

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 20 February 2025

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

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

[Notices of motion given.]

## *Bills*

### **HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT (SPLITTING OF THE HUNTER NEW ENGLAND HEALTH DISTRICT) BILL 2025**

#### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Roy Butler, read a first time and printed.**

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (10:18):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I introduce the Health Services Amendment (Splitting of the Hunter New England Health District) Bill 2025. The intent of the bill is to create two separate local health districts [LHDs], Hunter and New England North West. This bill has been a long time coming. The idea of splitting the Hunter New England Local Health District was most recently the subject of discussion in 2022 when my parliamentary colleague the former member for Northern Tablelands launched a petition to that effect.

It garnered over 16,000 signatures and was debated in Parliament, but it goes back even further than that.

Under the 1997 Health Services Act, there were provisions for the amalgamation for various regional and metropolitan area health services. Up to then, the Hunter Area Health Service and the New England Area Health Service were separate entities, but in 2004 it was announced that they would be combined to form a new, much larger health district. The population within the health district used to be 800,000 in an area covering 131,785 square kilometres and taking in 25 local government areas, but it has since grown to a population of around 970,000 people. It is also the only health district delivering services to rural and remote areas that is administered from a metropolitan base.

At the time the merger was announced, there were protests and even a petition tabled in Parliament by the then member for Tamworth, Mr Peter Draper. In June 2004 the Independent member for Northern Tablelands, Mr Richard Torbay, asked the then Minister for Health, Mr Morris Iemma, the member for Lakemba, whether, given the strong community concern and lack of any detailed information on the reasons for a merger, the Minister would rule out a forced amalgamation between New England and Hunter area health services, to which the Premier replied that several options were being considered but that the concerns of their local communities were being taken into account and the decision would be made with the best interests of all communities and area health services across the State.

The Government intended streamlining and improving the administration of health care in this part of New South Wales. The amalgamation began in 2005 when they began dismantling the head office of the New England Area Health Service, then based in Tamworth. That means the decision-making apparatus is no longer based in the area but is concentrated in a large metropolitan area, remote from most of the facilities it administers—an area, I would argue, that is far too large for this administration, particularly given its demonstrated reluctance to engage or directly consult with the rural and remote communities it serves. In the two decades since the amalgamation, the administration of this large, diverse area seems to have mostly been beyond the capability of the administrators.

During my time in office, I have received numerous complaints from patients about treatment they have received in Hunter New England hospitals, mostly related to understaffing and poor resourcing. I passed these complaints on to the Minister. The official responses we receive back from Hunter New England are often

dismissive of the claims made by patients and, as a result, nothing is ever done to fix those problems. This is not about our overworked nurses and medical staff. This is about the management structure that should support them. The amalgamation was meant to make things better for patients and staff, but the stories from constituents tell another story of understaffing, under-resourcing and an unresponsive, uncaring health district administration.

In one case a mother took her disabled son to Narrabri Hospital, concerned that he may have been suffering appendicitis. The only option available was a telehealth consultation during which the doctor told him to hop on one leg to see if he was in pain. The mother told the remote doctor that the boy had a disability and could not do that. He was then asked to bounce up and down. The remote doctor determined that he was not in pain and sent him home. He was later diagnosed with appendicitis after a nurse at Wee Waa hospital noticed he had a fever and blood tests revealed his true conditions. He was sent to Tamworth Hospital via ambulance and operated on, but by then his appendix had burst, resulting in the removal of part of his bowel. In response, Hunter New England did not acknowledge any of the mother's concerns or that there were any failings on its part. Consequently, nothing was done to ensure that something of that sort could not happen again.

In another case a man presented at Wee Waa hospital with his finger sliced open. The doctor, who was standing on the other side of the room, asked the nurse to take a photo of the man's injury to show it to the doctor. At no time did the doctor look at the wound herself, despite being in the same room. The man was bandaged and sent home. When he turned up for a scheduled X-ray the next Tuesday, he was told by phone by the radiographer that since he was the only one booked in that day, the radiographer would not be coming. Hunter New England's response was again dismissive, saying the man had been assessed and triaged appropriately by staff and blamed staff shortages for the man not being notified that the radiographer would not be coming. Nothing in the response suggested it would be investigating the doctor's actions or that it would be recruiting more staff to prevent a recurrence.

Part of the problem is that Hunter New England has failed to recruit adequate staff at hospitals in Narrabri and Wee Waa. In April 2023, Hunter New England announced that in May the Wee Waa hospital would operate from 8.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. Any patients presenting with emergencies outside those hours were to be sent to Narrabri Hospital, and there are signs that Narrabri Hospital is struggling with that increased workload. Wee Waa is a town of around 2,000 people but the hospital serves a much larger area. It takes in the towns of Rowena, Pilliga, Gwabegar, Burren Junction and Marah. People from this large rural area rely on the medical service they get from the Wee Waa hospital. For instance, if a person from Pilliga needs stitches for a wound, instead of travelling only 40 minutes to Wee Waa they would need to travel around an hour and a half to Narrabri because a laceration requiring stitches cannot be dealt with at Wee Waa.

The community even raised money for a palliative care unit at the hospital, which also is not currently in operation. Palliative care is vital for those who want to die with dignity in their own town, which is particularly important for the Indigenous population. In the years before the reduction of opening hours at Wee Waa, there had been an ongoing failure by Hunter New England to negotiate to have a local doctor take up a position as a visiting medical officer [VMO] at the hospital. Without a VMO, a hospital is limited in the services it can offer and many nurses are reluctant to work in a hospital without a VMO, making the recruitment of nurses more difficult. The matter of the VMO remained unresolved when the announcement was made about the reduced hours. When I heard about the reduction, I contacted the Minister for Health, who I note is in the Chamber. I really want to acknowledge that the Minister for Health has been incredibly attentive to the situation at Wee Waa. This bill is certainly not targeted at the Minister.

The Minister gave a commitment that the hospital would remain open and return to normal operating hours. I also requested the establishment of a working party to engage with Hunter New England to discuss solutions. However, Hunter New England has not shown any sense of urgency about returning the hospital to normal running and failed to engage with that community group and the community at large. The Wee Waa hospital community working party was established in May 2023 but Hunter New England showed little interest in collaborating with it; in fact, it actively undermined the group, and even asked twice for me to disband it. Since Wee Waa hospital went to reduced hours, Hunter New England has consistently been dismissive and evasive about what it is doing to return to normal operation and has shown no sense of urgency in recruiting the necessary staff. In recent months the Wee Waa community has held rallies to demand something be done about their hospital, but Hunter New England seems not to be interested in sending someone to meet with the community working party or to work with it on ways of recruiting staff.

While it is true that many hospitals across New South Wales and Australia are struggling to maintain staffing levels, other health districts have shown it is possible to recruit staff. In October 2022 the Western Local Health District was faced with a comparable situation to Wee Waa, with a reduction in the number of available beds at the Nyngan Multi Purpose Service [MPS] due to staff shortages. After several months of being unable to recruit staff, in August 2023 a Nyngan MPS working group was formed. The Western Local Health District made

every effort to collaborate with the working group, and by January 2024 the hospital was back to normal operation. The difference was that Western LHD consulted with the community and kept them informed and worked consistently on recruitment. In my electorate I have four different local health districts, or parts of them—Murrumbidgee, Western, Far Western and Hunter New England. Three of these are good to work with. They are responsive, consult with the communities they serve and are transparent about what they are doing. Hunter New England, in my opinion, is the exception.

An example of how Hunter New England struggles to deal with rural medical services was seen last year when the contract for Narrabri's pathology services, held by SydPath, was due to expire in July. In the absence of any communication from Hunter New England, in May rumours began circulating that Hunter New England planned to close the Narrabri laboratories and move them to Moree, according to a model it had used in Gunnedah. At that point, no consultation had been done with medical staff or the community and Hunter New England continued to remain silent about its intentions for Narrabri pathology after the end of SydPath's contract. After hearing the rumours, I again contacted the Minister for Regional Health to try to elicit an official response to the rumours from the health district administrators. Eventually, they were forced to issue a statement that said no decisions had been made about the future pathology service model. We later met with representatives from Hunter New England, who finally agreed to begin consultation with staff and the Narrabri community.

Essentially, the model they decided on kept services at both Narrabri and Moree but would modernise equipment at Narrabri and there would be no job losses. However, reports are that things are not going well after the transition. I have heard from staff that people are waiting up to two hours for blood tests at Narrabri and then waiting four days for results because staff have not been properly trained on the new equipment after the transition from SydPath to NSW Health. I have also heard that the new point-of-care testing can be time consuming and confusing, leading to the rostering of an extra nurse to handle the increased workload. Obstetrics in the Hunter New England LHD is another weak point. Women from towns in my electorate within the health district now must travel to Moree to have an initial assessment with a team from John Hunter.

This Initial Maternity Assessment and Planning [IMAP] service has resulted in resources being pulled from Narrabri, impacting its maternity services. It is deemed not to fit the IMAP service because Narrabri no longer offers the 12-week ultrasound. The number of births at Narrabri has been on a downward trend since Hunter New England structures forced women to go elsewhere to give birth. Nurses at Narrabri fear that the maternity unit there, which services areas such as Wee Waa, Burren Junction and as far away as Lightning Ridge, will soon be deemed unviable and closed.

It is a symptom of the increasing centralisation of birthing services in Hunter New England.

In a recent discussion with representatives from Hunter New England, they talked at length about models of obstetric care they use in towns like Glen Innes, which allow births to happen under carefully planned circumstances but mostly result in women being sent elsewhere if the birth is deemed for any reason to be higher risk. They wanted to introduce it in places like Narrabri but, in discussing that model, they were in fact avoiding mentioning the fact that the problem could be easily resolved by recruiting enough staff to handle more complex births. Again, I stress that it is not the dedicated nurses and staff but the remote and detached administrators far away in Newcastle.

The amalgamation of the Hunter New England area health service was an experiment that has not worked. As I have said, it is the only health district where rural and remote services are administered from a metropolitan base. The metropolitan base is too far removed from the New England region, and it is too large an area for them to adequately look after. Splitting the health district would not be a disruption; it would be a return to how things should be: a country health district looking after its own. I could speak for much longer and provide more stories from constituents about what has happened and how they have been bumped from hospital to hospital seeking care, but the intention and focus of the bill at the moment is to refer it to a committee. The community can then have direct input into the committee's work and have the opportunity to tell their stories. I am certain that, if the bill is referred to committee and comes back to the House for debate, those experiences and stories will inform future debate.

**Debate adjourned.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** In accordance with the resolution of 18 February 2025, debate on the bill will continue at the time set aside for general business order of the day (for bills).

**HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT (SPLITTING OF THE HUNTER NEW ENGLAND HEALTH DISTRICT) BILL 2025****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (10:31):** I make a contribution to debate on the Health Services Amendment (Splitting of the Hunter New England Health District) Bill 2025. I thank the member for Barwon for his work in his community. There are many regional MPs in the Chamber right now and I thank them and the Government for their work advocating for our communities. Members would agree that we are passionate about our communities because we at times feel as though we do not get the attention that we deserve. The further away from large metropolitan cities, the more problematic it is. That is of course reflected in some of the comments from the member for Barwon. I acknowledge that the member for Murray has carriage of a similar bill about splitting local health districts.

I also acknowledge that the member for Lismore has raised with me some of the challenges around border communities and the impacts those challenges have on health services. No matter what role you play in this place, that is important for city-based MPs, Ministers and legislators to understand, because there is a uniqueness that occurs the further you get from the city. From my understanding, that is further exacerbated in border communities like those of the member for Barwon, the member for Murray, the member for Lismore, the member for Bega and a range of MPs whose communities face those challenges. A number of regional MPs are in the Chamber at the moment. It is an important issue, and I acknowledge the work that regional MPs do every day for their health services.

I acknowledge that we still have a hell of a lot of work to do. You will never see me, as a Minister, do a victory lap on any issue. To be brutally honest, health is an area where, if you feel as though you have done your job, it is time for someone else to do it, because the level of improvement that we should seek each day is phenomenal. I have made very clear to chief executives across New South Wales that it is important to engage with local MPs. I am not there every time that happens, and different personalities can be better at that than others, but I acknowledge the concerns raised by the member for Barwon.

One of the things I am perhaps most proud of during my time as the shadow Minister is the establishment of the landmark parliamentary inquiry into rural and regional health care. Among its findings were alarming reports that, by some measures, health outcomes and access were far less favourable than for those living in our larger metropolitan areas. I vowed then and there that, if I was ever given the privilege, I would do what I could to close the gap. For almost two years as the Minister for Health and Regional Health, I have tried not to waste a single moment to focus on regional and rural health care and improvements. I acknowledge that the member for Wagga Wagga, the member for Cessnock previously, the member for Lismore and others in this place are also on the standing committee looking into that regional report and its recommendations. I acknowledge their engagement with that.

The Government is delivering on its election commitments to implement all 44 recommendations of that landmark inquiry. We are increasing the number of regional and rural paramedics by 500. That comes at a cost of around \$438 million over four years, which is the first big investment targeted exclusively for regional and remote communities. That big number is to ensure that large metropolitan areas and city places, like where I am from, do not absorb the intakes of paramedics, because it was made very clear during that inquiry that that was a concern. We have appointed a dedicated Deputy Secretary for Regional Health, Luke Sloane. That is important from my perspective because I wanted a senior public servant at the bureaucratic decision-making table, who had an eye and ear for and understanding of regional and rural health and communities. I acknowledge Luke's work.

We have established free parking at rural and regional public hospitals and committed around \$15 million in funding for expansions of services such as Bombala Multipurpose Service to support the construction of additional single bedrooms, functional areas and self-contained staff accommodation units. Having spent a lot of time in regional, rural and remote areas, I know multipurpose services have an important role. In addition, we have focused on the workforce and secured the employment of 1,120 nurses. We removed the wages cap to give the largest increase in salaries. We have doubled the Rural Health Workforce Incentive and boosted doctors in regional GP surgeries by working with the Commonwealth through the single-employer model. We have invested significantly in upgrading our hospitals and upgrading housing for our health workers—two issues that the member for Barwon and other members currently in the Chamber have directly spoken to me about, because it is hard to get staff if they do not have a house to live in.

A further \$461 million has been provided to health and hospital projects in regional New South Wales. We have made significant investments in places like Eurobodalla, Temora, Moree, Cessnock, Shellharbour, Shoalhaven, Port Macquarie, Manning and Forster. As alluded to by the member for Barwon, staffing is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges. Some of the issues that the member has highlighted, where things have not gone as well as I would have liked, have been around staffing. That is a challenge for us. From my perspective, I do not think there is anything I work on more, in the seven days a week of a ministerial role, than staffing and how to get more. The Government has been quite honest and upfront about the challenges at the moment. We are in negotiations with nurses through the independent umpire. We have not resolved that, but it is a challenge. We are working on that through a range of different incentives and measures to try to make sure that we can get staff into regional and rural areas. I outlined those previously, so I am not going to repeat them now.

Whilst the Rural Health Workforce Incentive Scheme is good, by no means is the job done or is everything how it needs to be in regional and rural areas. We made a decision to boost the incentive package by \$20,000 and, wherever possible, we provide housing and accommodation as best we can to make sure that people are able to remain in those areas for a sustained period.

I had discussions early on with the member for Wagga Wagga regarding the Rural Generalist Single Employer Pathway for GPs. We have accelerated that program, which allows GPs in regional and rural areas to move between private practice and hospitals without losing their benefits when they do both of those things for their community. That was at a very low number when I took over. We have it increased significantly, but there is more work to do. Regardless of the result in the Federal election that is just around the corner, one of my first discussions with the next Federal health Minister will be about making sure that important program, which started in the Murrumbidgee area, continues to be worked on and accelerated. About 80 rural generalist trainees can take part in the program at any one time through exemptions offered under the Health Insurance Act. It is one of important ways in which we will try to continue to boost staff.

