEPHEN HUMPHRYS**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—Congratulations to Stephen Humphrys, Richmond Valley's Volunteer of the Year. Stephen moved to Casino in 1984 and has since greatly contributed to the local community. Stephen has been a Lions Club of Casino member since 2000, holding all major executive positions including President for six years, Treasurer for three years, Zone Chairperson for one year and Lion of the Year in 2022. Over the years, Stephen has been a Beach Patrol Volunteer in Evans Head, coordinated Beef Week's "Battle of the Bands", held the position of Treasurer of Casino Country Music Club, has been Secretary of St Mary's Catholic School Parents and Friends and contributed to local sport. Stephen has played important roles in organising Lions projects, including Youth of the Year, Gunthorpe Shield, Sil Gava public speaking competitions and Miss Personality. All key Lion activities have seen input from Stephen, such as Casino Beef Week, Casino Truck Show, Primex, weekly Farmers Markets, Casino Fun Run, the Peach Festival, Casino Country Music Muster, and countless Christmas events. Stephen has volunteered for Beef Week, Casino's Own Wireless, Relay for Life, CWA and the Platypus Day Club. Congratulations Stephen and thank you for your community involvement.

#### **BARWON NATIONAL AWARDS RECIPIENTS**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—I would like to congratulate all medal recipients across the Barwon electorate as part of the Australia Day honours program. The Australian Honours and Awards system recognises the outstanding service and contributions of Australians. The commitment you show to your community is valued and the recognition is well deserved. Congratulations on receiving this award. I appreciate your dedication towards the people across your community.

#### **COBAR SHIRE COUNCIL**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Cobar Shire Council has been named among the winners of the 2024 Local Government NSW Excellence in the Environment Awards. This award recognises magnificent achievements of NSW Councils in their efforts to protect and manage the environment. Cobar Shire Council's Water and Sewer Treatment Plants Solar Arrays project was the winner of the Division A Category. The project saw Cobar Shire Council install solar arrays at its Water and Sewer plants, which enables Council to reduce

emissions and operational costs. I congratulate Cobar Shire Council on receiving this award and for their smart actions on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating a positive impact on the environment.

#### **VALE CARLA BAXTER**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Narrabri Local and real estate agent proprietor Carla Baxter sadly passed away this month. Carla has been in the real estate industry for more than two decades and is remembered her generosity to her local community, by supporting many local organisations, sporting clubs, local events, and schools. Carla was taken way too young, but her kindness and generosity will always be remembered by the Community of Narrabri. My thoughts are with Carla's family and friends. May she now rest in peace.

#### **MAITLAND MEALS ON WHEELS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Maitland Meals on Wheels has provided care and support in our community for decades, delivering nutritious meals and vital social connections to elderly and vulnerable residents. More than just a meal service, this organisation fosters independence, combats isolation, and ensures that recipients receive not only food but also a friendly face and a check-in on their well-being. The dedicated volunteers are the heart of the service, giving their time to prepare, pack, and deliver meals across the region. Their commitment ensures that hundreds of people in Maitland can continue living safely in their own homes with dignity. Beyond meal delivery, Maitland Meals on Wheels has expanded its services to include social outings, wellness programs, and additional support for those in need. Their work exemplifies community spirit, and their impact cannot be overstated. To the team at Maitland Meals on Wheels—thank you for your dedication and compassion. Your work strengthens our community and makes a real difference in the lives of so many.

#### **SAMANTHA CONNOR AM**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Samantha Connor AM on being named a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for her significant service to people with disability. As a passionate social justice and human rights advocate, Samantha has dedicated decades to championing the rights of people with disability, ensuring their voices are heard at the highest levels of government and policy-making. Samantha's leadership roles, including President and Vice President of People with Disability Australia, and her advocacy on the international stage as an Australian delegate to the United Nations, have driven meaningful change. A pivotal moment in her career was her instrumental role in securing the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, demonstrating her unwavering commitment to justice. As a wheelchair user with lived experience of muscular dystrophy, Samantha continues to advocate fiercely, challenging systemic barriers and amplifying the voices of those often unheard. Samantha's tireless efforts have made a profound impact, and the Maitland community is immensely proud of her achievements.

#### **BRANDON HARVEY**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I wish to acknowledge the work of Brandon Harvey to raise awareness of pancreatic cancer across our community. Brandon lost his beloved nan Helena on the first day of his initial placement as a nurse. Helena was 72 years of age when she passed, on the day of her wedding anniversary. Brandon remembers his Nan as a strong person who was always positive through her 22-month battle with the disease. Pancreatic cancer can be a particularly aggressive cancer, primarily because its initial symptoms are non-specific, making it challenging to detect early. As such, 5-year survival rates of the disease are only around 12.5%. In the four years to 2021, 675 people died from pancreatic cancer in Hunter New England, with 839 people diagnosed with the disease over this time. Brandon last year organised a 'wear purple day' at Maitland Hospital to raise awareness around the disease and encourage his colleagues to wear purple scrubs and dress in purple clothing. He also spread awareness via social media. I applaud and thank Brandon for his continued advocacy for Pancreatic Cancer Awareness.

#### **HELEN CRIMMINS**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I recognise the community and school service of Helen Crimmins, who recently marked twenty years as the conductor of the Rozelle Public School band. Across those twenty years of service, Helen has encouraged generations of students to share in a love of music and has produced no small measure of flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, and drum players. In this time, the school band has been established as an essential part of Rozelle Public School life. I have heard many former students express deep fondness for their memories of participating in band camps, or playing at school assemblies, community events and the bi-annual "Big Gig." It is a real testament to the skill and dedication of Ms Crimmins as a teacher, and a valued member of our community. I was deeply impressed to hear of Helen's two decades of service to the Rozelle Public School community during their annual Celebration of Achievement. People like Helen are vital

parts of the success of our public education system, and I want to extend my thanks to her for her incredible gift of service to Rozelle Public School.