We hear loud and clear some of the concerns that the member for Barwon has raised. I think most regional MPs, regardless of their political persuasion, would say that I try my very best to engage widely and deeply with them to get issues resolved as best we can. Notwithstanding the investments and progress that I have talked about, as I said from the outset, there is still a lot of work we need to do. That is why this bill and the related healthcare access issues that the member has raised are important matters to be considered in relation to the question of whether the way we govern our health services provides opportunities.

On will go on record and say that I do not think dismantling health districts is the best way to do that. I will go through some of the issues in a moment, but it is worth a committee spending some time to look into it. I acknowledge that other members of this place have a view similar to the member for Barwon, and I think there is an opportunity to look at this. Most members know that I will always try to improve something. I never think that the job is done or that all great ideas come from one side of the Chamber. I did not think that way when I came here in 2011, and I certainly do not think that way now. As a Minister who is prepared to listen and truly learn from local members on the ground, particularly regional and rural areas, I think there is an opportunity to look at this bill through the committee process. That is important.

As members know, our health services are delivered through 15 local health districts. Other models have been tried and tested in the State's history. We have often gone from small to large or large to small. Each model has its problems. As Churchill said about democracy, it is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried. Each of these things are not foolproof or perfect. I do not want members to think that I believe the current model is perfect, but it has advantages in terms of funding, efficiency and, importantly, access to specialised care and delivery of services. I am concerned that splitting the district in two would be detrimental for rural and regional communities and risk exacerbating staffing challenges across New South Wales.

Every worker in the Hunter New England Local Health District is part of a collaborative network. They are supported by some of the major tertiary hospitals that the member outlined, which ensures that patients in that part of regional New South Wales have access to specialised services. That is why they are integrated. As the member for Barwon mentioned, senior doctors and specialists from Newcastle provide clinical support through virtual care and by working regularly at smaller rural and regional hospitals. My concerns about a split are not philosophical; they are about spending money on new corporate services and structures that I would rather see put into frontline services.

I am also concerned about the impact on patient flow and referral pathways through to specialist services in larger centres. In addition, we would need to maintain strong relationships and partnerships across two separate regions, which has been challenging even in the current structure. The landmark Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding that we announced is due to report soon. I know members of this place and various stakeholders have made submissions, and for that I am grateful. The commission's terms of reference deliberately

include how we govern our system, which I included as a result of a suggestion by former member for Northern Tablelands Adam Marshall and others who raised governance issues.

It is important that I put on record my acknowledgement of the incredible work done by the staff of the Hunter New England Local Health District. It is a big district, and they do fabulous work. By no means do they get it right every time; and by no means do we get it right every time. That is certainly not the way I view my role. If there is an opportunity to do better, then it is worth looking at. As the member for Barwon said, this matter has come up on multiple occasions, and I am always open to new and different ways of approaching the challenges and opportunities.

At this stage, I do not lean towards splitting up the local health district, but I am prepared to have this issue examined and discussed and for members and stakeholders to provide input through a committee process. I acknowledge the member for Barwon and thank him for his long and detailed engagement on this matter. I have also engaged with other members of this place, many of whom are here now, about governance-related issues. Those issues are not simple, and they are often more complex for regional MPs than for city-based MPs because of the tyranny of distance.

I look forward to the findings of the special commission of inquiry, which is a landmark inquiry in nature. I want the inquiry findings and recommendations to be handed down. There is always a risk in doing these types of things as Minister, but it is a risk I wanted to take. After the COVID-19 pandemic, we have an important opportunity to reform the way in which we deliver health services. For the reasons I have outlined, the Government is open to hearing further views on the matter and receiving evidence to consider other changes. At the request of the member, we support the referral of the bill to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services. I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting all words after "That this bill" and inserting instead "be referred forthwith to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services for inquiry and report."

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** Before I call the member for Coffs Harbour, I remind members that, in accordance with the resolution of the House on 18 February, there will be only two speakers in the debate—the Minister and one Opposition member—who will each speak for up to 20 minutes.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (10:49):** I contribute to debate on the Health Services Amendment (Splitting of the Hunter New England Health District) Bill 2025. This is a bit of an unusual process compared with how bills are normally dealt with, but we will roll with it. I think this is the first time I have been in the Chamber when every member present is from regional New South Wales. Bring back the regional seniors travel card! Regional health is a really important issue for regional MPs. It is the issue we receive the most correspondence about. One of the more harrowing parts of our job is dealing with people who are trying to navigate the health system. It has been a problematic issue for generations. When people are dealing with health issues, they expect to have access to as many services as are available in metro areas.

One of the biggest challenges faced by the regional health system—especially in smaller, more remote locations—is being able to provide the services that our city-based counterparts take for granted. This is not the first time the idea of splitting the Hunter New England Local Health District has been put forward in this House. By my count, since I have been a member of Parliament, it is the third time the issue has been raised. That points to issues in the Hunter New England Local Health District. The further you go away from the Hunter towards the Queensland border, the louder the calls become.

I thank the very hardworking nurses and doctors in the health system, not only in the Hunter New England Local Health District but all over New South Wales. They provide such amazing care for everybody in New South Wales. The Hunter New England Health District was created nearly 20 years ago. It covers a region of more than 130,000 square kilometres. It covers 16 per cent of the land mass of New South Wales. It serves more people—more than one million—than any other health district. It covers 25 local government areas. Everything we do to manage the health system and health administration should be about improving services and patient outcomes. In my discussions with doctors, community leaders and members representing electorates covered by the health district, it is clear that there are issues around resourcing, staffing and the culture in the local health district.

Over the past few days, members of this place have spoken about the lack of maternity services. We hear some pretty harrowing stories from mothers, expectant mothers and families about some of the issues they have faced. Some of them have been bypassed by not one, not two, but three hospitals. They have given birth on the side of the road. People have to go to Sydney or Newcastle in order to have a baby. That can be hundreds of kilometres away from their families and support networks. A generation ago those services existed in those towns. It is not only maternity services. Emergency services in towns such as Wee Waa have been cut or closed. It is an issue throughout the local health district. I acknowledge the proposal to split the district has broad community

support. In 2022 a petition of 16,000 signatures was presented to the Parliament. I thank the Minister, who spoke to that petition. At the time he said:

... we have got to start to focus on the men and women who deliver the health care to the patients and communities that we are proud to represent and support.

He went on to say:

The delivery of health services is more than just new buildings. It is about making sure that when you go to hospital there is adequate staffing. It is about making sure that the State and Commonwealth governments, regardless of their colour, are working together to make sure that primary health care is working.

I agree with the sentiments expressed by the Minister in 2022. In his speech in the second reading debate today he acknowledged that there are issues around staffing across the country. Sometimes in this place we get very partisan, but this issue crosses political boundaries. The reason we are talking about this bill today is that whatever is happening right now is not working. Communities, particularly the ones further north, do not feel that the system is working for them. The bill will be referred to a parliamentary committee. Community members, mayors, local members and others will all have the opportunity to make submissions under the terms of reference. We have not yet seen or debated what those terms of reference will be. As the Minister said, this is an opportunity to take a deeper dive into the issue.

Historically the Opposition has not supported the splitting of health districts. The referral to the committee will create an opportunity to look a little bit deeper. My hope is that one of the questions that will be addressed is whether the funding for additional administration could be better spent on additional nurses and doctors in the health system to deliver better health outcomes, notwithstanding the administrative issues raised with me, the Minister and other local members in the area. The bill will go to the committee and then come back. Obviously the Opposition will have much more to say once the committee has tabled its report and members have had a chance to read it.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The member for Barwon has moved that the bill be read a second time, to which the member for Keira has moved an amendment that the bill be referred forthwith to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services for inquiry and report. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services will do an excellent job. It is an excellent committee.

## **ROAD RULES AMENDMENT (MOBILE PHONES AS NAVIGATION AIDS FOR PROVISIONAL LICENCE HOLDERS) BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (10:58):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Road Rules Amendment (Mobile Phones as Navigation Aids for Provisional Licence Holders) Bill 2024 was introduced in the other place by the Hon. John Ruddick of the Libertarian Party NSW. I agreed to take carriage of this bill because it is a commonsense proposal and, frankly, this Parliament needs more common sense.

This bill will grant provisional drivers over the age of 25 the right to use their mobile as a navigational aid whilst driving, provided that device is in a secured cradle. The bill still ensures road safety, which is incredibly important. Under the bill, drivers may not touch their phones while driving but can preset a map app while the car is parked. By "parked," the bill does not just mean stationary at the lights; the car has to be properly parked as the map app is being preset. This bill did not come out of nowhere; it has resulted from a real-world situation where the current laws failed.

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

*Members***MEMBER FOR SWANSEA****MEMBER FOR WYONG**

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge the upcoming birthdays of the member for Swansea and the member for Wyong and hope they have some wonderful celebrations planned.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I extend a warm welcome to the Deputy Consul-General of the United Kingdom, Ed Kitt, who is in the gallery with the chief of staff to the President of the Legislative Council. I hope Will learns something today in the Legislative Assembly. I also welcome to the gallery guests of the member for Wollondilly, Mayor Matt Gould and CEO Ben Taylor from the Wollondilly Shire Council. I welcome guests of the member for Kiama from the Kiama Walking Group. I acknowledge a familiar guest of the member for Cootamundra, Adam Hall, the deputy secretary of the Health Services Union. I am thinking about offering him a blanket welcome for the remainder of the year. If any member wants to welcome him as their guest, they can just attach their name. I also acknowledge guests of the member for Vacluse, being students and teachers from the Scots College participating in the ScotsX program. I welcome to the gallery legal studies students from Macarthur Anglican School in the Badgerys Creek electorate. I also welcome Larissa Butler and her colleagues, who are guests of the member for Goulburn.

*Announcements***LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ORDER FOR PAPERS: MINISTERIAL VEHICLE LOGBOOKS**

**The SPEAKER (11:06):** With members' indulgence, I make a statement. I advise the House of a matter resolved in the Legislative Council yesterday in relation to an order for papers concerning ministerial vehicle logbooks. Paragraph (a) (iii) of the Legislative Council's order seeks documents relating to current and former Speakers of the Legislative Assembly in the possession, custody or control of the Premier or the Premier's Department, being all driver and car logbooks and a wide range of related material—for example, emails, diary entries, text or electronic messages, or notes relating to repairs, maintenance or cleaning of vehicles since 23 March 2019. That part of the order has significant implications for this House and my role as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

The formal power possessed by either House to order papers gives effect to scrutiny of the Executive and holding it to account. It is a power grounded in the common law principle of reasonable necessity. As your elected Speaker and a servant of this House, like all of my predecessors, I am accountable to the Legislative Assembly and its members for the actions I take in my capacity as Speaker—and only to this House. I fail to see what legitimate purpose the Legislative Council could have to order the production of documents pertaining to me as Speaker.

*[Interruption]*

Members will reserve their outrage and come to order. I note that the use of my car is at the Assembly's expense, forming part of the Speaker's expenditure of office. Consequently, I will take advice from the Clerk as to the legitimacy of that part of the Council's order for papers, and its implications for this House and our future office holders. To dispense with any suggestion that my comments are a tactic to avoid accountability, I declare that I will be completely accountable and transparent in the use of this resource and intend to provide the relevant records associated with its use to this House, and only this House. I consider that such records are held by the Premier's Department as an administrative arrangement but that my conduct in office is a matter for which I am accountable to you, the Assembly, and not the other place. This development also means I will need to review the arrangement in future if it is open to such intrusions. I will also seek advice as to whether the matter should be referred to the privileges and ethics committee for its consideration.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**The SPEAKER:** I trust the House will assist me in keeping my head.

*Question Time***SMALL BUSINESS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:11):** My question is directed to the Premier. So far this financial year, New South Wales has the highest number and the highest per capita rate of business insolvencies in the country. Why is New South Wales the worst in the country on this Government's watch?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:11):** We have the biggest State with the greatest number of small businesses.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. The Premier has just commenced his answer. He will be heard in silence.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** When it comes to the economy in New South Wales, I can report to the House that, other than Western Australia, we have the lowest unemployment rate of any State or jurisdiction in Australia. Our economy is growing. Real wages are up 1 per cent across the public and private sectors. During the past decade under the former Government, it was at negative 1 per cent.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** What about real growth?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I am talking about real wage growth.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. The member for Wahroonga will come to order. That is no way to behave in the Chamber.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The member for Wahroonga is able to yell out, but he should be accurate when he yells. As the biggest State, New South Wales has the highest number of small businesses. The Government will continue to work with Business NSW to ensure that compliance costs are as low as possible for small businesses. Two glaring pieces of reform were left completely alone by the previous Government. The first is insurance reform, particularly the stamp duty on insurance, which was started by former Treasurer and former Premier Dominic Perrottet, but then spectacularly abandoned.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** This is surely relevant to small businesses.

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

**Mr Mark Speakman:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question was not about what the Premier may or may not do in the future. It was, "Why are we now the worst in the country?"

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** There are significant costs to small businesses, but the Leader of the Opposition asks why we are in this situation. I will explain it to him. Notwithstanding the general economic news in New South Wales, there are two input costs for small businesses. The first is the cost of insurance because of the former Government's bungled and abandoned changes to stamp duty on insurance, and the second is workers compensation. There was no reform from the former Government on workers compensation. It kept the cap on icare, and as a result premiums exploded for small businesses. One cannot walk down the street and talk to small business owners in New South Wales without them explaining that workers compensation charges are going through the roof.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** What are you doing about it?

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I do not like mentioning the member for Kiama, but at the end of the day he sat like a stunned mullet doing absolutely nothing for 10 years.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Yet he is the biggest critic of everyone else in the meantime.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** He has the biggest gob in this place, but he did bugger-all when he was in government. Opposition members are happy to talk about input costs for small businesses, but their record for 10 years was pretty bloody disgraceful.

**WESTERN SYDNEY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (11:14):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to build better Western Sydney communities by investing in the essential services that people rely on?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:15):** I thank the incredibly hardworking member for Penrith for that important question about what this Government is committed to delivering for the communities it represents in Western Sydney.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The member for Penrith was elected for a very good reason. She is an advocate for the booming local area of Penrith and its surrounds. There was a reason the Minns Labor Government was elected to office in March 2023, and that was to invest in the local infrastructure and services that were neglected for 12 years under members opposite. The truth is very clear in the communities that we represent. This is a mature government when it comes to giving credit to members of the former Government.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am about to give Opposition members a compliment, if they will calm their farm a little. We might have the metro—I admit that the former Government did a good job on that, although parking is a problem. We might have WestConnex, although we are paying every day for the privilege of driving on those roads. However, Western Sydney did not get local schools, hospitals, roads or housing. We did not get basic things. The former Government even locked up the beach, which this Government is very proud to have opened for people in the community.

I will mention a few of the investments the Government is making in Western Sydney that will make a big difference to the everyday lives of the people it is privileged to represent. The Government is making one of the largest investments in hospitals in years, delivering an additional 600 hospital beds. There is \$550 million for Fairfield and \$350 million for Canterbury. And then there is Rouse Hill. Every day we talk about the horrible history of the Rouse Hill Hospital. This is the first Government to actually deliver it, with \$700 million—

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —to invest and deliver the hospital.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The former Government promised a hospital. What did it deliver?

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** All that members opposite delivered was a sod turn. Good on them. They dug up a bit of dirt, but they did not do anything else. In fact, even though the member for Kellyville promised the hospital in 2015— [*Extension of time*]

Even though the former Government promised it in 2015, I note that the member for Kellyville told the *Rouse Hill Times* in March 2019—

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —which is a whole term later, that "the department is working really hard to come up with a concept". In all that time, all the people of Rouse Hill got was a sod turn and a concept. Good job!