#### **JENNIFER MCNAMARA**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I recognise the work of Jennifer McNamara in promoting art education in our community as the founder and director of ArtEst, a local organisation that sadly closed its doors recently. Across its seventeen years of operation, ArtEst succeeded by connecting students to practicing artist and hosting workshops, masterclasses and exhibitions for students and artists. ArtEst has also been integral to the GreenWay Art Prize, which was established in 2010 to capture the essence of the Greenway through visual art and to showcase the vibrancy, creativity and community spirit of our local community. The closure of ArtEst is a clear reminder of the need to support local businesses and community programs which add so much value to area. I thank Jennifer McNamara for her years of hard work to further the arts education of children and adults in our community and note that the legacy of ArtEst will be fondly remembered by so many who had the benefit of its programs.

#### **2SER IN YOUR HOOD**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I recognise the vital community work of local community radio station 2SER 107.3 FM, supported by Inner West Council, in bringing together the In Your 'Hood live music event in Leichhardt. Over the weekend, five artists from the 2SER community played a free public concert in Leichhardt's Pioneer Park. It was designed to appeal to folks of all ages and connect a wide range of people to music, and to others in our community. The day was a tremendous success, and it was great to get down there with my family and see so many people in the community getting out to support the wonderful musicians. I'd like to thank all at 2SER who organised this event, Nina and Tom of Soft Spot Recordings and the Live Music Activation Team at Inner West Council. I give special thanks to the artists Cinta, The Aerial Maps, Library Siesta. Gailla and Threatnique for their participation in this event. I hope that its success means we get to see many more community events like this one.

#### **OBERON ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPIONS OF THE YEAR FRIENDS OF THE OBERON LIBRARY – THE BOOK NOOK**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—I Congratulate the Friends of the Oberon Library and the Award they have been given as the Environmental Champions of the Year. The group has demonstrated unwavering dedication to environmental sustainability and community enrichment over a period of some 15 years. This has been reflected in the raising of funds for the Oberon Library through the collection, recycling and sale of pre-loved resources including books, DVD's ,CD's and jigsaw puzzles preventing these items going into landfill. In 2023 the group established the Book Nook – a permanent space which houses over 3,000 items that have been rescued and repurposed. The sale of these items has resulted in Funds of over \$3,000 being raised and reinforces their philosophy of 'reduce.reuse.recycle' Also being instrumental in introducing the Waste 2 Art community event in 2011 which champions creative approaches to environmental stewardship. I congratulate the Friends of Oberon Library and on their Award as they have clearly demonstrated their commitment and dedication to tirelessly protecting the environment and to foster a culture of sustainability throughout the community.

#### **CHRISTOPHER DUNBAR**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—I Congratulate Mr Christopher Dunbar on the recognition given him as the Oberon Young Citizen of the Year – 2024. Christopher commenced his working life at the age of 14 at Oberon Foodworks and through his wonderful work ethic has risen to the position of Store Manager. His capacity to both mentor and train staff and his focus on gaining knowledge in all aspects of business has seen him achieve exceptional professional capacity. Not only through his work but Christopher has extensively interacted with his community through involvement with a range of sporting activities including soccer, rugby league and squash. Christopher is an outstanding asset to his community having earned the respect of family, friends and work colleagues through his work ethics and willingness to support and assist others. It is a pleasure to recognise Christopher Dunbar as an inspiration and role model to his peers and as an achieving young Citizen of the Oberon community.

#### **BATHURST NEW EVENT OF THE YEAR THE NATURAL CAPITAL: TREES AS AN ALTERNATIVE CROP**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—I congratulate the organisers of a unique first-time event – The Natural Capital: Trees as an Alternative Crop Conference – and the recognition they have received at the Australia Day Awards in Bathurst. The staging of this very first innovative two day conference brought agroforestry into the spotlight highlighting awareness and the benefits of the potential of an alternative agricultural pathway. The event successfully brought together landholders and producers through an educational platform and information sharing

opportunity. An event with vision, creativity and organisational excellence, this new event is truly worthy of the acknowledgement received as the New Event of the Year.

#### **GYMEA NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the incoming student leadership team of GyMEA North Public School on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in NSW Parliament to acknowledge the student leadership team for 2025, namely School Captains Simone Glasson and Harrison Teen and Vice Captains Chloe Mackay and Tristan Dadley. With the guidance of their incredible Principal, Kirsty Sharman, I have every confidence that these dedicated students will capably lead their peers through what will be their most important year of schooling thus far and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify GyMEA North Public School's motto of 'service and loyalty'.

#### **KAREELA PUBLIC SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the exceptional student leadership team of Kareela Public School on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in NSW Parliament to acknowledge Kareela Public School's student leadership team for 2025, namely School Captains Isla Anderson and Sofia Nunez, and Vice Captains Grace Seeto, Thomas Lewis, Amelia Perryman and Louis Yeung. With the guidance of their incredible Principal Nicole Arnold, I have every confidence that these dedicated students will capably lead their peers through what will be their most important year of schooling thus far and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify Kareela Public School's motto of 'knowledge, pride, success'.

#### **BONNET BAY PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERS**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the incoming student leadership team of Bonnet Bay Public School on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in Parliament to acknowledge the student leadership team for 2025, namely School Captains Ethan Middleton and Leah Schimpf, and Vice Captains Edward Leyland and Catelyn Arthur. With the guidance of their incredible Principal Liz Rudder, I have every confidence that these dedicated students will capably lead their peers through what will be their most important year of schooling thus far and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify Bonnet Bay Public School's motto of 'learn to grow, grow to learn'.

#### **WILLIAM HAYNES**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—The electorate of Coogee would like to acknowledge Clovelly resident William Haynes on his win in the Rolex Sydney to Hobart Yacht race. Haynes was a passenger on board his father's yacht, Celestial V70. While Haynes has been sailing since primary school, and it is not his only passion. William is a research assistant at the Schizophrenia Research lab at Neuroscience Research Australia in Randwick. He is also set to embark on a PhD in neuroscience, aiming to shed a new light on Schizophrenia. William's research and drive to better educate and help the community is a wonderful reflection of his selflessness and passion. His impact on our community does not go unnoticed. I congratulate William on his win and wish him luck on his PhD endeavours. William's ongoing research and care for the community is a true testament to his selfless character.

#### **EASTERN SUBURBS POLICE**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—The electorate of Coogee would like to thank the NSW Police for their proactive responses to ensure the safety of our Jewish community in the Eastern Suburbs. Our office has been liaising consistently with the NSW Police Strike Force: Operation Shelter regarding these incidents, and the ongoing investigations that are occurring. We have also been working with the broader operations of Strike Force Pearl. The NSW Police are here to keep our community safe, and with increased presence and additional resources. Thank you, NSW Police, as well as Operation Shelter and Strikeforce Pearl for your ongoing commitment to keeping our community safe. Your dedication to the community is steadfast, with the community at the front of mind.

### CLEAN UP COOGEE BEACH

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—The Coogee electorate would like to acknowledge Paige Smith, a Coogee resident who coordinates a community group to clean up Coogee Beach each week. Frustrated at litter left by beach goers on weekend at Coogee Beach, Paige took it upon herself started collecting rubbish on Mondays. Starting this summer, Paige would take down a bucket to collect rubbish including, bottles, cigarettes, plastic waste and much more. Her biggest haul of rubbish has been over 20kg, an incredible effort. Paige has realised she couldn't combat Coogee Beach's rubbish problem alone, so she has set up the Clean Up Coogee group on Facebook. The group is growing from strength to strength and making a local impact, with groups now heading out every week to clean up the beach. We congratulate Paige on her initiative.

### LIONS YOUTH OF THE YEAR

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)**—This week, I had the pleasure of attending the Lions Youth of the Year Awards, and it is safe to say that our future is in good hands. I am proud to announce that Caroline Chisholm College student Ava took home the accolade of this year's Lions Youth of the Year after presenting her speech "The Epidemic of Loneliness". The competition has been running since 1964, optimising the confidence, leadership, and citizenship qualities in thousands of years 9 to 12 students. Thank you to the Lions Club for hosting such a tremendous event that allows our young people to improve their soft skills before entering the workforce or other endeavours. Good luck, Ava, as you represent yourself, your school, and the Penrith community at the zone competition in March. I also want to congratulate all the students who participated in this year's Youth of the Year competition: Ava, Dev, Sophie, and Zachary; after listening to each of your speeches, I can tell that our Penrith youth are bound to make positive contributions in our community.

### PRON PROHM THAI RESTAURANT

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to acknowledge father and son entrepreneurs Dilok and Dereck Thamrak, owners of Pron Prohm Thai Restaurant in North Strathfield, an institution which has been serving our local community since 1985. For nearly four decades, Pron Prohm has consistently offered authentic Thai cuisine, creating a welcoming space for locals to enjoy exceptional food in a warm and inviting atmosphere. This longstanding presence in the community is a testament to the dedication, passion, and quality of Pron Prohm's service and the team who work tirelessly to provide superb cuisine. I sincerely congratulate Dilok and Dereck on this outstanding milestone. 40 years in our local community is a remarkable achievement and one you should be most proud of. Congratulations to the Pron Prohm team and I look forward to seeing your continued success for many years to come. Pron Prohm is a personal favourite for my family and I, and we have shared many meals and memories together. I wish you all the very best.

### SUPERINTENDENT CHRISTINE MCDONALD

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I sincerely congratulate Superintendent Christine McDonald on her appointment as the City of Canada Bay 2024 Citizen of the Year. Superintendent Christine McDonald has dedicated over two decades of service to the NSW Police Force, making significant contributions across a range of roles. Since joining in 2001, she has served in general duties and criminal investigation roles, the Sex Crimes Squad, secondment to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and Investigations and Crime Manager roles. Prior to her appointment to Burwood Police Area Command in early 2024, Superintendent McDonald served as Chief of Staff to Commissioner Karen Webb, becoming the first female to hold this role in NSW Police history. This award celebrates the incredible contributions of individuals who go above and beyond to make our community a better place. Congratulations once again Superintendent McDonald, I have no doubt that your dedication to community-based policing and proactive crime prevention will continue to make a meaningful difference for our residents.

### EDEL MCKENNA

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to acknowledge the contributions of Edel McKenna who was recently recognised for her work in our community with a NSW Community Service Award. This award recognises individuals who have made significant contributions to the betterment of the community through selfless service, leadership, and dedication to creating a lasting and meaningful impact on the lives of others. Edel has been a dedicated volunteer at St Ambrose Catholic Church and Primary School over many years. She has played an integral role through our local St Vincent de Paul and Mini Vinnies initiatives. Edel helps to provide food and services for those who need it most and encourages our community and school students to give what they can to support those going through a challenging time. Through her service to the local community, Edel has demonstrated an unwavering commitment and dedication to improving the lives of others. Congratulations Edel on this well-deserved recognition. Your tireless dedication continues to inspire our community. You have a heart of gold and I wish you all the very best.