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wollongong will cease assisting the Minister.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We talk about the delivery of essential roads. We have said a lot about our investment in roads like Fifteenth Avenue, Horsley Drive and Appin Road.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Something very close to my heart and that of the member for Penrith is the Government's investment in Mulgoa Road stages 1 and 2.

It would be good if the member for Badgerys Creek was here to explain why she was so ineffective in delivering that upgrade to Mulgoa Road. But, as was revealed today, she has quietly gone off to London.

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

**Ms Monica Tudehope:** Are you jealous?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No, I'm not jealous.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Epping to order for the first time. Even though she is a new member, she will be removed from the Chamber if she continues to interject.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** She has gone off to London for a conference described as a conversation to re-lay the foundations of civilisation.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. The Clerk will stop the clock. The behaviour of members is disgraceful. It is in defiance of the standing orders and of my rulings. Members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber. The behaviour of Opposition members, in particular, is disgusting. It will not be tolerated. Opposition members will give the Deputy Premier their attention and show her the respect she deserves. The Minister will be heard in silence.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Opposition members do this intentionally because they do not like listening to women telling them what is happening in the real world.

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

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Coffs Harbour left the Chamber at 11:20.]*

**Ms PRUE CAR:** In reality, the Opposition does not like me drawing attention to the fact that the member for Badgerys Creek is at a conference about the foundations of our civilisation—

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —when she should be explaining the foundations of Mulgoa Road.

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

**Mr Alister Henskens:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. What the Deputy Premier is going on with has nothing to do with the Minns Labor Government's work, which is the subject of the question.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister is in order. The member for Wahroonga will resume his seat.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Opposition members' respect for this place and the people of New South Wales shows why they are unelectable to govern our State for the people of Western Sydney.

#### COOTAMUNDRA HOSPITAL

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (11:21):** My question is directed to the Premier. With the support of the Health Services Union, pathology clinicians are about to strike over his Government's decision to close the Cootamundra Hospital pathology lab. The closure will overwhelm pathology at Young, where services are already at breaking point. Will the Premier step in and agree to meet with me, the frontline workers and their union to hear why he must reverse this reckless decision by his Government?

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier is referring the question to the Minister for Health. I call the Minister for Health.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:22):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

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

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. This is completely within the standing orders. The question falls within the portfolio of the Minister, and the Premier can refer it to him.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** There is nothing in the standing orders.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. I will hear briefly from the Manager of Opposition Business.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 126. The question is directed to the Premier, and there is nothing within the standing orders that allows it to be flick-passed to another Minister. The Premier and the Executive are accountable to the Parliament. The member for Cootamundra asked the Premier the question. It asks particularly whether the Premier will meet with her and other relevant stakeholders. It cannot be handballed to a different member.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** To the point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** I am happy to hear from the Leader of the House on the point order. However, I ruled immediately that it was in order for the Premier to refer a question to the relevant Minister. The Clerk has advised me that it is in order and is within the practice of this House. I call the Minister of Health.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** This is a good opportunity to talk about this issue. I know it is important for the local member. I acknowledge that someone who does not spend a lot of time in this place, Adam Hall, is here with us today, and I know the Health Services Union has an interest in this area. I also acknowledge the other healthcare workers from the Nurses and Midwives' Association here today. NSW Health Pathology is committed to ensuring pathology services continue to meet the needs of the Cootamundra community and the wider Murrumbidgee region. All of my colleagues on this side of the Chamber—and I am sure it was the same for Opposition members when they were in government—try to be as accessible as possible to members who have concerns about issues within their communities. I am happy to meet with the member; that is not a problem.

However, currently 70 per cent of pathology samples taken in Cootamundra require transfer to Sydney, Young or Wagga Wagga for testing. The expansion of services will see more testing undertaken within the local region at the Young laboratory. The transition will provide new technology, faster testing and a range of benefits for the Cootamundra community. Most testing will be performed at an expanded Young lab, with extended operating hours, including weekends. There will be enhanced point-of-care testing capabilities in Cootamundra—that is, where people have their blood tested onsite, at the bedside—including new full blood count technology for urgent onsite testing. Cootamundra collection services will be retained for inpatients and outpatients. Blood transfusion capacity will be maintained, with a remote-release blood fridge with O negative blood products available to support emergency response capabilities, something we all know is important. There will be no reduction in overall staffing levels.

It is important to note that this model has already been successfully operating in similar-sized communities for more than a decade. It was an initiative established and commenced under the Coalition Government. It is an initiative that this Government has taken on for that area, and it is in place for communities, like Temora, that do not have a laboratory on site. It is important to acknowledge the previous Government's work in this area. NSW Health Pathology is inviting interested members of the community to attend a specific information session in Cootamundra on Monday 24 February. I understand that the member for Cootamundra is going to that session. I met with the Health Services Union yesterday. Obviously, I meet with the Nurses and Midwives' Association regularly. This is an issue that they have raised with me, but I also know it is an issue that is personally important to the member for Cootamundra. With that in mind, I am happy to meet with the Health Services Union on this issue and others, particularly those raised by rural and regional members.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order: Mr Speaker, because there seems to be some consternation in relation to the last ruling you gave, I invite members' to give attention to a considered ruling given by Speaker Richard Torbay on 28 June 2007—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** A corrupt Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** As Presiding Officer, I take offence at the comment made by the member for Wamboona. I ask the member to consider withdrawing the comment.

**Mr Chris Minns:** I ask the member for Wamboona to withdraw that comment.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wamboona is covered by parliamentary privilege in this House, but he should use it very carefully. There is no such finding against the former Speaker. The Premier has asked the member for Wamboona to withdraw, but I take it from his steely silence that he will not. I place the member for Wamboona on a warning. I will discuss the withdrawal of his comment with him later outside the Chamber.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** I do not think that any of the aspersions that the Manager of Opposition Business cast upon the former Speaker would necessarily infect the ruling, which I invite the House to consider. On 28 June 2007, Speaker Torbay made a considered ruling in relation to a question that was asked of the then Leader of the House. He said:

... as noted in Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, questions addressed to Ministers should relate to the public affairs with which they are officially connected, to proceedings pending in Parliament ...

He ruled the question out of order, as it was beyond the purview of the Leader of the House to answer a question outside the list of duties that Speaker Torbay indicated was the responsibility of the Leader of the House. Accordingly, it is very difficult to ask a specific question of a member of the Executive Government who is not directly affected by that portfolio unless it is worded more broadly. If members look at both the considered ruling

and Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, they will see that there is plenty of support for the ruling I have just given.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the Leader of the House. As I have indicated, I am sure that we will have further discussions about this matter outside the Chamber. I am confident in my ruling.

#### CIVIL LIABILITY CLAIMS PRACTICES

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (11:32):** My question is addressed to the Attorney General. Will the Attorney General update the House on how the Minns Labor Government is increasing victim protections by cracking down on claim farming?

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (11:32):** I thank the member for Riverstone for his question. The Minns Labor Government will soon bring legislation to this Parliament to crack down on the practice of claim farming in New South Wales. Claim farmers are individuals or organisations who target people who may be personal injury or abuse victims by contacting them, often without their consent, and encourage them to lodge civil compensation claims, sometimes by using high-pressure and misleading tactics. Claim farmers may present themselves as claims management services, and some of them are quite sophisticated and established businesses. They charge referral fees to sell the claim to a law practice or to another claim farming organisation. Claim farming activities can have negative and traumatic impacts on people, including on victim-survivors of abuse.

Prohibiting claim farming in New South Wales would protect members of the community and potential victims with legitimate claims from predatory and exploitative claim farming practices. While claim farming practices vary, some of the shared patterns of behaviour of these often insidious individuals include obtaining the personal information of people who have suffered a personal injury or experienced abuse by engaging in unethical conduct, including misleading and deceptive practices, harassment and intimidation; making unsolicited contact with a potential claimant to pressure them to make a claim, sometimes through an intermediary; presenting themselves as claims management services or survivor-advocate organisations; and charging the claimant referral fees to sell the claim or to provide another service, such as preparing statements for a lawyer or for other claim farming organisations, often without the claimant's knowledge.

Last year, the Department of Communities and Justice began targeted consultation at my direction. This targeted consultation began in 2024 and concluded just weeks ago. In response, stakeholders provided anecdotal reports that claims can be sold to law practices for anywhere between \$800 and \$10,000 per claim. Intermediary so-called claim management services may pay individual referrers between \$50 and \$100 for every potential new claimant. Incredibly, lawyers may pass on these costs to claimants through so-called disbursement fees, which often reflect things like photocopying, courier services and fees for serving process on people. [*Extension of time*]

Injured people then get a bill with claim referral service fees on them. This week we saw reports in the ABC and other outlets that seven people were charged for allegedly fraudulent child abuse claims. There are two aspects to this, but I do not want to go into them in detail because it is before the court. The first aspect is the fraudulence of the claims, which is already illegal under existing laws. The second aspect is the claim farming practices, which will, with the accedence of both Houses, also be illegal in the not-too-distant future. Victim-survivor advocacy groups have long called for law reform to prevent predatory and exploitative claim farming, particularly in the context of child abuse claims which may involve very traumatised people who are sometimes clinging to life and sanity by their fingernails.

It is outrageous that victim-survivors should be exploited in this way. The Government is responding to these long-running calls by introducing the Claim Farming Practices Prohibition Bill. This bill will prohibit a person from contacting another person to solicit them to make a relevant claim or from buying or selling a claim. Importantly, we will also be contacting lawyers because they are the necessary cogs in this wheel. The bill will prevent lawyers who are convicted of these offences from charging any legal costs in relation to the claim and require them to refund any costs already received. I stress to the House that this bill will not affect the rights of victims in any way whatsoever. Their ability to claim will be unaffected and they will still be able to seek legitimate advice. The Government will cut out the unethical middlemen from these important legal practices.

#### WATER BUYBACKS

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (11:37):** My question is directed to the Premier. Federal Government water buybacks will destroy rural New South Wales. That is indisputable. Until now, the New South Wales Government has said it does not support the buybacks, but it has stopped short of actively opposing them. Will the Premier declare once and for all that his Government will oppose water buybacks? Will the Premier fight to protect rural New South Wales?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:38):** This is the fourteenth question from the member for Murray about water. That is more than from all of the members of The Nationals combined. In the two years since Labor came to government, the "party of the bush" has asked one question about water. The member for Murray has every right to ask this question. We have said many times in the past that we do not support water buybacks, particularly in regional communities that rely on primary industries and wonderful export-led industries. Let me say it in an unambiguous way: We oppose Federal Government water buybacks in New South Wales. We accept the economic theory that taking that kind of money out of regional communities is devastating to all of the ancillary services that small towns in regional New South Wales rely on.

It might be the accounting practice; it might be the law firm. It may be the schoolteachers or those who work in the local hospital. All of them rely on the economic churn and prosperity that comes alongside agriculture.

Agriculture is a massive part of our export economy. We are under pressure when it comes to minerals. By any objective analysis, the number one export from New South Wales is coal, and we need to be cognisant of other opportunities to fill that export gap in the years ahead. Agriculture is a leading part of that. We cannot do it without water. I acknowledge the advocacy of the member for Murray on that issue. She has pursued the issue with a single-mindedness that has seen the New South Wales Government release an Alternatives to Buybacks Plan. Under that plan we will, in all ways, aid river management and environmental practices, and avoid the hit to the regional economy that comes from buybacks.

### HOUSING SUPPLY

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (11:40):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier please update the House on the New South Wales Government's work to deliver more housing?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:40):** Members would be aware that in November the planning Minister and I announced the creation of the Housing Delivery Authority [HDA] to be at the forefront of the new State-led approval process for major and well-located residential developments. The HDA's role is to provide faster approval pathways for projects that can deliver housing in well-located parts of New South Wales. By any objective measure, housing is under enormous pressure.

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

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** In accordance with your previous ruling, Mr Speaker, this question should be answered by the planning Minister.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Wahroonga to remove himself from the Chamber under Standing Order 249A until the conclusion of question time. I give that direction for a number of reasons. The member has the opportunity to discuss the matter sensibly at a later time. He has chosen not to do that.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Wahroonga left the Chamber at 11:41.]*

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Isn't he likeable?

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** He has all the charm of a sideline official. He has all the charm of a prison guard, the old Alister.

**Mrs Wendy Tuckerman:** What's wrong with prison guards? How dare you say that.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** There is nothing wrong with them. They have a difficult job to do.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will return to the answer.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** We cannot wait to see Alister make his way to the leadership of the Liberal Party. He is such a likeable man.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 75. The member for Wahroonga should be referred to not by his name but by his position. The Premier clearly called him "Alister".

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** She got me. Anyway, in the planning system in New South Wales, for too long, legitimate development applications that would boost housing supply have hit a bureaucratic brick wall. The

Minister for Planning and Public Spaces decided to set up the HDA to clear some of the backlog and get more housing into New South Wales. It is an urgent priority. The population across Sydney has boomed in the last 50 years. The Woollahra local government area has experienced a 15 per cent reduction in its population since the 1960s. Other areas like Blacktown have seen a massive explosion in the same number of houses, and we need to make changes. Unfortunately, if we rely on the old system, we will not get too far.

I acknowledge the willingness of the Leader of the Opposition to work with the New South Wales Government to get change through. We need that change. We can pursue ideas and initiatives like the HDA but, ultimately, we need to reform the system. If we can do that, we can get certainty. If we get certainty, we can get more capital into housing markets, and the financing will ultimately lead to more homes. In short, if it is in legislation, it will survive whatever future Parliament comes in. We can crack the nimbyism that is holding back young people from purchasing their first home and leading to exponential increases in rents in New South Wales.

I have said it many times: We are losing twice as many young people as we are gaining on a year-by-year basis. A city without young people is a city without a future. The only way we can provide that future is with housing. Sydney and Melbourne are two similarly sized cities, with two similar economies. The median house price in Sydney is \$1.6 million; in Melbourne it is \$1 million. That difference is being felt at the moment, after 13 rate rises and when the pressure on household budgets is so much more significant. Every member of this House would have seen that. [*Extension of time*]

Every member of Parliament would have had conversations with young couples in their electorate who say, "It's just too expensive for me to put down roots in this community. I am moving interstate." If it is to regional New South Wales, that is great. But far too often they are moving to other States and jurisdictions. We have seen intrastate migration before—it is not a new phenomenon—but it was generally older Australians moving north for warmer weather. The demographic shift has been significant. We want younger people in the prime of their economic lives to join community organisations, become coaches of cricket and football associations, join our essential services or start their own businesses. Instead they are deciding that it is easier to do that in Adelaide, Perth or Brisbane than in Sydney. We need to reverse that. I say to the Opposition: I appreciate the gesture. We believe it is genuine. We believe work needs to be done to embed these changes for the long haul. It will make a significant difference to the people of New South Wales.

#### ASSISTED REPRODUCTION REBATES

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (11:45):** My question is directed to the Premier. From this week, thousands of New South Wales couples will no longer be able to access the Coalition's \$2,000 IVF rebate. In a cost-of-living crisis, why is the Premier forcing women to choose between paying the bills and starting a family?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:46):** We do not want people to make that choice but, unfortunately, we were left with the largest debt ever handed from one government to another in the history of New South Wales.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** That is the sad reality. The previous New South Wales Government had the largest deficit ever recorded. It was \$15 billion. The second largest deficit ever recorded by a New South Wales government was, again, the Coalition's record at \$9 billion. I feel like those should be agreed facts. The New South Wales Government's deficit, as it stands, is \$5 billion, and we need to get it down. The reality is that we need to work diligently to ensure that we get as close as possible to a balanced budget in New South Wales. That means difficult decisions need to be made. We do not relish it; we do not want to make them. Ultimately, means-testing some of the grants that the New South Wales Government is responsible for is essential to ensure that we can balance the books.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Those decisions needed to be made to get the budget back on track. We could live as if we were in—

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Miranda to order for the first time. Members will allow the Premier to answer the question. He has been completely relevant at this stage. He will be heard in silence.