**MR ROBERT PHILIPS**

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping)**—I proudly acknowledge the outstanding contributions of Mr. Robert Philips to the Community Bank Epping (CBE). Having been a dedicated member of the CBE for 11 years, Mr. Philips has demonstrated unwavering commitment to the organization's mission and values, particularly through his role as Chair from 2017 to 2024. In recognition of his exceptional leadership and dedication to the community, Mr. Robert Philips was nominated for a Parramatta Council Senior Citizen of the Year 2025. Through Mr. Philips' leadership the Community Bank of Epping has helped to fund essential community projects and support a wide range of local organizations. Sporting, educational and wellbeing organisations have all benefitted from the community grants program. I extend my congratulations to Mr. Robert Philips for his outstanding service and leadership, and for the positive impact he has made on our community.

**MS DELMA PARKER**

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping)**—It is with great gratitude that we acknowledge the outstanding contributions of Ms. Delma Parker to our community, particularly through her long-standing dedication to both the Carlingford Dundas Lions Club and the State Emergency Service [SES]. Since joining the Lions Club in 1985, Ms. Parker has been an integral part of the club, consistently demonstrating her unwavering commitment to improving the lives of those in need. In addition to her work with the Lions Club, Ms. Parker has shown remarkable dedication to the SES for over 21 years. Her tireless support of SES volunteers across New South Wales, offering 24/7 assistance in times of crisis, stands as a testament to her selflessness and resolve. Through her role, Ms. Parker has contributed significantly to the safety and well-being of many, always responding with care and compassion. In recognition of her exceptional service, dedication, and unwavering commitment to both the Carlingford Dundas Lions Club and the State Emergency Service, we proudly acknowledge Ms. Delma Parker as a deserving nominee for Parramatta Councils' Senior Citizen of the Year 2025.

**MS GWEN WALKER**

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping)**—I wish to acknowledge the contributions of Ms. Gwen Walker to the North Rocks Netball Club and the broader netball community. As a founding member of the North Rocks Netball Club, Ms. Walker has been instrumental in shaping the club's enduring legacy and success. Her passion for the sport and her commitment to its growth and development in the region has been of great benefit to the community. For over 55 years, Ms. Walker has dedicated herself to the netball community. Her initiation of the Spring Twilight Netball Carnival over 40 years ago stands as a testament to her vision and organizational acumen. Through her leadership, this event has become a highly anticipated fixture in the local sporting calendar. Ms. Walker's tireless service to the sport has not only enriched the lives of countless players but has also created a legacy of community involvement. In recognition of her outstanding contributions to the North Rocks Netball Club and the broader sporting community, we proudly acknowledge Ms. Gwen Walker as a deserving nominee for the Parramatta Council Senior Citizen of the Year 2025.

**AUSTRALIAN FIRE SERVICE MEDAL**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—Congratulations to the Fire and Rescue New South Wales service members who received the Australian Fire Service Medal on Australia Day in January. This is a prestigious award that recognised their sterling achievements and dedication. My congratulations to Superintendent Gregory Houston, Captain Garry Reardon and Station Officer Samuel Parkhouse. The Parramatta Fire Station is the lifeblood of our community. Superintendent Gregory Houston, a community-led man with a zeal for teamwork became the first FRSNSW Aviation officer who has since been recognised for his firefighting skills, mentorship and support. Grafton's Captain Garry Reardon, throughout his service at FRSNSW has supported, deployed and led his firefighters in many local disasters such as the 2019/20 Bushfires and the 2022 Lismore Floods. Seven Hill's Station Officer Samuel Parkhouse set out to create a firefighter-centric approach to assist mental health treatment and developed a FRSNSW Wellness Summit. The work done by the firefighters keep us safe and ensures Parramatta is a world class city. Hats off to all the recipients. At the end, I would like to congratulate all the awardees, who in the words of Superintendent Gregory, "don't do it for the accolades" – but for the people.

**LUNAR NEW YEAR DUMPLING WORKSHOP**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—The Dumpling Workshop was a great experience which allowed me to connect with the community through something as universal as food. Held at Wentworth Point on January 28th, this hands-on event gave me a chance to get to learn more about the Asian cultural traditions connected to Lunar New Year, a celebration of the arrival of spring and a symbol of prosperity. This event was attended by many local families which made it even more special. The event was organised and presented by the Wentworth Point Community Centre and Library and the Sydney Olympic Peninsula Multicultural Community Association respectively, both working tirelessly for the community by offering a range of resources for residents and

businesses. Folding each dumpling alongside the other families was a reminder of how food transcends national boundaries and surpasses differences. At the end of the event, all families were given the dumplings to take home and enjoy later. Food has an incredible way of bringing people together, and this experience reminded me of how vital it is to embrace all cultures, and about how much I love dumplings! Thank you WPCCL for hosting such a great event. Gong Xi Fa Cai!

### PONGAL IN THE HOUSE

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—Pongal is a multi-day Hindu festival celebrating the harvest season and signifying a time of renewal. Pongal marks the end of the winter solstice, honouring nature and its rhythms, and a time to cook Pongal rice, a dish I absolutely love. Growing up on a farm, the significance of the harvest season is all too familiar to me, so I hold the importance of Pongal close to my heart. The Tamil Arts and Cultural Association hosted their 9th annual Pongal Festival here in Parliament. As their host and special guest, I was joined by my colleagues to witness the beautiful and moving cultural performances from Nrityarpane Academy of Performing Arts, students of Margam Centre for Arts, Bolyfitt Dance Studio, Liverpool Ladies and a joyous folk music performance from the Parai Legends. Watching a group of Tamil youth from Kamban Kazhagam Australia passionately delve into the significance of Pongal through discussion, was truly captivating. I acknowledge the TACA representatives that worked tirelessly to organise this wonderful event. Special guests of the night included Dr Janakiraman, Consul General of India in Sydney, and many respected Tamil community leaders. Wishing everyone a joyous, peaceful and prosperous Pongal.

### PETER STEIGRAD

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I recognise Peter Steigrad for his unwavering commitment to both his community and his team. Peter has been a dedicated member of Marine Rescue NSW for over 15 years, serving in various leadership roles, most recently as Unit Commander. Peter's impressive resume extends far beyond his tenure as Unit Commander. With extensive leadership at Marine Rescue Middle Harbour, he is a Marine Rescue NSW Master, holds an AMSA Certificate of Competence M<24M, and a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Peter's background in business and governance has been invaluable to the organisation. He has received numerous accolades, including the Premier's Citation (2021) and Commissioner's Citation (2024). It is no surprise that Peter has been elected as Greater Sydney Regional Director on the Marine Rescue NSW Board. I am confident that he will continue to build on his legacy and excel in this new role. It has been a pleasure working alongside Peter throughout the development of the new Middle Harbour Base. Peter steadfastly led the development of the site from design through to operations. On behalf of my community, I thank Peter for his exceptional service and leadership. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

### MONTE SPORTING ACHIEVEMENTS

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Late last year, Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College held its annual Sports Awards Dinner, a celebration of excellence on the sporting field. A total 42 Player of the Year awards and 151 Excellence in Sports awards were presented, and I extend my congratulations to all the students who were recognised. It is fantastic seeing young women excelling in the sporting arena. I congratulate Monte's Senior Sports Woman of the Year, Annabel Lynch, Junior Sports Woman of the Year, Indie Roche, Anthony Khoury Encouragement Award recipient, Virginia Shaw, and Netball Alumni Award recipient, Lucy Rudd. Well done, girls, your achievements are truly impressive. I also wish to acknowledge the outstanding dedication and leadership of Monte's Student Coaches of the Year, Lucy Rudd and Lucy Edmonds, as well as the Coach of the Year, Richard Nicholl. Their commitment to guiding others is commendable. I congratulate the Monte 1st Touch team, the Monte U16 Rugby 7's team, and the Monte Senior Netball team for their remarkable performances. To all the young women who received awards, your dedication to your sport is inspiring. Congratulations on your exceptional achievements, I look forward to seeing what you accomplish in future.

### BRIAN BARRY CELEBRATES 101ST BIRTHDAY

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I want to take a moment to recognise long time Mosman local, Brian Barry, who recently celebrated his 101st birthday. He has lived a colourful and inspiring life, and has become an integral part of the tight-knit Mosman community. Brian has left an indelible mark on the world of rugby as a former first-grade touch judge and referee, officiating hundreds of NRL games, including five consecutive grand finals. Throughout his life, he has been a proud and dedicated supporter of the North Sydney Bears – a true local. In 1944, at 20, Brian married his childhood sweetheart, Rose. Their love story spanned over 70 years until Rose's passing in 2016. That same year, Brian served as a soldier in World War II on the battlefields of New Guinea. Brian's life is a testament to perseverance and dedication. He has become a cherished figure in our community, and Mosman has been so lucky to have 101 years of Brian. Congratulations to Brian on reaching this incredible milestone. Your passion for rugby and your commitment to the community continue to inspire us all. I wish you and your family all the best in future.

### LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—Congratulations to the local women nominated in this year's Local Woman of the Year Awards for my electorate of East Hills. These women make incredible contributions to our community in areas including sports coaching, community volunteering, mental health support, environmental care, and more. Local sports leader and volunteer, Jen Craig; Revesby Workers Cricket Club leader and Board member, Christine Benham; Sharelle Hurley, who organises donations and supports others; Nerva Ghamraoui, a leader who empowers those around her; Clare Tapp, a committed volunteer with Panania Free Rangers, Georges River Lifecare, and Parkrun; Judy Camac, who reopened a beloved community op shop and important community space; Christine Butters, who's made lasting contributions to youth athletics and maternal health; Nina Trad Azam, a passionate mental health advocate; Lucinda Cooke, a devoted mother and volunteer; Nicole Gersbach, a local hairdresser who inspires with positivity; Ashleigh Daus, a dedicated netball leader; Julia Woods, an inspiring soccer leader; Ashleigh Renton, who's shaped the community through long service to Bankstown Sports Netball Club; and Bettina Vogel, who promotes inclusivity and support for families and youth. Thank you for all you do for our community!

### AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS FINALISTS

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—I would like to recognise some outstanding individuals and organisations from East Hills who have enriched our community. While they may not have received the top honour in Canterbury Bankstown Council's Australia Day awards, their contributions remain invaluable to my electorate. Congratulations to our Citizen of the Year finalists, Yasser Zaki and Jamie Warren Elvy. Thank you for your service and commitment to our community. Our Volunteer of the Year finalists, Naomi Sampol and Keith Donnelly, have generously given their time and energy to help others. And to our Community Woman of the Year finalist, Nadine Chaar, thank you for your dedication and service. Thank you as well to our Community Organisation finalists - Connect FM 100.9 which has been a cornerstone of local broadcasting since 1983, Furever After Rescue Inc. providing homeless cats a second chance, and Padstow Community Care supporting residents through initiatives to encourage independence and resilience. These individuals and organisations have made a profound impact on East Hills. Their commitment to service and excellence continues to make our community a better place for us all.