**Ms Jenny Leong:** He hasn't mentioned women.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for North Shore to remove herself from the Chamber under Standing Order 249A. Was it the member for North Shore? If it was the member for Newtown, then she will have to leave.

**Ms Felicity Wilson:** Mr Speaker, it wasn't me. But I am happy to leave if that is your expunction.

**The SPEAKER:** No. The member for Newtown, however, will leave the Chamber. I am sorry.

**Ms Felicity Wilson:** Is being thrown out the only way that women can be heard in this answer from the Premier? Mr Speaker, the Premier is not even considering women in his answer, but you throw us out for caring about our fertility challenges.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for North Shore to remove herself from the Chamber under Standing Order 249A until the end of question time.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for North Shore left the Chamber at 11:48.]*

**The SPEAKER:** I direct the member for Newtown to remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of the Premier's answer.

**Ms Jenny Leong:** Mr Speaker, may I make a point?

**The SPEAKER:** No, you may not.

**Ms Jenny Leong:** I want to make the point—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Newtown understands the standing orders very well.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** It has not been revealed in the questions, but the House needs to understand that the Government did means test it. It upped the rebate—

**Ms Jenny Leong:** There were two women's voices there. You confused us, Mr Speaker. That is not fair.

**The SPEAKER:** I direct the member for Newtown to remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of the Premier's answer.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Newtown left the Chamber at 11:48.]*

#### **OPERATION SHELTER AND STRIKE FORCE PEARL**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (11:49):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Will the Minister update the House on the work that the NSW Police Force is doing through Operation Shelter and Strike Force Pearl to crack down on recent disgraceful incidents of antisemitism?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:49):** I thank the member for Camden for her question. I know that she is a strong advocate for police and the tireless work they do across all of our communities. I am pleased to update the House on the major operations that the NSW Police Force is undertaking to hunt down and hold the perpetrators of those hateful and divisive acts to account. The hardworking NSW Police Force officers deployed under Operation Shelter and Strike Force Pearl have been working around the clock to reassure and protect the community, and to bring to justice those individuals who are spreading hate and antisemitism.

Officers working on Operation Shelter have been out on our streets undertaking almost 39,000 proactive deployments aimed at preventing and deterring the crimes before they occur. That has included specialist resources such as night-time aerial patrols by PolAir. That highly visible presence is there to reassure the community that the NSW Police Force is watching out for them. It is being noticed and it is appreciated. Police crews tasked under Operation Shelter operate 24 hours a day in areas and locations determined by risk assessments made by our highly capable police. As of this week Operation Shelter has been responsible for the arrest of 175 individuals for 472 offences, with 185 court attendance notices being issued.

That is not all. Strike Force Pearl officers are making great progress, today laying charges on two individuals for the attacks in Queens Park and Dover Heights. Thirteen people have been charged with 73 offences by Strike Force Pearl, which was established to investigate antisemitic hate crimes across Sydney and comprises officers from the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command and the Central Metropolitan Region. Strike Force Pearl has 40 detectives and four specialist analysts, who are ably supported by the Traffic and Highway Patrol, the Regional Enforcement Squad, Police Dog Unit and PolAir have also been brought in to help the local police on the ground in those areas. Together they have been tasked with 7,000 deployments since the strike force was created. On behalf of the New South Wales Government I thank everyone working on Operation Shelter and Strike Force Pearl for their enormous and successful efforts to take the perpetrators off our streets. *[Extension of time]*

I also take a moment to address some absolutely shameful comments made recently by some members opposite. To be clear, a lot of members sitting on Opposition benches genuinely respect our police and are committed to working with me to address concerns in their communities. I thank them for that. They know that my door is always open and that I will do everything in my power to assist them. However, some Opposition

members take the first opportunity to bash our cops. In particular, the member for Wahroonga, who this week took the opportunity to blame the NSW Police Force for what occurred at the Opera House in October 2023. I am disappointed that he is not in the Chamber. According to *Hansard*, he said, "An ugly mob was given a police escort." That statement is shameful. The member for Wahroonga should apologise to the police, but given that he is not in the Chamber, I ask the Leader of the Opposition, to apologise on his behalf. I am glad he is here; I thought he was in London. It is absolutely disgusting that the member for Wahroonga accused our police—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will cease quarrelling across the table. The Minister will resume her seat. The Leader of the Opposition rises on a point of order.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** In question time the questions are directed to Ministers. The Ministers do not get to ask other MPs questions. The Minister is out of order.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** Don't lecture me. You obviously think it is okay for your member to bag the police—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister's time has expired. She was being quarrelsome. The Minister will be more considered in the way she answers questions.

### PSYCHIATRY WORKFORCE

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (11:55):** My question is directed to the Premier. The media reports this week that, amid psychiatrist resignations, a psychiatric patient awaited for more than five days in a major Sydney emergency department. Why is the Minns Government failing psychiatric patients in New South Wales?

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:55):** Members would be aware that the Government has had to stand up an emergency response in relation to—

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order and allow the Premier answer the question.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** —the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists and the union advocating for resignations of psychiatrists from psychiatric facilities and forensic hospitals in New South Wales. A decision had to be made to stand up emergency care across the health system. The Government regrets any delays in treatment; we do not want that. We want to make sure that those who need emergency help and emergency care in our public hospitals get it as soon as possible, but there will be stretched resources as a result of the coordinated campaign for mass resignations of psychiatrists. The reason for that mass resignation is a double-digit—what's the number?

**Mr Ryan Park:** It's 25 per cent.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** They are asking for a 25 per cent pay increase on their current yearly salary. That is \$80,000 a year more for one psychiatrist. The Government has been prepared to negotiate with the union and go to arbitration to try to get through the impasse, but that is a massive increase in pay for psychiatrists in New South Wales public health. As has been widely covered in the media, it comes at a time when the Government has not been able to offer anywhere near that kind of salary increase for NSW Health workers or rail workers or anyone else in the public sector. How could anyone in the Government say to nurses, Health Services Union members, orderlies or others that work in the system, "We cannot pay you what you are asking for but we can pay psychiatrists an extra 25 per cent."? I could not do it, and I think the health Minister has made a decision that he cannot do it either.

The Government has tried to avoid a deadlock by having arbitration heard at the Industrial Relations Commission but that has been rejected by the union and the royal college. The Government regrets any delays and is trying to stand up emergency care across forensic hospitals and psychiatric units in the New South Wales public hospital system. If there are gaps, the Government is keen to hear about them so that they can be plugged.

With the House's indulgence, I correct the record. I thought that the member for Wahroonga was referring to the current Speaker when I asked him to withdraw his comment, but I accept that he was not referring to you, Mr Speaker, so I withdraw that request.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the Premier for that clarification. I will discuss it later with the member for Wahroonga.

## SILICOSIS

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (11:58):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Work Health and Safety. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to safeguard New South Wales workers from silicosis?

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (11:58):** I thank the hardworking member for the Blue Mountains and Parliamentary Secretary, who I know is a very strong advocate, particularly for getting workers screened for silicosis, asbestosis and mesothelioma. The Minns Labor Government has been at the forefront of protecting workers from silicosis, which is a deadly dust disease. There is a lot to do. We are making progress, and we are doing the work. The Minns Labor Government led the campaign on a national ban of engineered stone. It was the Premier when in opposition who led the campaign and took a very tough and strong stand. He said if the others do not do it, we will do it alone.

On 1 January this year we strongly welcomed the import ban applied by the national Government. The importation of engineered stone products, benchtops and slabs are no longer being imported into Australia. We are working with SafeWork to protect all workers exposed to crystalline silica by introducing new regulations. Those regulations will apply to all workers exposed to silica, including those who work in tunnels, mines and on building sites. Our Government has pledged \$5 million in critical funding to the Asbestos and Dust Diseases Research Institute based at Concord Hospital, which will be working with the Dust Diseases Board to do some really important research work and, particularly for those who are diagnosed with silicosis, to assist them and their families to navigate the medical system.

I am also very proud to announce that the Minns Labor Government is working with icare, Dust Disease Care, to renew our commitment to protecting workers from dust diseases by unveiling the \$2.5 million state-of-the-art mobile health screening clinic, the Lung Bus. Members will have seen it out in The Domain. This morning Mr Speaker, the member for Sydney, the member for Wagga Wagga, the member for Newcastle and other members saw it. Everybody is welcome to see it. We invite staff and other members to see it. The Lung Bus will be in The Domain all afternoon. We also have a list of scheduled locations where the Lung Bus will be visiting over the next year. [*Extension of time*]

This morning, I was chipped by the member for The Entrance—who is a strong advocate for the people of the Central Coast, and so are all members who represent the Central Coast. He asked me, "Where is the Central Coast on the list?" I will take on board the comments by the member for The Entrance. The Lung Bus will visit regional centres. As I mentioned, it is state-of-the-art screening for regional workers. The Minns Labor Government is ensuring that we bring government to the people. We are bringing the screening service to workers in regional New South Wales. The Lung Bus will visit Broken Hill. In two weeks time it will visit Taree, Port Macquarie and then the South Coast, Wollongong and Port Kembla. A few weeks ago, the member for Shellharbour also asked me about the Lung Bus. It will visit Shellharbour and other regional electorates. If members do not see their location on the list, they should let me know.

This is a really important issue that affects people across the board. All members of this House care about workers in mines and building sites. We want to ensure that there is an end-to-end point of coordination to ensure that people are being screened. We want to ensure that we follow the treatment of people who have been diagnosed to ensure that we refer them out, particularly young workers who, as I speak, are being diagnosed with silicosis. The Minns Labor Government wants to ensure that we look after them, not only with available treatment but also with getting back to work—not in the places where they were working, but other workplaces.

## REGIONAL CRIME

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (12:03):** My question is directed to the Premier. According to the latest Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research data, the likelihood of a resident in Kempsey experiencing a violent home invasion is five times greater than the State average, but the Premier and several Ministers declined my invitation to attend our regional crime action event this weekend. When will the Premier spend a night in Kempsey and experience the trouble my community lives with?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:04):** The member for Oxley came and saw me after question time and said, "Can I have a private word?" I said, "Yes, no problem." He said, "Would you mind sending an official to my forum on the weekend?" I said, "No problem. We'll keep it confidential. That's fine." Then he comes into question time and says in actual fact it was not a private word. If the member wants to come and speak to us about it—and I have worked with members right across the Opposition about crime matters and safety matters in every circumstance—but it is to be weaponised for question time, I think we should be given fair warning of that.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. This is an important matter. The Premier is directly addressing the issues raised by the member for Oxley.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Now that the member for Oxley has spoken about how he came to us and spoke to me—and, I assume, the Minister for Youth Justice—I am happy to say to the House what I told him. We inherited the laws that were given to us by the previous Government in which the current Leader of the Opposition was the Attorney General. The member for Goulburn constantly chirps in question time, "Why don't you change them?" We have. We have introduced legislation relating to knife crime, tighter bail conditions for domestic violence, and bail conditions for young people. We have said repeatedly that we will make changes that we believe are appropriate to tackle youth crime issues in regional New South Wales. But only part of it is legislative change. The other aspect to it—and the other legacy that was left to us—is policing in regional New South Wales. We need policing.

**Mr Michael Kemp:** They're doing a great job. It's the court system.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** There is not enough of them, and the reason there is not enough of them is because the member for Oxley and his Coalition colleagues did not fund them. Is that not the case? Speak to anyone. The former Government had half-full parade grounds in Goulburn and a police academy where people were not paid to learn. As a result, we could not get any recruits when record numbers of police were leaving the service. The Government is taking steps. Over the last two years, we have shown that we are prepared to take steps to get people in posts to ensure that we tackle what is undeniably a problem. I will speak to any member of this Parliament about any issue, particularly in relation to law and order. The Government's record shows we would do just that.

### LITHIUM ION BATTERY FIRES

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (12:06):** I address my question to the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading. Will the Minister please update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to protect consumers from the safety risks posed by lithium ion battery powered products?

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (12:07):** I thank the member for The Entrance for his question and his keen interest in consumer protection issues. I firstly acknowledge there has been another tragic death this week at a Guildford house fire that is believed to have been caused by an exploding e-bike battery. A young man has lost his life. All members of this House extend our sincere condolences to his family during this very difficult time. It is just awful to hear about these types of tragedies. We know that e-bikes and e-scooters will continue to grow in popularity, and they are being made more accessible and available to so many consumers across New South Wales.

We need to do more to make sure these products are safe. That is why the Minns Labor Government has implemented nation-leading safety standards and consumer protections in relation to these products. We know there is an increasing risk of fires from products that are built with low-quality components or are used or charged incorrectly. Fire and Rescue NSW data shows that e-vehicle products caused 193 fires between 2022 and 2025. The rate of fires caused by those devices continues to significantly increase each and every year. Those disturbing figures are why the Government has moved quickly to introduce a raft of regulatory changes in the past six months. We are serious about protecting lives and property from the devastating damage that can be caused if lithium ion products are unsafe or used incorrectly. We have introduced two separate standards to help to protect the residents of New South Wales.

Just yesterday, in a nation-leading first, a new information standard for e-bikes and other vehicles came into effect. The information standard will keep consumers informed of safety risks from those products, and how those risks can be mitigated or avoided. It covers issues like product safety information, fire safety and emergency procedures, product end of life and storage, electrical safety, and advice on road rules. The information standard is complemented by new product safety standards that have been in effect since 1 February this year. The safety standards will protect consumers from fire risk by ensuring e-vehicles and their batteries and chargers are only built with safe and compliant components. The introduction of both standards this month puts the Minns Labor Government at the forefront of regulating lithium ion battery powered products in the nation. I am pleased to inform the House that, over the next 12 months, the Government will continue to ramp up protections against unsafe lithium ion products. [*Extension of time*]

New testing and certification requirements will come into effect from August this year, and new labelling requirements will come into effect from February 2026, creating a combined, multi-phase regulatory framework to keep our consumers safe. Sellers who do not meet the strict new safety standards can and will be fined up to

\$825,000. I am pleased to advise the House that this Government is setting a best practice example for other jurisdictions across the country to follow. I initiated discussions with my ministerial colleagues from across the country, and New South Wales is now leading a working group to pursue a national approach on the safe use of lithium ion battery products. Our increased regulation is backed by education campaigns led by Fair Trading, SafeWork, Fire and Rescue, the Environment Protection Authority and Transport for NSW.

The Minns Labor Government has cemented New South Wales as Australia's leading jurisdiction for the regulation of lithium ion powered e-bikes, e-scooters and similar products. Our new safety standards will drive up the quality of those products and help better protect consumers, their homes and their property.

### **NARRABEEN SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater) (12:11):** My question is directed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Supporting creative industries means supporting Pittwater electorate high schools. Will the Government commit to a fit-for-purpose creative and performing arts centre, amongst other upgrades, at Narrabeen Sports High School?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (12:12):** I thank the member for Pittwater for her question. Although she has only been a member for a short time, I already know that she is a passionate advocate for local public schools. She is certainly a breath of fresh air. The member for Pittwater is right that supporting creative arts means supporting our high schools. I preface my comments with a bit of history about Narrabeen Sports High School, which is one of our fantastic sports high schools that offers the Talented Sports Program. Along with Narrabeen North Public School next door, it was promised major upgrades by members opposite when they were in government in 2018. When we came to government five years later, those upgrades had still not been delivered. At one point, the former local member was even appointed Minister for Education, so I am not sure what their excuse was.