### AVALON PALM BEACH BUSINESS CHAMBER

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—The Avalon Palm Beach Business Chamber is dedicated to serving the needs and enhancing the connections between the local network of business owners. Revitalised under the visionary leadership of President, Sally Tabner and Vice President, Stephanie Hammond their efforts have brought about and contributed to a collaborative business community. The Chamber hosts a wide variety of regular events, ranging from comedy nights to issues-based forums and advocates for business owners, ensuring they are consulted and informed on local infrastructure works that impact the local area, businesses and residents. The Chamber and its members are dedicated to the greater future of Avalon, planning for the long-term by developing a revised tourism strategy that aims to revitalise and stimulate the local economy and keep the community in business. I want to acknowledge the efforts of Sally and Stephanie, the Chamber's members, and their dedication to the economic health and resilience of Avalon.

### WARRINGAH - PITTWATER SES

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—The Warringah/Pittwater SES Unit plays a vital role in safeguarding the local community through recovery operations and risk mitigation efforts. Covering one of the largest populations due to its geographic size, the unit's 130 dedicated members respond to up to 1,000 incidents annually. Their work is crucial in disaster response, restoring affected areas, maintaining community infrastructure, and saving lives. Beyond emergency operations, the SES Unit strengthens community ties through events and preparedness initiatives. These include the Australia Day Breakfast at Newport Beach and the Women Helping Women Workshop in Terrey Hills, where 40 local women learned essential skills to manage storm and flood incidents. A defining moment for the unit came in January 2025 during severe storms, when members handled 250 callouts over three days—the busiest January in 15 years. Remarkably, half the team was actively involved in these emergency efforts, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to community safety. The dedication and teamwork of the Warringah/Pittwater SES Unit are integral to the region's resilience. Their selfless service ensures the community is better prepared, protected, and supported in times of need.

### JOHN CALLAN

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—I would like to recognise John Callan for his incredible 54 years of service to the people of Pittwater, all while maintaining his trademark sense of humour. In 1971, John opened Fenners, in Mona Vale, initially selling clothing imported from Wales. Over the years, he adapted to the changing

needs of his customers, offering bedspreads to curtains, and for the past 25 years, a thriving haberdashery, Fenners remains one of the few independent stores of its kind in Australia. John's commitment to his community is evident as he now serves the children of his original customers and fosters the joy of sewing and creativity in the next generation. At 81, John has no interest in retiring – he'd rather stay active in the business he loves rather than "rake leaves." Despite not being able to sew, his passion for his work and for serving his customers remains unwavering. We are truly fortunate to have John as a pillar of our community. His many years of dedication and hard work are an inspiration, and I offer my heartfelt thanks to John for his continued contribution to the Pittwater community.

#### **ELISE CLANCY – COOLAMON'S YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Citizens of Coolamon are known for the willingness to give their time and go above and beyond for others, no matter what role they are undertaking. Elise Clancy is such a person. Her involvement with the Coolamon Raiders JRLC has shown that she epitomizes these qualities with her work for the Raiders in their inaugural season. Unfortunately, Elise is too old to play but her passion for the game has seen her volunteer as a support person for coaches, players and the committee. Elise has assisted with game day roles that are integral to the day to day running of the club. For Elise, these included help at the BBQ, refereeing, helping, and directing young players on the field, assisting teams with training, running water and attending committee meetings. Elise didn't only attend the local games, she travelled to away games continuously supporting the club. Elise is to be congratulated for her dedication and commitment. I congratulate her on being Coolamon's Young Citizen of the Year.

#### **AUSTRALIA'S HIGHEST MILITARY HONOUR TO GUNDAGAI VETERAN**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Private Richard Norden was awarded posthumously the Victoria Cross for putting his life on the line to save a wounded commander when his platoon came under fire in 1968. Private Norden was recognised for "acts of gallantry in action in the presence of the enemy in the "AO Surfers" Area of Operations in the Bien Hoa province, Vietnam, on 14 May 1968 during the Battle of Fire Support Base Coral. The Citation told of his bravery under fire as he continually moved forward, forging the way for other behind. Despite being seriously wounded himself he continued to move forward taking replacement weapons off the enemy dead to fire upon the North Vietnamese whilst assisting his severely wounded Section Commander whom he half carried, half dragged back to the command area. Private Norden returned from the Vietnam War and joined the Police Force Motorcycle squad but perished in a crash on duty in October 1972. He received the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his heroic actions. Lest We Forget.

#### **JAMES KEADY CALLS IT QUILTS AFTER 45 YEARS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—After an impressive 45-year career as a stock and station agent, James Keady is hanging up his hat, marking the end of an era for the local agricultural community. Known for his expertise, integrity, and enduring relationships with farmers and graziers, James has been a cornerstone of the industry since beginning his journey in the late 1970s. Throughout his career, James played a pivotal role in connecting buyers and sellers, navigating market fluctuations, and providing trusted advice. His deep understanding of livestock and rural properties earned him the respect of clients and colleagues alike. Beyond his professional achievements, James became a mentor to younger agents, passing on his wealth of knowledge and fostering the next generation of industry leaders. His presence at livestock sales and auctions will undoubtedly be missed, along with his trademark humour and friendly demeanour. At a retirement gathering attended by family, friends, and clients, James reflected fondly on his career, expressing gratitude for the relationships he built along the way. As he steps into retirement, James plans to spend more time with his family and pursue his love of fishing and travel.

#### **CATHERINE CANNULI CUP**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—It is an honour to raise the remarkable growth of women's football, particularly following the success of the Southern Districts Football Association's Catherine Cannuli Cup on 5 September 2024. Last year's event, one of the largest yet, showcased the talent and determination of junior and senior school teams from across the South-West region. Named in tribute to Catherine Cannuli, a distinguished Matilda and A-League Women's player, the competition highlights the immense contributions of female athletes and coaches. Catherine's ongoing role as SDSFA's Women's Technical Director continues to inspire future generations. I was thrilled to see Leppington electorate schools, including Greenway Park and Middleton Grange, take part, with Greenway Park Public School emerging undefeated. Their incredible performance – 21 goals scored, just one conceded – speaks to the skill, teamwork, and resilience young women bring to the game. This event celebrates excellence, encourages community spirit, and empowers young women. Thank you to all who made it a success—the future of women's football is bright.

**SWS-MACARTHUR REGIONAL VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD CEREMONY**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—On 10 September, I had the honour of attending the South Western Sydney/Macarthur Regional Volunteer of the Year Awards at Campbelltown Catholic Club. Now in its 18th year, this inspiring event celebrates the dedication and compassion of those who selflessly support their communities. Through their service, our communities grow stronger, more resilient, and more connected. I congratulate Uncle Eddie Burge of Macquarie Fields, a respected Wiradjuri man, named South-Western Sydney and Macarthur Volunteer of the Year for transforming Curran Public School into a hub of cultural pride. Congratulations also to Mikayla Harris, Rebekkah Hagstrom, Edward Burge, and the Macarthur Centre for Sustainable Living for their incredible efforts. The Centre for Volunteering plays an essential role in supporting volunteers across NSW, offering resources, training, and advocacy to strengthen the sector. Volunteers like Uncle Burge are an integral part of our social fabric, embodying generosity, commitment, and community spirit. I commend all volunteers for their contributions and the positive difference they make.

**LADIES LIKE TO LUNCH**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—On 27 October, I had the privilege of attending the Pink Ribbon Luncheon hosted by the esteemed Ladies Like To Lunch in support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. This charity event united our South-Western Sydney community in a powerful show of solidarity for women affected by cancer. Hosted by Dr. Lurve, the luncheon featured a live performance by Samantha Jade, auctions, raffles, and, most poignantly, moving survivor stories. I was even put up for auction, with a generous individual bidding \$600 to share a lunch with me in Parliament. The funds raised will support the Liverpool Wellness Centre's vital programs, care packages, and awareness initiatives—essential resources for women undergoing cancer treatment. A sincere thank you to those who worked tirelessly to bring this event to life and all who attended and contributed. Your efforts truly make a difference in the lives of many women in our community.

**TRISH NICHOLLS OAM**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Trish Nicholls, of Forster, who has been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] for her service to basketball as a statistician. Trish has been involved with basketball for over 40 years, beginning when she met her husband, Steve, a passionate basketball player and referee. From playing and refereeing, Trish found her niche in statistics, meticulously recording every point, rebound, and assist to support coaches and teams. Her career highlights include officiating at the Sydney 2000 Olympics, Commonwealth Games, Pacific Games, and the Women's World Cup, among other prestigious events. Trish also trained and mentored aspiring statisticians, helping to grow the sport both locally and internationally. Until her retirement in late 2023, Trish was Basketball NSW's Statistics Coordinator, conducting courses, assessments, and managing rosters for NBL and NBL1 games. I congratulate her on receiving this well-deserved honour and thank her for her incredible contributions to basketball in Australia.

**PALMS ARTISAN BAKERY**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge the success story of Palms Artisan Bakery, founded by Lara and Kieran Weber in Pacific Palms. After relocating from Sydney 11 years ago, the couple saw a local need for traditional sourdough bread. With no prior baking experience, they took on the challenge, building a wood-fired oven in their backyard and creating sourdough from organic, stone-milled wheat. What started as a small operation grew to include market stalls, a pop-up shop in Blueys Beach, and, most recently, a storefront in Wharf Street, Forster. Palms Artisan Bakery now produces not just sourdough, but also croissants, donuts, tarts, and French pastries, employing a French pastry chef to expand their range. Their commitment to using locally grown ingredients and their innovative approach have made Palms Artisan Bakery a beloved local business. I congratulate Lara and Kieran on their journey and wish them continued success with their future plans, including an outlet in Taree.

**GREAT LAKES CHEERLEADING**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievements of the Great Lakes Cheerleading team, a group of young athletes from across the Myall Lakes region, who have earned the opportunity to compete at an international cheerleading event in the United States. In mid-April, twelve athletes from Forster, Tuncurry, Cundletown, Kooraingat, and Failford will travel to Tampa, Florida, to compete in The Summit, alongside teams from around the world. They earned their place by winning the Worlds Experience competition in Sydney, which saw them outshine other teams from Australia and New Zealand. The team have spent countless hours practicing, which has earned them a reputation as an undefeated team in their division across Australia. This achievement also includes the selection of two team members to represent Australia at the International Cheerleaders Union event in Florida. I commend the Great Lakes Cheerleading team on their hard work, and I wish them all the best as they prepare for this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

### **BOMADERY HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Bomaderry High School. On Sunday 9th February 2025, Bomaderry High School P&C hosted a sausage sizzle at Bunnings in South Nowra to raise funds for their Year 7 and Year 9 Naplan breakfast. On Monday 17th February 2025, the school hosted its annual swimming carnival. The HSC Excellence Ceremony recognising and celebrating the success and achievements of the Year 12 2024 class. Former students participated in a Q&A Session with year 11 and year 12 students, discussing topics such as motivation and study habits. During the school recent 'Being Bomo' session, students completed their "This Is Me" Student Profile, which helps teachers understand their strengths, learning preferences, goals, and students' future career interests. Bomaderry High School will host its annual Open Night on Tuesday 4th March at the school hall. Prospective students in Years 4-6 and their families are invited to learn more about school programs, curriculum, future building developments and plans, meeting teachers and staff and exploring the facilities. I acknowledge the Principal Mr Ian Morris and the teachers, staff, students and P&C at Bomaderry High School.