We completed the upgrades to Narrabeen North Public School upon winning government. I believe the school community has embraced the new upgrade, and it looks fantastic. There are 15 new classrooms, three new support classrooms, a new covered outdoor learning area, landscaping and a new hall. Next door at Narrabeen Sports High School, it is fair to say that the local community is rightly frustrated at the lack of investment. We got to work straight away to address the school's needs. I know it is a huge priority of the member for Pittwater. Last year we refurbished classrooms, science labs, the STEM room, technology rooms, change rooms and amenities. We resurfaced the school's outdoor basketball and tennis courts. We have upgrades for a further 20 classrooms on the way. The member for Pittwater, though, rightly raises that the school community has been calling out for increased investment, particularly in creative and performing arts facilities.

That speaks to the fact that at every high school, whether it is a selective academic school or a sports program school, we need to provide facilities so that every child can be pushed and challenged to be the best they can be. In the first instance, we are working with the school to convert classrooms into dedicated music rooms for students, but I know there is a lot more to do. Following the advocacy of the new member for Pittwater, I have asked the Department of Education to work with Narrabeen Sports High School on its infrastructure priorities. I say that knowing that a creative and performing arts space is at the top of the list of needs that the school would like to see addressed. I look forward to meeting with the member in coming weeks to discuss those priorities and what we can do together to support Narrabeen Sports High School with improved creative and performing arts facilities.

### **DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (12:15):** My question is addressed to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Will the Minister please update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to create a safer New South Wales by taking a whole-of-community approach to addressing domestic and family violence?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (12:15):** I thank the member for Granville and Parliamentary Secretary for her question and absolute commitment to eradicating domestic and family violence in her local area. I can assure the House that the Minns Labor Government is taking the scourge of domestic and family violence seriously. We are committed to eradicating it. We all agree in this place that domestic and family violence is unacceptable. We are continuing our work to create a safer New South Wales by taking a whole-of-community approach in our response. We are also addressing it from every angle: from crisis response to justice reforms to crime prevention and early intervention. Fundamentally, we are holding perpetrators to

account for their violence through justice reforms, but also through working with them so that they understand that their behaviour is never acceptable and that they can choose a different path.

I am pleased to inform the House that yesterday we announced the expansion of Men's Behaviour Change Programs to seven new locations across State. As part of last year's budget, we announced an additional \$10 million to expand Men's Behaviour Change Programs. That means that men in Nowra, Ulladulla, Forster, Gloucester, Lithgow, Blacktown and Maitland can now access life-changing supports. That is in addition to the 28 sites already available across New South Wales. It is life changing. One man who has been through the program after being charged and then losing contact with his daughter said the program challenged him and made him question his own beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. He said it has meant a brighter and safer future for his family where his daughter can have a safe relationship with both parents and feel nurtured. His wife no longer feels coerced, threatened or controlled and she is free to live her life without fear or threat.

Men's Behaviour Change Programs have engaged with more than 1,800 men since they were established in New South Wales in 2022. They incorporate cognitive behaviour therapy, risk and responsivity, and person-centred, trauma-informed therapy. The most effective Men's Behaviour Change Programs have been found to reduce reoffending up to 40 per cent. We need to continue our focus on stopping offending. [*Extension of time*]

We also want to understand what types of interventions work best for what types of people. We invested an additional \$5 million to do the research to work out what will work for different types of perpetrators. I also said we are taking a whole-of-community approach to address domestic and family violence. I am pleased to share with the House that since last year, when we announced the opening of expressions of interest for primary prevention grants, we have received 145 responses, as of this week. Across New South Wales, communities and local organisations want to be part of the solution. We received responses from sporting clubs, educational institutions and licensed clubs. There is \$4.2 million of funding available for local organisations to be part of the solution to eradicate family and domestic violence in our communities.

We want to continue to partner with local organisations to work on programs that disrupt the drivers of domestic, family and gender-based violence in New South Wales and to promote healthy relationships. We have gone local because we know that local communities know their own solutions. I look forward to updating the House on the results of those grants. We know that the status quo is unacceptable. The Government is working hard to eradicate domestic and family violence, but we cannot do it alone. We need men who use violence to have the courage to accept and take responsibility for their actions, and to change their behaviours. We need the community to work with us to change attitudes and beliefs that condone violence against women. It is through our communities that we will change domestic and family violence outcomes in this State.

### *Rulings*

## QUESTION TIME

**The SPEAKER (12:21):** At the beginning of question time today, I made a ruling to allow the Premier to refer a question to the Minister responsible for the portfolio relevant to the question. I received advice and it was my recollection that this is allowed. I stand by that. The matter will be discussed further, as I have made clear. The Clerks have advised me that it is practice for us to follow the practice in the House of Representatives. The *House of Representatives Practice* states:

A Minister may refuse to answer a question. He or she may also transfer a question to another Minister and it is not in order to question the reason for doing so.

It goes on to state:

It is not unusual for questions addressed to the Prime Minister to be referred to the Minister directly responsible. No direct statement, request or overt action by the Prime Minister is required to indicate that another Minister will answer a question addressed to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister may also choose to answer a question addressed to another Minister.

That is the practice in the House of Representatives. It is not embedded in the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly. However, it has been our practice to follow those rules. I stand by my ruling. I understand that there will be differences of opinion on the matter. I do not believe the issue can be resolved here and now. There is a procedure to do that through the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee. I am happy to have that discussion more fully. Other than that, it is up to the House to hold me accountable for my ruling.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** I seek leave to give notice, pursuant to Standing Order 95, of a motion that this House dissents from a ruling of the Speaker. In question time on 20 February 2025 the member for Cootamundra asked the Premier whether he would personally "step in and agree to meet with me, the frontline workers and their union to hear why he must reverse that reckless decision of his Government".

**Mr Alex Greenwich:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Everybody wants the standing orders applied, until they do not. I am trying to apply the standing orders even-handedly. This is a clear case in point. I will hear the point of order from the member for Sydney.

**Mr Alex Greenwich:** The Leader of the Opposition has sought leave to move a motion. It is unclear whether leave was granted. If leave was not granted, now is not the time to move such a motion; it should be moved at the start of the next question time. Clear rules and procedures govern the moving of a motion of dissent from a ruling of the Speaker.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** To the point of order: I value the view of the member for Sydney, but the Leader of the Opposition is seeking leave. Any member of the House can deny that leave. If the member for Sydney does not agree to grant the leave sought by the Leader of the Opposition, he can refuse to grant it. But the Leader of the Opposition should have an opportunity to seek leave and read out the entire motion that he proposes to seek leave to move.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** He shouldn't have interrupted.

**The SPEAKER:** The standing orders allow for a member to take a point of order. I will not be lectured by the member for Wahroonga on the very basics of the standing orders.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Mr Speaker, you are correct. If a member takes a point of order, it takes precedence over anything else occurring in the House. The Manager of Opposition Business knows that. I make the point that it is not appropriate to reflect on the Speaker's rulings, otherwise the House becomes unmanageable. It has not been tolerated by former Speakers, even reasonable ones. Mr Speaker, you should not tolerate it either.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. I thank the Leader of the House for that clarification. I am quite open and happy to hear the position of the Leader of the Opposition. But he must agree that members are able to take point of orders.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** The Speaker ruled that the question could be answered by the health Minister when the Premier asked the health Minister to respond instead. The health Minister is not the head of the Government, nor the object of the personal request in the question.

**Leave not granted.**

*Business of the House*

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: MOTION OF DISSENT**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (12:27):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the giving of notice of a motion of dissent from the Speaker's ruling forthwith.

As members are aware, understand Standing Order 97, giving of notice for a motion of dissent with precedence can be moved immediately before question time. As the matter of the motion, under Standing Order 95, arose during question time—literally some minutes after the standing orders would have allowed a motion of this kind to be moved—it is the contention of the Opposition that a matter of minutes should not preclude the giving of notice and that standing orders should be suspended to allow the giving of notice.

As you are aware, Mr Speaker, Standing Order 95 does not require that this motion be heard instantly. It must be heard within three sitting days, which means that in all likelihood it will be heard in the next sitting week. But I contend that, if the suspension of standing orders is not agreed to, that will mean this motion cannot be heard before the second sitting week rather than in the next sitting week.

This process will preserve the Opposition's position of objection to the ruling that you made. It will not preclude us from taking up your invitation to have a discussion and consider the matter, but it will mean that it is dealt with in the next sitting week—which I think we would all agree is desirable, having regard to the conduct of question time. We are moving to suspend standing orders. Whether it is a few moments before or after question time should not prevent the Opposition from moving a motion under Standing Order 95. We ask that all parties agree to the very reasonable request that standing orders be suspended so that the motion under Standing Order 95, of which the Leader of the Opposition has just given notice, is brought on in the next sitting week.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:31):** Standing Order 95 makes provision for procedures for dissent from the Speaker's ruling. Paragraph (3) of Standing Order 95 states:

The motion shall take precedence over all other business on the day appointed.

The standing order and the requirement of giving notice has, no doubt, a particular purpose, and that is that the House can consider these matters in the full knowledge of what is contained in the standing orders, what is contained in the practice of the House and what is contained in Erskine's *Parliamentary Practice*—and, if all of that is silent, what is contained in the *House of Representatives Practice*.

There is no urgency for the House to consider matters of this complexity. Question time has finished. A point of order was taken and the Speaker gave a more informed ruling than would normally be given during question time. The issue should not take precedence over the remainder of business today. If a ruling was made by the Speaker on a serious issue and I considered it to be in error and to be prejudicial and unfair to the Opposition, I would seek to dissent from that ruling or seek a reconsideration of that ruling, just as I did to allow the Opposition Leader leave to bring the motion to the attention of the House. The practice that the Government and I, as Leader of the House, have taken is not to show any unfairness to the Opposition and to give the Opposition every fair consideration it is entitled to.

Mr Speaker, if I formed the view that an error was made by the Speaker in a ruling and that error prejudiced the Opposition, I would ask you to reconsider. I cannot say that you made an error. The ruling seems to be consistent with Speaker Torbay's ruling. One argument is that if you follow his ruling, the question to the Premier is probably out of order. I say that this is a stunt. I think it is more about sour grapes over a ruling that has been made. It is designed to be an insult to the Chair. There has been too much disorderly conduct in the Chamber. I have been in this House for a little over 12 years and no other Speaker has tolerated another member of the House interrupting when the Speaker is speaking. It is a practice that has evolved in this House.

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

**Mr RON HOENIG:** Listen to them! I have never seen members of the House trying to shout down the Premier and Ministers when they are trying to give an answer.

**The SPEAKER:** All members will come to order. We must be able to work through this. It is a complex matter that has caused concern to the Manager of Opposition Business. I am willing to try to resolve it, but members will allow the Leader of the House to complete his comments without interjection.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** Interjections are part and parcel of the bearpit. There was a time when interjections were quite humorous or cutting. That seems to have departed the House. The behaviour of members—the disorderly way in which they have been conducting themselves and the way in which they have shown disrespect to the office of the Speaker—is breathtakingly poor. The attempt to suspend standing orders is an insult to the authority of the Chair, and the House should deal with it appropriately.

**The SPEAKER:** Before I call the Manager of Opposition Business, I assure everybody that I am okay. It is all right.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (12:36):** In reply: I make it very clear that we are not proposing, as the Leader of the House seemed to think, that this matter proceed today. In fact, I made it very clear that I wish to take up your invitation, Mr Speaker, to have a discussion about the matter within the three-week break that we are about to have. But if we are not able to come to an agreement about the matter, at least we will then be able to ventilate it in the next sitting week rather than in four or five weeks time. I think that is desirable. I make that point of clarification.

**Ms Donna Davis:** Didn't you want to know about pathology in Cootamundra?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Parramatta will cease interjecting.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** The chatter across the Chamber is interesting, especially given what the Leader of the House just said. I make clear that there is provision within the standing orders for a dissent from the Speaker's ruling. That is of a longstanding nature. It is not a personal attack on you, Mr Speaker, as was suggested by the Leader of the House. Reasonable people can have differences of opinion on what is provided or not provided.

**The SPEAKER:** Members on both sides of the House will come to order.

**Ms Janelle Saffin:** It is hard to be reasonable.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** Then leave.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Terrigal, that is not like you!

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Yes, it is.

**The SPEAKER:** Yes, I know. I was being ironic.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** It is a serious issue that needs to be ventilated. Does the head of government need to respond to questions that are directed to them in question time as the leader of the Executive Government in which every Minister has their portfolios only because of the head of government? Also, when a question is directed personally to the leader of the Government—the head of government—and refers to his Government and asks will he meet with the member and other stakeholders, it is not referring to the health Minister's government. It is a serious issue as to whether that sort of question can be handballed to another Minister. It is not a trivial matter and we wish to have it ventilated. We wish not to be shut out from another business day by reason of a few minutes as to whether a motion is given notice of before question time or directly after it.

**The SPEAKER:** As is appropriate, I remain agnostic on the question. My offer to members to discuss the matter further will stand regardless of the outcome.

The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....31  
 Noes .....51  
 Majority.....20

**AYES**

Anderson, K  
 Ayyad, T  
 Clancy, J  
 Cooke, S  
 Coure, M  
 Cross, M  
 Crouch, A (teller)  
 Griffin, J  
 Henskens, A  
 Hodges, M  
 James, T

Kemp, M  
 Lane, J  
 Layzell, D  
 Moylan, B  
 Petinos, E  
 Preston, R  
 Provest, G  
 Roberts, A  
 Saunders, D  
 Singh, G (teller)

Taylor, M  
 Thompson, T  
 Toole, P  
 Tuckerman, W  
 Tudehope, M  
 Wallace, J  
 Ward, G  
 Williams, R  
 Williamson, R  
 Wilson, F

**NOES**

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

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

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

**PAIRS**

Sloane, K  
 Speakman, M

Watson, A  
 Minns, C

**Motion negatived.**

*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 2596 to 2625 will lapse tomorrow.

*Bills***ROAD RULES AMENDMENT (MOBILE PHONES AS NAVIGATION AIDS FOR PROVISIONAL LICENCE HOLDERS) BILL 2024****Second Reading Speech****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (12:46):** I will start at the beginning of my speech, given there was so much noise earlier. I introduce the Road Rules Amendment (Mobile Phones as Navigation Aids for Provisional Licence Holders) Bill 2024. I note that this bill originated in the other place, brought by the Hon. John Ruddick, MLC, of the New South Wales Libertarian Party. I agreed to take carriage of this bill because it is a commonsense proposal and, frankly, this Parliament needs to see some more common sense. The bill grants provisional drivers over the age of 25 the right to use their mobile phone as a navigational aid whilst driving, provided that device is in a secured cradle. The bill still ensures road safety, which is incredibly important.

Under the bill, drivers may not touch their phone while driving but can preset a map application while the car is parked. By "parked", the bill does not mean stationary at the lights or somewhere like that. The car has to be properly parked as the map app is being preset. This bill does not come out of nowhere. It has resulted from a real-world situation where the current laws failed. At 1.12 a.m. on 20 May 2022, Ms Chiqui Esequé was spotted by a police officer accidentally driving without headlights. The officer saw a mobile phone mounted on a hands-free holder, with the screen illuminated and displaying a GPS application. According to court evidence, the officer said:

... you have a mobile phone displaying a map which you are not allowed to have displayed. As a P plater you are not allowed to use a phone for any reason. Just wait here a minute I'll be back.

Ms Esequé told Senior Constable Frencham that she didn't understand, but she was issued a ticket for the headlights and charged with using a mobile phone while driving. According to New South Wales law, drivers with a learner, P1 or P2 licence are prohibited from using a mobile phone for any purpose while driving. On 15 December 2023, the Supreme Court of New South Wales ruled that Chiqui Esequé, a provisional driver, had violated the law by using a mobile phone device as a GPS while driving. But here is the thing: Ms Esequé knew what the law was. She knew she could not use her phone while driving, but she thought that she was doing the right thing.

She had removed the SIM card from her phone to prevent it from making calls or sending an SMS. She then tethered her phone to a mobile broadband device for internet connectivity. But the Supreme Court determined that the absence of a SIM card and cellular network connection was irrelevant, as calls and messages could still be accessed via voice over internet protocol, known as VOIP.

Ultimately, Supreme Court Justice Monika Schmidt ruled in favour of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, which had appealed a New South Wales Local Court magistrate's decision to acquit Ms Esequé on the grounds that her device was not functioning as a phone. Ms Esequé was ordered to pay the DPP's costs, despite the device not being used for anything other than the purpose of navigation on Sydney's complex road system. That led the Hon. John Ruddick to work towards changing the law. I note that the bill passed the Legislative Council with the vocal support of the Coalition and The Greens. I am glad the bill has received that support. In rural areas like mine, GPS navigation is a godsend for people unfamiliar with the area. The last thing we need in rural areas is people driving around lost and frustrated, because they inevitably make the roads unsafe for everyone else and for themselves. I know that some members who come out to the country get lost and nearly run out of fuel in isolated areas.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Not me.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Not me.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON:** Not present company. During debate on the bill in the other place, the Hon. Susan Carter said:

According to recent statistics, over 80 per cent of drivers in developed countries use GPS navigation systems regularly. This reliance on GPS is not just a matter of convenience but also of safety. Studies have shown that drivers who use GPS are less likely to get lost and are more likely to reach their destinations efficiently, reducing the risk of accidents caused by confusion or sudden lane changes.

We all accept that people should not be using their mobile phones while driving, but surely we can pass a law that allows the sensible and safe use of navigational apps. There are approximately 12,000 provisional licence holders over the age of 25 in New South Wales. Many of those drivers will visit the regions for a holiday—and why wouldn't they, because it is a great place—for work, or simply to see family and friends. Currently, they cannot use a mobile phone as a navigational aid. Does anyone in this place seriously think it would be safer for those drivers to be leafing through a big, thick Gregory's while they are driving? How dangerous would that be? The Minister for Roads said during the second reading debate in the Legislative Council that he has instructed Transport for NSW's Centre for Road Safety to conduct a review of the issue. That review was promised before Christmas, and it still has not happened. We do not need another review; we just need some common sense and for this bill to pass in this place, right now.

### Second Reading Debate

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** Before I call the Minister, I welcome the Hon. John Ruddick, MLC, whose bill the member for Murray has carriage of in this place.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (12:53):** I contribute to debate on the Road Rules Amendment (Mobile Phones as Navigation Aids for Provisional Licence Holders) Bill 2024. I acknowledge the presence of the Hon. John Ruddick from the other place, and his adviser, Will Jennings. It is great to have them here. I thank them for their initiative in introducing the bill to Parliament. I also thank our dear friend the member for Murray, who has given the regional context to the bill. It is important to provide an update on the Government's response to this proposal and the review of rules impacting novice drivers. Last year, during debate on bill, the Minister for Roads advised the Legislative Council that the Centre for Road Safety had been instructed to conduct a review of the rules for novice drivers when it comes to using a mobile phone for navigation. At that time, the Minister committed to providing an update on the review to the Parliament in the first sitting weeks of 2025. Some of that is still in train.

Under the current policy setting, novice drivers—which includes all learner and provisional licence holders—are banned from using a mobile phone for any reason while driving, including navigation. Novice drivers are only permitted to use a mobile phone to show their digital licence if requested by New South Wales police, or to access mobile phone wallet functions if they are off the road, such as in a carpark, driveway or drive-through. As Minister Graham stated during debate on the bill in the other place, there is an overall increased road safety risk for novice drivers. That is particularly apparent during the first six months of a provisional licence because they adjust to driving without supervision for the first time. I am pleased to advise that the review of the current policy settings by the Centre for Road Safety is underway. It was important to undertake the review to fully consider the road safety implications for young and inexperienced drivers, including the risks of distracted driving, as well as the needs of young drivers to be able to navigate in complex road environments.

Transport for NSW has advised of the steps it has taken to progress the review. Those steps have included considering available academic and scientific research; reviewing the approaches taken in other Australian jurisdictions; considering possible options, including those set out in the bill introduced by the Hon. John Ruddick and debated in the other place last year; and engagement with other agencies to seek their feedback on options. It has been particularly important to get feedback from the NSW Police Force on any operational or enforcement factors that need to be considered if changes to current settings are adopted.

I note that New South Wales, along with the Northern Territory, has the most restrictive settings for novice drivers using a mobile phone for navigation, while varied approaches are taken in other States according to the age of the driver or the stage of licensure and how the device is used. Transport for NSW will be further engaging with stakeholders, including the Road Safety Advisory Committee, which is meeting before the end of this month. I thank the members who have engaged with this issue to date. There is still some further work to do, but this opportunity to review the policy settings and to take a considered approach to potential risks for our young drivers and other road users is really important. In fact, it is vital. The Minister for Roads has committed to making the outcomes of the review public in due course and looks forward to sharing those outcomes with interested parties.

The Government is committed to collaborating with all interested parties on this matter. We want to make sure we get the policy settings right. I thank the member for Murray and the Hon. John Ruddick for their interest in this matter and the spirit in which they have engaged in discussions with the Government. The proposal does have merit. However, there are operational issues the Government must carefully consider before agreeing to change the law. This is a good opportunity to review the rules and consider responsible reform. My last speech in Parliament last year was about the issue of road safety and deaths on our roads, particularly on regional roads. Last year, the road toll was 340 people. More than two-thirds of those people died on regional roads. It was not good news but slightly comforting that that number did not increase again last year; it was stable from the previous year. It is something that Government members are cognisant of.

We are doing a lot of proactive work and ensuring that the pace of legislative change is keeping up with the science and with good, informed policy. Members are all aware of the road toll. It is disturbing. The Government has introduced a range of measures to save more lives and reduce the road toll. That is one reason we have had to carefully work through the proposals that have been put forward. I am a mother from regional New South Wales. We are all aware that young drivers are especially vulnerable and have an increased road safety risk profile.

I have two children who are licensed heavy vehicle drivers. They have had extensive training and experience but, in those early years, it was quite worrying whenever they were driving. We know there are cognitive issues with young drivers.

The evidence-based graduated licensing scheme in New South Wales allows people to learn and move on to provisional driver licences. I got my licence in the Australian Capital Territory, where there was not a graduated licensing scheme. Going from the safety net of the L-plate straight to a full driving environment where you were expected to have the same competence as other road users was quite frightening. There was no green or red P-plate to signal to people to say, "Hey, hang on", which is a well-tested and well-introduced approach. The current approach in New South Wales bans all mobile phone use by learner and provisional drivers because we want to remove the safety risk of mobile phones as a source of distraction. That sends the message that mobile phones and driving should be kept separate as drivers develop their skills. Provisional and learner drivers are currently permitted to use dedicated GPS systems that are not a mobile phone. We know that there is a continual evolution of technology, research and understanding of trauma risk as a result of phone use in other jurisdictions, but we also know that the people's cognitive development is a factor.

We agree it is time to look again at those rules. I understand that the proposal, if accepted, would result in a change to the road rules so that provisional drivers aged 25 years and over would be permitted to use a mobile phone as a GPS navigational aid only. I understand what has been taken into consideration but, again, many things come into it. A review of the road rules is being undertaken and all the evidence is being carefully considered. It weighs heavily on me. I get a text message whenever there is a fatality on the road. At 340 fatalities a year, that is nearly one every day. My office contacts the member for every one of those electorates. It weighs heavy to see that somebody's mother, father, brother, sister, aunty, uncle or other family member has lost their life, so we need to be careful.

The bill provides that a mobile phone would be required to be secured in a mounting affixed to the vehicle. Under the bill, the provisional driver would not be able to touch their mobile phone while the vehicle is moving or stopped at traffic lights. To be able to have a navigational application running, the provisional driver would need to set their travel route up before they start driving. Again, we know that does not always happen even with adults who are on full licences, so again we need to be careful. The bill also includes a repeal date of 12 months after the date of commencement, setting up the change as a one-year trial. The Minister in the other place and I acknowledge that this is a genuine attempt to address road safety concerns while facilitating access to a mobile phone for navigational purposes.

We agree that elements such as limiting interactions with any distraction and having the device properly secured are critical. The policy review is considering all these aspects, including how we can reach a satisfactory definition of "permissible use". In conducting the review, we are considering the rules in other States and Territories because there is variation in the way these rules apply across Australia. There may be opportunities for us to increase consistency on the way through. In some of our cross-border communities in places like Tweed, Queanbeyan, Albury and some areas in the Murray electorate it would be quite difficult if we were not consistent.

The graduated licensing scheme has been enormously successful at reducing road trauma among young and inexperienced drivers. It has been progressively strengthened since the early 2000s to reduce risks for novice drivers. For example, in 2004 a zero blood alcohol limit for learner and provisional driver licence holders was introduced. In 2005 changes were made to incorporate vehicle restrictions for provisional P1 and P2 drivers, meaning they were banned from driving high-performance vehicles. In 2007 further changes were made to introduce a zero-tolerance approach for provisional P1 drivers and riders caught speeding, and introduce a peer passenger restriction for young provisional P1 drivers between 11.00 p.m. and 5.00 a.m. In addition, the mandatory hours for supervised on-road driving experience to be recorded in a logbook by young learner drivers was extended to a minimum of 120 hours.

These things are easy for governments to do, but there can be difficulties because communities never want to see a right taken away from them. But we have seen the evidence and the safety outcomes over time. The problem of going the other way and opening up a capacity to do something runs the risk of not ensuring that we have clear guidance from the Centre for Road Safety and scientific experts that it will work in the way we want it to. We need guidance that there will not be a death on our road caused by a young driver or a 25- or 26 year-old

novice driver being distracted. We need clarity around the rules for them. This is the important backdrop against which the review is being undertaken.

We acknowledge there have been technological advancements in mobile phones, including functions like the "do not disturb" mode and the increased integration of phones with vehicle interfaces. Both advancements highlight how this technology is rapidly changing, and it is appropriate for us to re-examine these measures and their impact on provisional drivers. We are taking that opportunity. I reiterate my thanks to the Hon. John Ruddick from the other place, who is in the advisers area, and the member for Murray for bringing the bill to the House. As a regional parent, I understand the frustrations. I make the commitment to them that the Government is working on the review. We will produce those results in due course. I thank the members for their initiative and passionate advocacy.

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (13:05):** On behalf of the Opposition, I speak in debate on the Road Rules Amendment (Mobile Phones as Navigation Aids for Provisional Licence Holders) Bill 2024. As has been noted, according to recent statistics, over 80 per cent of drivers in developed countries use GPS systems regularly. This reliance on GPS is a matter not just of convenience but also of safety. Studies have shown that drivers who use GPS are less likely to get lost and are more likely to reach their destinations efficiently, reducing the risk of accidents caused by confusion or sudden lane changes. In this context, the Opposition is happy to support the bill, which allows provisional drivers aged 25 and over to use their mobile phones as a navigational aid while driving. Under the bill, they may not touch their phone while driving but can preset it while the car is parked.

We note that this legislation is not open ended. It provides for a 12-month trial period, after which time additional legislation may be required to extend or make permanent these new privileges. The Coalition strongly believes in treating people like grown-ups by ensuring freedoms but in the context of adults assuming the consequential responsibilities. Opposition members are happy to support the bill. We thank the Hon. John Ruddick in the other place for bringing the matter to the attention of the House. The approach in the bill ensures we are not only making good decisions but also being responsible stewards for public safety and our personal freedoms. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (13:07):** I thank the member for Murray and the Hon. John Ruddick for introducing the Road Rules Amendment (Mobile Phones as Navigation Aids for Provisional Licence Holders) Bill 2024. The Government has had considerable interaction with the member since he first moved a similar, more wide-ranging version of the bill. There has been significant consultation, and I note that the bill has changed as a result of those discussions and the evidence that the member has examined. Some of those discussions have been under the advice of the Centre for Road Safety. I thank the member for the approach that he has taken on the bill.

I say at the outset that the Government does not support the bill. The suggestion that the Hon. John Ruddick and now the member for Murray have both put forward is certainly not out of the question in New South Wales. However, on balance, the Government wants to carefully sort through some operational issues before agreeing to a change in the law. We agree that there is an opportunity to review the rules and deliver measured reform. All members know and have talked about the rising road toll in New South Wales. We have introduced a number of measures to address it. That is one reason we have had to carefully work through the proposals in the bill.

As the Hon. John Ruddick noted in his second reading speech, young drivers have an increased road safety risk profile. The evidence-based graduated licensing system in New South Wales allows people to learn and move on to provisional driver licences. Some of those licences have been graduated according to age, based on research about brain development and risk-taking behaviour on our roads. The current approach is to ban all mobile phone use by learner and provisional drivers. That approach intends to remove the safety risk of mobile phones as a source of distraction. That policy sends the message that mobile phones and driving should be kept separate as drivers develop their skills.

Provisional and learner drivers are currently permitted to use dedicated GPS systems that are not a mobile phone. However, there is a continual evolution of technology, research and our understanding of trauma risk as a result of phone use in other jurisdictions. We agree with the member that it is time to look again at the rules and carefully consider the best policy settings for young and inexperienced drivers. The road toll weighs heavily on the Government. Provisional New South Wales crash data shows that there were 76 fatalities from young driver crashes in 2023. That was 22 per cent of all New South Wales fatalities in 2023, which was an increase on the previous year.

There is an increased risk for young drivers, especially in the first six months of a provisional P1 licence, as drivers transition to driving without a supervisor for the first time. However, that risk is not limited to young drivers. There is also an increased crash risk for provisional drivers who are 25 years and older when compared with unrestricted licence holders. Those are some of the factors that we must take into account if we are to make a change in this area of law. The Centre for Road Safety has been instructed to conduct a review dealing with the

policy, risks and enforcement mechanisms. That review commenced following discussions with the Hon. John Ruddick since he introduced the bill and will inform the Government's position over time.

I note the changes in the bill. It now provides for a change to the Road Rules so that provisional drivers aged 25 years and over would be permitted to use a mobile phone as a GPS navigational aid only. The mobile phone would be required to be secured in a mounting affixed to the vehicle. Under the bill, the provisional driver would not be able to touch their mobile phone while the vehicle is moving or stopped at traffic lights. To be able to have a navigational application running, the provisional driver would need to set their travel route up while parked and before they start driving.

The bill also includes a repeal date of 12 months after the date of commencement, setting up the change as a one-year trial. The bill genuinely seeks to address road safety concerns while facilitating access to a mobile phone for navigational purposes. The Government agrees that elements such as limiting interactions with any distraction and having the device properly secured are critical. The policy review will consider these kinds of factors, including how we can reach a satisfactory definition of permissible use. I welcome those changes. As I said, they are different to the original bill, but each of those is a welcome protection in the approach that the member is now advocating.

In conducting a policy review, the Transport for NSW Centre for Road Safety will consider the rules in other Australian States and Territories. There is a variation in the way these rules apply across Australia. There may be opportunities for us to increase consistency with other States. We will certainly look at the available evidence to see what is working well and will take into account stakeholder and other agency perspectives. Such a policy review will look at the research and what the evidence says about driver distraction, navigation technology and learner and provisional drivers. Importantly, the review will also examine trauma and offending behaviours with a view to ensuring that the Road Rules remain targeted but readily enforceable. The Government still has some work to do on that last point to make sure that they are enforceable in a commonsense way on our roads.