### **GERRINGONG AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Gerringong and District Historical Society. The Gerringong and District Historical Society has received a donation of \$2,779 from the Sunday Night Charity Raffles held at the Gerringong Bowling Club. I acknowledge Colleen Jauncey and Geoff Webb who received the cheque from Sue McGilvray at the Gerringong Bowling Club. The wonderful generosity shown through these raffles will assist in the mounting of ongoing exhibitions of interest to the local Gerringong community. 'Swim between the Flags' is the next exhibition by the Archive Team exploring the history of the Gerringong Surf Club from 1914 to 1994. This timely exhibition coincides with the completion of the new Surf Club premises. The exhibition will be opened by Mr Gary George, President of the Club, at 2pm on Saturday 22nd March 2025 at the Gerringong Heritage Museum. Thank you to the Sunday Night Charity Raffles, the Gerringong Bowling Club and the Gerringong and District Historical Society committee members and volunteers for the incredibly important work they continue to do for our region.

### **KIAMA ROTARY**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises some outstanding Kiama Rotary Club members for their service. At its recent celebrations for the 120th anniversary of the founding of Rotary International, Kiama Rotary Club took the opportunity to recognise the extraordinary service of two of its members who have both clocked up over 50 years of Rotary Service. David Russell and Peter Maitland were called forward to receive certificates of congratulations prepared by the President of Rotary International, Stephanie Urchick, on this achievement. President Phillip Whyte said he was delighted to present the certificates to Peter and David, stating that their service showed a strong commitment to "Service above Self" and to the local communities in which they and their families have lived throughout their Rotary service. David Russell has been with Rotary for 52 years and has received three Paul Harris Awards, the highest awards made by his clubs, two in Bathurst and one by the Kiama Club. Peter Maitland joined Dee Why Rotary Club in 1975. He has been acknowledged with three Paul Harris Fellowships for his contribution. Congratulations and well done to David Russell and Peter Maitland from the Kiama Rotary Club.

### **ST BERNADETTE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, CHRISTMAS HAMPER DRIVE**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I acknowledge the incredible efforts of the St Bernadette's Parish Castle Hill community for organising the Christmas Hamper Drive. For more than 20 years, St. Bernadette's Parish has led the Christmas Hamper Drive which has fed families experiencing hardship. Christmas Hampers are donated by school communities from St. Bernadette's Parish, Tangara School for Girls, Oakhill College, Gilroy Catholic College and Redfield College. The Christmas Hamper Drive 2024 was the biggest drive in over 20 years with 580 hampers donated, packed, and wrapped. St Bernadette's Parish Priest Fr Fernando Montano blessed the hampers, the donors and those who are to receive the hampers. Fr Fernando stated: "The generosity of time, skill and gifts from the local parish and school communities are always a good example for all at a time when we come together as a community of faith to share the gift of giving with those in need." The hampers were delivered to Catholic Care at Orchard Hills for delivery to families in need. I commend and thank Parishioner and St Vincent de Paul Society volunteer Carole Walton who has volunteered time to organise the Christmas Hamper Drive for the last eight years.

### **JULIE CHARLTON OAM**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I wish to extend my congratulations to Julie Charlton, OAM, on being recognised in the Australia Day 2025 Honours List for her outstanding service to sport and people with disability. Through determination and resilience, Julie has forged an extraordinary career as both an athlete and a

coach, from her first experiences of competing in primary school to representing Australia in Shot Put at the Commonwealth Games. Beyond her own achievements, Julie has been a tireless advocate for people with disability, dedicating herself to creating opportunities for others. She began coaching para-athletes at just 16 and has since become a leading voice for inclusion in sport. Through her coaching business, JC Squared, she is working to make sporting environments more accessible, providing guidance to athletes and organisations alike. Julie's impact extends far beyond the track and field. Her ongoing work ensures that people with disability are heard, supported, and empowered – work carried out tirelessly across a large swathe of councils, advisory panels and ambassador roles, including the Hills Shire Council's Youth Ambassador. Julie Charlton OAM continues to do her community proud, and it is an honour to congratulate her on behalf of the people of Castle Hill.

#### **ROB KATZ OAM**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I wish to extend my congratulations to Rob Katz, OAM, on being recognised in the Australia Day 2025 Honours List for his outstanding service to judo. This honour is a reflection of his decades-long commitment to the sport, both as an elite competitor and as a dedicated coach and mentor. Alongside his wife Kerrye Katz, OAM, Rob has transformed Budokan Judo Club in Castle Hill into a world-class training facility that welcomes athletes of all ages and abilities. From Olympians to young beginners and adaptive judo athletes, Budokan embodies the spirit of inclusivity and excellence. Rob's leadership, alongside a team of dedicated volunteer coaches, has made the club the largest not-for-profit community judo club in Australia. Rob's passion for judo has been lifelong, beginning at age 12 and continuing through his years as a national coach and mentor to generations of athletes. His philosophy extends beyond the mat, instilling confidence, resilience, and discipline in all who train under him. On behalf of the community, I commend Rob Katz OAM for his extraordinary contributions and congratulate him on this well-deserved recognition. His dedication and leadership continue to inspire the next generation of judoka.

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