The Graduated Licensing Scheme has been enormously successful in reducing road trauma in young and inexperienced drivers. It has been progressively strengthened since the early 2000s to reduce risks for novice drivers. I shall recap some of those changes. In 2004 a zero blood alcohol limit for learner and provisional driver licence holders was introduced. In 2005 changes were made to incorporate vehicle restrictions for provisional P1 and P2 drivers, meaning they were banned from driving high-performance vehicles. In 2007 further changes were made to introduce a zero-tolerance approach for provisional P1 drivers and riders caught speeding and a peer passenger restriction for young provisional P1 drivers between 11.00 p.m. and 5.00 a.m. The mandatory hours for supervised on-road driving experience to be recorded in a logbook by young learner drivers was extended to a minimum of 120 hours. While that is a very long period, it has driven a better result on our roads. They are some of the changes that have unfolded. That is the backdrop against which we judge the bill and its effect on our roads.

I acknowledge that there have been technological advancements with mobile phones, including functions like the "do not disturb" mode and the increased integration of phones with vehicle interfaces. That is why it is an appropriate moment for us to re-examine measures concerning mobile phones and provisional drivers. The bill gives us an opportunity to do exactly that. The Government will take that opportunity. I draw the attention of members to the driver licensing system online courses that are now operating, which are increasingly popular with young drivers, and the efforts we are putting in for new drivers through the Driver Licensing Access Program. In February last year those matters were all discussed at the Road Safety Forum when we brought together experts from around the country and the world. I conclude by again thanking both the Hon. John Ruddick and the member for Murray for introducing the bill.

As the Minister for Regional Roads has advised the House today, the review of the current policy settings by the Centre for Road Safety is underway. It has been important to undertake that review to consider road safety implications for young and inexperienced drivers, including the risks of distracted driving as well as the needs of young drivers to be able to navigate in complex road environments like the Sydney network or—noting the member for Murray's concerns—rural and regional areas. We know that there is an increased risk when using a mobile phone as a navigational device, but these drivers face significant practical issues as they move around. The member has laid out the case for reform in this space well.

We need to look at the evidence and the technological advancements that have taken place since this matter was last considered. However, we need to do it in a way that keeps people safe on our roads. Given the state of the road toll at the moment, we need to make sure that these measures are enforceable. I also acknowledge the advice that the Government has received from the NRMA. It has been extremely helpful in sorting through the complexity of these issues. I know that the member has engaged with the NRMA directly as well. That advice is one of the reasons the bill is now in a very different form to when it was first conceived. I note the bill and thank the member.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (13:17):** I contribute to debate on the Road Rules Amendment (Mobile Phones as Navigation Aids for Provisional Licence Holders) Bill 2024. There can be argy-bargy in the House. As we saw earlier today, things can sometimes get combative but, in my time in this place, I have been pleased to see that there is very much a bipartisan approach to reducing the road toll and improving road safety where possible. That being said, the Government does not support the bill. I do, however, thank the Hon. John Ruddick and the member for Murray for introducing the bill; it is certainly an idea that needs consideration. As I said, when it comes to road safety, we all take a measured, considered and bipartisan approach to reducing the road toll and improving road safety. I have been involved in a number of petition debates on issues of road safety in my short time as a member.

While the Government does not support the bill, it does not dismiss it outright. The issue lies with a number of operational concerns that need to be addressed before looking at legislative change.

The Government acknowledges the need to review the current rules and explore measured reform. The Minister spoke earlier about that process. A key concern is the rising road toll in the State, which has continued to climb post-COVID. It is important that we do what we can to improve the road toll. It is also important to ensure that any changes are evidence based and made cautiously. The last thing we want is unintended consequences from implementing changes without due consideration.

This bill obviously concerns young drivers. I have a young driver in my household, my daughter, who got her Ps last year. As she left the house on the morning of her test, I remember thinking, "She's not going to pass. I've seen her drive." When she came back, she had passed. I was a little bit frightened, but I can now say that she is a very sensible driver. I am proud when I see her out and about on the road with her P-plates. Young drivers have a higher risk driving profile. I am happy to put my hand up and say that when I was of driving age and got my first licence, my brain had possibly not fully formed or matured. Some members may think that I am still not there, but we will leave that up for debate.

We set age restrictions of 16, 17 and 18 years of age for when young drivers can start to apply for their Ls and Ps. These drivers have a higher risk profile because it takes time for their brains to fully form and for them to develop better reaction times, which is reflected in the road toll statistics. The graduated licensing system in this State is evidence based and structured to reduce risks for young and inexperienced drivers. That is why we have L-plates, red Ps and green Ps. There were 76 young driver fatalities in 2023. This accounted for 22 per cent of all fatalities, the number of which had increased from the previous year, which goes to my earlier point about the increased post-COVID road toll.

The highest risk period for a driver is their first six months of driving. All members who drive will know that we gain instinctive driving skills. When my daughter is driving and I am sitting in the passenger seat, I will say, "Watch out! This idiot is about to pull in front of you." Within about five seconds that idiot does pull in front. These skills develop over time. It takes a while for young drivers to develop them, which is why the first six months are so critical. What if someone decides they do not need to get their licence when they are 16 or 17 and instead gets their Ps after the age of 25? As youth and cognitive development issues remain to a certain extent, even provisional drivers who are over the age of 25 have a higher risk profile when compared to unrestricted licence holders of the same age. This reflects provision drivers' lack of instinctive traits which come from driving experience.

I drive to Parliament every morning, and on days like today I can feel a little bit tired from lack of sleep. I do not want to single any drivers out, but it tends to be big utes driven by tradies that duck in and out more than the average car. Drivers develop an instinctive feeling for when cars are going to whip in and out. This is why it is important that drivers have their eyes and all of their sense concentrated on the road. This is especially true when driving down roads like the M5, which I drive on every morning. Things like mobile phones can be distracting.

Members only need to look at this place during question time, or even right now, to see that these are very distracting devices with their ding-dongs and notifications—Candy Crush is no doubt front and centre of some members' minds. That is why phone use is restricted while driving and the Government intends to keep it that way until it has undertaken its review. The idea behind this policy is to send a clear message that mobile phones and driving should be kept separate. The rules differ in other Australian States and Territories. The Government wants to do two things: firstly, look at evidence-based best practice; and secondly, keep things consistent. That is very important for border towns. We want to make sure that the rules are consistent if someone is whipping over the Murray River or Tweed River between jurisdictions. It will take a bit of time to ensure that new laws are evidence based and consistent.

The Transport for NSW Centre for Road Safety is conducting a review to work out the best way forward. The review will look at policy considerations; risks, which I spoke about earlier; the practicality of enforcing any

changes; and research and evidence on driver distraction and emerging mobile phone and car technologies. In recent years changes were made to allow provisional drivers over the age of 25 to use a mobile phone as a GPS navigation aid. There are restrictions on this, including that the mobile phone must be mounted, the route must be set before the trip and the driver must not touch the phone while driving. Perhaps a review is needed, given the increase in emerging technologies and given that cars are getting fancier.

When I am driving in my vehicle, I can press the little microphone button and say, "Navigate to New South Wales Parliament," and away it goes. We need to ensure that the law is not unnecessarily limiting the convenience of these technologies if they are safe to use. To wrap up, I acknowledge the work of the member for Murray and the Hon. John Ruddick, from the other place, to refine this bill and bring it before the House. The Centre for Road Safety review will ensure that any decision the Government makes is based on evidence and road safety. I finish my remarks by acknowledging the contribution of stakeholders, including the NRMA.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (13:27):** Mr Temporary Speaker—

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Before you start, Ron, this is how you change a tyre.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I remind the Minister at the table that this is not about an instruction manual on how to change a tyre in the western sands of Tibooburra. The Road Rules Amendment (Mobile Phones as Navigation Aids for Provisional Licence Holders) Bill 2024 is an important suggestion by the Hon. John Ruddick, who has shepherded the bill through the other place for this House to consider. During the process, the Government has undertaken considerable consultation on this bill with the Hon. John Ruddick. This is a proposal of merit and it is not out of the question in New South Wales. Some law enforcement agencies are opposed to this suggestion. When there is an expression of concern from the New South Wales police that something will adversely impact road safety, it is vital that the Government and the Parliament listen.

As someone who was in local government before I was elected to this House, I have been a member of a local traffic committee for decades. For my sins, I am a member of four traffic committees. When there is a choice between one matter and another, and advice is provided that one decision increases the dangers of road safety, we should always take the option that we are advised is the safer one. We do that for two reasons. Firstly, if we reject that advice, we must accept personal responsibility for any tragedy or injury that might occur as a result of the decision. Secondly, when advice is provided by various types of experts, that advice is not just made on a whim or because they have a philosophical view. They have a genuine professional view, based on their experience in their chosen calling. That advice is provided to people like us, who are not qualified in the particular area but who make decisions in the best interests of the communities we represent.

The Government takes the position—and I know this is the Minister's position because I have spoken to him in relation to it—that the suggestion is not without merit. It needs to be further examined. Important work is underway to work through a variety of operational issues for the Government regarding what the bill proposes. But at this stage, in the interests of road safety, the Government cannot support the bill. The Government agrees that there is an opportunity to review the rules in place for mobile phones to be used for navigational purposes. The Government also agrees that there is an opportunity to deliver sensible, measured reform.

Members in this place are well aware of the rising road toll in New South Wales. We know the devastating impact that road incidents and fatalities have, specifically on regional and rural roads. Every member of this House accepts that every death on a New South Wales road is a tragedy. We also know, not only from the research provided to us but also from our own life experience, that young drivers are especially vulnerable to road accidents within the first six months of receiving their provisional licence. That is why there are particular restrictions.

Those of us who have had the fortune to teach our children to drive and see them progress from a learner to a P-plater have sat in the passenger seat in morbid terror as they negotiated the road. I remember ringing the member for Bankstown once and his voice was quivering because one of his children was driving the car. I have been told some years ago—and I do not know whether it is right—that in modern times there are fewer young people with driver licences than there were in the '50s. Firstly, they have a culture generally not to drink and drive; secondly, there was the advent of point-to-point transport, such as Uber. Nevertheless, I assure members, from my personal experience watching my children learn to drive, including how they would try to change lanes or negotiate a roadway, that negotiating behind a wheel safely takes considerable driving experience.

Evidence gathered over a long period has shown that the Graduated Licensing Scheme in New South Wales has been enormously successful in reducing road trauma in young and inexperienced drivers. Since the early 2000s in particular it has been strengthened to reduce the risk for novice drivers. Any distraction for a novice driver places somebody with already reduced experience at risk. I do not know what the experience of other members is but, in recent years, whenever I see a P-plater on the road—there used to be only red Ps but now there

are green Ps—I take additional care. P-platers these days are clearly not as experienced in driving as the generation before were—it is clear from the way some of them navigate a road—so we need to pay particular attention.

It is not just young people and inexperienced drivers who get distracted by mobile phones. As I look around this Chamber I can see one of our parliamentary colleagues who received a substantial injury relating to a mobile phone and texting while walking. It happens to many of us who are distracted in life by the use of our mobile phones. I noticed that Temporary Speaker Greenwich did not even look up when I referred to his history. There are valid reasons for the concerns expressed by law enforcement agencies.

The history of intervention for provisional drivers is interesting to examine. A zero blood alcohol limit for learners and provisional drivers was introduced in 2004. The following year, changes were made to incorporate vehicle restrictions for P1 and P2 drivers, banning them from driving high-performance vehicles. In 2007 the Parliament made further changes to introduce a zero tolerance approach for P1 drivers and riders caught speeding. Passenger restrictions for young P1 drivers between 11.00 p.m. and 5.00 a.m. were introduced to target high-risk behaviours. I assure members that that period is high risk, when I think about what I was doing with a group of mates in a car after 11.00 p.m. The mandatory time for supervised on-road driving to be recorded in a logbook by young learner drivers was also extended to a minimum of 120 hours. The main purpose was to increase the amount of driving experience of young drivers. [*Extension of time*]

Quite fascinatingly, changes made to the licensing system were based on research about brain development and risk-taking behaviour on our roads. Returning to the bill, under the proposal, a provisional driver would not be able to touch their mobile phone while the vehicle is moving or stopped at traffic lights.

To be able to have a navigational application running, the provisional driver would need to set their travel route while parked before they start driving. The bill also includes a repeal date of 12 months after the date of commencement, setting up the change as a one-year trial. The Government agrees that elements such as limiting interactions with any distraction and having the device properly secured are critical. The review that the Government is undertaking will consider those kinds of factors, including how to reach a satisfactory definition of "permissible use".

The current approach in New South Wales is to ban all mobile phone use by learner and provisional drivers. Novice drivers are only permitted to use their mobile phones to show their digital licence if requested by New South Wales police if they are off the road, such as in a driveway, carpark or a drive-through. To date, that policy has sent a clear message that mobile phones and driving should be kept separate as young and inexperienced drivers develop their skills and confidence on our roads. The policy exists because the Government and the Parliament wanted to remove the safety risk of mobile phones as a source of distraction. Experienced drivers know and take for granted that split-second decisions made behind the wheel can have lifelong impacts on individuals, families and communities. Lives are never the same. Provisional New South Wales crash data shows that there were 76 fatalities in crashes involving young drivers in 2023, which was a significant portion of the road toll at 22 per cent of all New South Wales fatalities. That is horrendous. The risks are not limited to young drivers but also apply to those aged over 25 years on a provisional licence.

As I said, a comprehensive review is underway to consider road and safety implications of the use of mobile phones for navigation by young and inexperienced drivers. The review is wide-ranging. It is considering the available academic research and involves engaging with multiple agencies, including New South Wales police. The police have a vitally important enforcement role. There are factors that need to be considered before making the changes to the current policy settings that the bill proposes. I am advised that Transport for NSW is engaging with a range of other stakeholders, including the NSW Road Safety Advisory Council, because the Government wants to make sure that policy settings are right. The review will examine approaches taken in other Australian jurisdictions to mobile phone use by provisional drivers and whether there are opportunities for New South Wales to increase consistency with other States. Importantly the review will also examine trauma and offending behaviours with a view to ensuring that the Road Rules remain targeted but also readily enforceable. It is on that last point that the Government still has some work to do.

The bill genuinely seeks to address road safety concerns. Every life lost on New South Wales roads is one life too many. The Government recognises the evolution of mobile technology and the impact that it has had on driving behaviours. The Government agrees with the Hon. John Ruddick that it is time to examine the rules again and carefully consider the best policy settings for young and inexperienced drivers. That is what the review by Transport for NSW Centre for Road Safety is looking at. The road toll weighs heavily on the Government and every member in this place. Above all, the Government's main responsibility is to keep people safe on our roads. The Government does not support the bill.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (13:43):** In reply: I thank the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Jenny Aitchison; the member for Castle Hill; the member for Camden; the member for Leppington and

the member for Heffron for their insightful and long contributions. I also thank the Hon. John Ruddick for giving me the opportunity of presenting this sensible bill to the House.

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

**The House divided.**

[*In division*]

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I understand that there is an issue with the lifts, which will not surprise members at all. I extend the time for the division by two minutes.

Ayes .....35

Noes .....44

Majority.....9

AYES

Anderson, K  
Ayyad, T  
Clancy, J  
Coore, M  
Cross, M  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Dalton, H  
Griffin, J  
Hannan, J  
Henskens, A  
Hodges, M  
James, T

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

Singh, G  
Taylor, M  
Thompson, T  
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  
Davis, D  
Dib, J  
Doyle, T  
Finn, J

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

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

PAIRS

Speakman, M  
Watson, A

Sloane, K  
Minns, C

**Motion negated.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The time for debate has expired. I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

*Motions*

**LEPPINGTON ELECTORATE TRAFFIC CONGESTION**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (14:30):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that motorists of Leppington will benefit from fast-tracked upgrade works at Fifteenth Avenue.
- (2) Acknowledges the need for further action to address ongoing congestion issues due to the 12 years of neglect by the previous Government.
- (3) Commends the Government for its commitment to easing congestion in Leppington.

Two days ago, during the Public Interest Debate, I said I could talk for hours about Fifteenth Avenue. That was not a threat; it was a promise. As members know, the Leppington electorate has some of the fastest growing suburbs anywhere in the State and probably in the country. In Austral, Leppington, Denham Court and right through that south-west growth area, we have seen thousands of houses constructed over the past decade or so. Unfortunately, due to 12 years of neglect by those opposite, what we did not see was a commensurate investment in critical infrastructure: schools, hospitals, open space, public transport and roads. Fifteenth Avenue is emblematic of that lack of investment.

The Premier described that road as a goat track. That is a little unkind, but it is a rather accurate description. Every day tens of thousands of vehicles travel down that road. At present, it is a one-lane council road. For the most part, there is no kerb or gutter. To expect families, workers, students and tradies to travel up and down that road each and every morning and afternoon and to be stuck in congestion that can sometimes stretch for up to four kilometres is simply unacceptable. I know that. Government members know that. The people of my community know that. That is why, when I put my hand up to run for the electorate of Leppington, I made a steadfast commitment that, should I be elected, the Government would commit \$50 million to that road.

That was an initial injection of funds to get things moving, and in a very short time we have seen some action. We have done some initial design work and addressed some low-hanging fruit to relieve congestion. Work has already started on an additional lane at the intersection of Fifteenth Avenue and Cowpasture Road, which will clear traffic that backs up in the morning. That \$50 million will also go towards longer-term planning and design work. I am happy to report that, since I first gave notice of this motion on 20 November, there has been some very big news in relation to Fifteenth Avenue. The news has been kept under wraps; I have only told every second person instead of every person I have bumped into. A few weeks ago I was joined by the Prime Minister, the Premier and a host of State and Federal Ministers and local members to announce that \$1 billion has been allocated to fix Fifteenth Avenue.

Members on one side of the Chamber invest in Western Sydney, understand the concerns of Western Sydney and ensure that the people of Western Sydney get to where they need to be in fantastic communities that have fantastic infrastructure. It may come as no surprise that it is the Government side of the Chamber that loves Western Sydney, whereas the Opposition side neglects Western Sydney. During the Public Interest Debate I mentioned that to the previous roads Minister, who is now the shadow roads Minister, has a form of Fifteenth amnesia. She has mentioned it several times in estimates and in the other place, but we checked the recordings—the video assistant referee—to see how many times she mentioned it when she was the Minister. How many times did she mention it when she was the Minister?

**Ms Charishma Kaliyanda:** Once?

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** No.

**Mr Stephen Kamper:** Twice?

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** No.

**Mrs Sally Quinnell:** Three times a lady?

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** The other way—zero, nought, zilch, duck egg, nothing.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! There will be no call and response from the member.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. As you know, nothing gets me more excited than \$1 billion for Fifteenth Avenue. I am very excited about this because it is something I have been fighting for over many years. I have spoken about the Opposition spokesperson for roads and how she has just found out about Fifteenth Avenue, now that the Coalition has lost government. But when it comes to Labor, whether we are in opposition or in government, we stick to our principles and our commitments. I remember that a few weeks after Premier Chris Minns was elected as the former Opposition leader, he visited me when I was a councillor at Liverpool, and guess where we met—Fifteenth Avenue. It is not just me who has known about Fifteenth Avenue, but the Premier as well. He saw the congestion and he made a commitment to act. Now that we

are in government, we are delivering for the people of Leppington, the people of Western Sydney and the people of New South Wales. It is very exciting news.

I know that when some of my colleagues speak during this debate, they will talk about easing congestion right across Western Sydney. There is still more to do. This is fantastic news, but we accept there is more to do. It takes a lot of effort, a lot of hard work and a lot of money to fix 12 long years of neglect by those opposite. I will not rest on my laurels. I will continue to work hard. We will get Fifteenth Avenue done, but we will also address some of the other ongoing congestion issues in Leppington, in Western Sydney and right across New South Wales.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (14:37):** I thank the member for Leppington for moving the motion because it gives me the opportunity to talk about the Coalition's delivery versus Labor's cuts, lies and broken promises. A \$1 billion upgrade of Fifteenth Avenue is fantastic, but let me make it clear that it was not Labor's idea. The win belongs to the local community and the Liverpool council, not to the member for Leppington or other Government members. A photo opportunity, a sod-turn or a novelty cheque does not mean that the member for Leppington did the work. The hard yards were put in by the local community through a hard-fought grassroots campaign demanding an upgrade from the Government to this major roadway.

I commend the local community and the fantastic Mayor of Liverpool, Ned Mannoun, for their efforts in writing to MPs, Ministers and shadow Ministers, in doorknocking and conducting media campaigns. They work hard day in, day out to ensure that south-west Sydney gets the attention it deserves from members opposite.

As we all know, there was a lot of show from members opposite. But, when it came to it, they were asleep at the wheel. There must be a Federal election in the air in Australia, because what we have from members opposite is an election commitment. No money of course—it is just an election commitment.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Terrigal is very close to being called to order. He will cease interjecting.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** I might take myself out of the Chamber.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** That is a fantastic idea. Government members will not provoke the member for Oatley. He needs no provocation at all.

**Mr MARK COURE:** I do not need any provocation at all. Thousands of local residents signed a petition calling on that to happen, and I thank everyone who did. It was thanks to their advocacy that we can finally see some movement on this important project. But the timing of the announcement is convenient. Labor knows that its heartland electorates are under threat. Those who live in south-west Sydney know that Labor has taken them for granted for far too long. The Prime Minister knows that. That is why he coughed up \$500 million for the project, forcing the Minns Labor Government to do exactly the same. I would be interested to see how many letters the member for Leppington, the member for Liverpool, the member for Camden or the member for Penrith have written to the Minister for Roads. In fact, I would like to know if the Minister at the table, Minister Kamper, actually spoke up for south-west Sydney around the Cabinet table. I am willing to bet that he did not.

Because electorates like Werriwa will determine the next Federal election, we will see more promises like that between now and whenever the Federal election will be—let's say 12 April, give or take a week or two. Federal and State Labor know that the aspirational, hardworking families who live in south-west Sydney are increasingly turning against the Labor Party. They know that living costs, transport and infrastructure, and education are major issues for south-west Sydney that are being neglected by members opposite. The Premier and the Prime Minister have also claimed that the upgrade will link Liverpool and Leppington to the aerotropolis in south-west Sydney. But, according to their own diagrams, the upgrade will not even make it that far; it will only go to Devonshire Road, which is five kilometres away from the new airport site.

The uncertainty around this announcement continues. That is not necessarily the fault of the member for Leppington. He is only a newcomer with his L plates on, so we cannot blame him. Having been a member for less than two years, he obviously does not have much experience in what good government looks like. Local residents want to know how much it will cost in total, when construction will start, how many houses will be knocked down to build it, and more. The member for Leppington was so desperate not to make Fifteenth Avenue just another Labor broken election promise that he had to beg the Prime Minister and the Premier to save it and rush the announcement even before Transport for NSW had finished the business case.

This Government is all about the photo op and never about the details. In contrast, the former Liberal-Nationals Government has a formidable track record of delivering infrastructure across New South Wales, and indeed across south-west Sydney. When we were in government, we did not just talk about the upgrades; we delivered them. We actually built stuff: WestConnex, M5 upgrades, metro systems the M8 and more. We

completed school upgrades, hospital upgrades and much more. Members on this side of the House understand the issues affecting south-west Sydney. We put south-west Sydney first time and again, and actions speak louder than words. I move:

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

- (1) Commends Liverpool council for its proactive approach in improving local infrastructure and easing congestion in Leppington.
- (2) Acknowledges the council's leadership in fast-tracking upgrade works at Fifteenth Avenue, which will benefit local motorists and enhance connectivity.
- (3) Recognises the importance of continued investment in road and transport infrastructure to meet the needs of Liverpool's growing community.
- (4) Congratulates the shadow Minister for South-West Sydney, Mark Coure, MP, on his strong advocacy and support for this vital project for the region.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (14:45):** In making a contribution to debate on the motion moved by the member for Leppington, it is important to acknowledge the importance of Fifteenth Avenue to the entire region. More than 60 per cent of people in Camden leave my area to commute every day, and large numbers of them go to Liverpool. To do so, they go along Fifteenth Avenue. It is a major collector road. The fact that it was neglected and deliberately cast aside as unimportant has been so detrimental to the lives and mental health of the people in our region. I am thrilled that the member for Oatley brought up the Federal election, because it is important to clarify that Fifteenth Avenue was not an election commitment by the Federal Labor Government; it was in the budget. The money has been put aside. It is ready to go.

It is important to recognise that the road was so neglected, yet so important to the area, that it took two levels of government working together to fix it. In my neck of the woods, the Hon. Angus Taylor has been the Federal member for Hume for 12 years. For 12 years he has failed to deliver on the major road and rail infrastructure that we need. We will be opening a brand-new airport just north of my electorate but, at the moment, the member for Hume has provided zero public transport to service my area. We have no way of getting to an airport for work or travel. When that happens, it once again falls to the Minns Labor Government to mop up that neglect. I call on Angus Taylor to commit to the people of Hume, who he apparently represents, and fix our rail issues.

I call on the member for Hume to fix the neglect so the people of Camden can access the Hume Highway in more than one place. At the moment, we can only get on the Hume Highway at Narellan Road. It is at a complete standstill. The other alternative is to go via Camden Valley Way, which Camden Council only last week asked to be upgraded. Those are all parts of Hume. I call on Angus Taylor to give us the upgrades that we need. For 12 years he has not delivered for the people of Hume, and it has taken the involvement of our State Government to finally unpack the neglect of the former State and Federal Coalition governments. It is very important that we can talk about all rail and road infrastructure, whether that be Camden Valley Way, Heath Road in the Leppington electorate or Spring Farm Parkway stage two. There has been too much neglect, and it is time to put it right.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (14:49):** I support the motion moved by the member for Leppington. It is a good and necessary motion that speaks to the decade of neglect and under-investment in south-western Sydney by the former State and Federal Liberal-Nationals governments. On 19 January I joined the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Prime Minister, the Commonwealth Minister for Infrastructure, and Federal and State colleagues to announce joint funding of \$1 billion to better connect Western Sydney to the world. The member for Leppington and the member for Camden spoke about the connection and the need to upgrade the current goat track to connect my community of Liverpool, in particular, to the airport. My community must be connected to the jobs, investment and essential economic development at the new airport.

This investment is important. The Albanese and Minns governments have committed to upgrade Fifteenth Avenue to create a critical transit corridor from Liverpool to the new Western Sydney International Airport. I have spoken to many community members and have looked on social media. I know that the communities of south-west Sydney—Liverpool, Leppington, Camden and many others who will benefit from the upgrade—are very excited. Like I said last week during a similar debate, the former Government's neglect and under-investment is the reason Labor won the seats of Camden and Leppington. Labor almost won the seats of Holsworthy and Oatley. We will win them in 2027—do not worry!

**Mr Stephen Kamper:** You have those ideas in your head.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** Exactly. The member for Oatley spoke about how the idea of investing \$1 billion was delivered through divine intervention; not because of the campaigns of the member for Leppington and the member for Camden, or because Labor fundamentally acknowledges and knows that the communities of south-west Sydney are important. We are investing in our communities. Every day more than

22,000 vehicles travel along the congested two-lane Fifteenth Avenue. Approximately 8 per cent of those vehicles are trucks. Liverpool City Council predicts a significant increase in housing in the areas immediately around Fifteenth Avenue, which could include up to 63,000 additional people living in those areas by 2041.

I contrast the motion moved by the member for Leppington with the amendment proposed by the member for Oatley. It is laughable. The member for Oatley patted himself on the back—which I understand because, unfortunately, no other Opposition member will pat him on the back. He should put his hand up for leader. He would do a great job, even if no-one else on his side of the House thinks so. The proposed amendment glorifies incompetence. It references a petition put forward by a consultant that Liverpool City Council paid \$100,000 of ratepayers' money. Guess how many signatures that petition received?

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** Surely it was tens of thousands.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** It received 500 signatures. I note that as a result of the shortfall of signatures for that petition, the member for Oatley sponsored a parliamentary petition. Guess how many signatures that petition received? [*Time expired.*]

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (14:53):** I say to the people of south-western Sydney, beware: This Government promises big but delivers little. I only have to tell the story of what happened on the South Coast. For 16 years Labor promised upgrades to the Princes Highway. Fifteenth Avenue will be named Thirtieth Avenue by the time Labor gets around to building it. Labor does not build things. Our Liberal-Nationals Government funded and built the Sydney Opera House, but Labor got to cut the ribbon. We funded and built the Harbour Bridge; those opposite cut the ribbon. The funding for Fifteenth Avenue upgrade will be eaten up in planning. There will be committees, great press releases and social media posts, but I suspect it will not be delivered. I will watch to see when the golden shovels come out and the Government actually does something.

On the South Coast we have been promised everything from off-ramps at West Dapto to the East Nowra Sub Arterial. The Government has promised almost \$1 billion for upgrades to the Princes Highway south of Nowra. But it does not deliver. The people of south-western Sydney should not be taken in by the panache, pizzazz and effervescence of a media conference because Labor just does not know how to build things. It could not build a cubby house even if it had the nails, wood and tools required. It has absolutely no capacity to build projects and never has. Even basic road improvements announced by Labor at the last election will not commence until after the next election. How can anyone have any faith in what Labor says it will deliver?

**Mr Stephen Kamper:** Can't you be positive about something positive?

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I will say something positive. How great is the F6 extension that the Minister is getting in his electorate? That upgrade was funded by poles and wires, which the Minister voted against. Government members have the audacity to take credit for the metro project and the F6 extension—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** The money would be available if Labor was in office at the time because it voted against it at every opportunity.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order!

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Labor voted against every spending measure of the former Government. Now Government members take credit for it all.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! The member for Kiama will come to order. It is not necessary to deliver his contribution at that volume.

**Mr Mark Coure:** It's exciting.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** It is not exciting. It is headache provoking.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I just wanted the Legislative Council to be able to hear it.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The member for Kiama does not need to speak that loudly. Government members will not rise to the provocation.

**Mr Stephen Kamper:** He's scaring me.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I cannot even see the Minister. He cannot possibly be scared. I can smell him, but I cannot see him. What I do smell, however, is nonsense. It does not matter that Government members seem to walk both sides of the street when it comes to privatisation. The other day, the Premier said the Government opposed the leasing of ports. Former Leader of the Opposition Luke Foley supported the leasing of ports in order to pay for infrastructure that the current Government is now taking credit for. Government members will get

repetitive strain injury from the use of novelty Ministers wandering around the State, cutting ribbons on projects they voted against. Labor voted against so many of the initiatives undertaken in order to fund those projects, be it poles and wires or the lease of ports. Now Government members have the temerity and audacity to tell their communities that they are delivering. The people of south-western Sydney should not believe it until they see it. This Government talks a big game on infrastructure, but which Labor project announced at the last election has commenced?

**Mrs Sally Quinnell:** Gledswood Hills High School is finished.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** That was planned for by the former Government. Labor shut down 90 preschools when it was last in government. Labor had nothing to do with it. It is amazing. These projects are like sea monkeys. The Government just adds water, and they pop out of the ground. All the planning was done by the former Government. Government members would take credit for the internet if they could. They are shameless when it comes to taking credit for projects.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** I remind the member for Kiama that he is on three calls to order. I have asked the member to lower his voice. He is inciting bad behaviour in the Chamber. It is not necessary. If the member for Kiama continues to raise his voice, he will be removed from the Chamber. The member for Camden is very close to being called to order.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Government members are taking credit for so many projects that were funded by the previous Government. Of course, the Minister says, "I'm so sorry." He will turn up, smile and take the credit for all the projects he voted against. He will convince his community that he had something to do with the metro project, the roads, the new hospitals and the new schools. Will the Government have the guts to make the tough decisions to make sure the infrastructure pipeline continues? The reality is that the pipeline of infrastructure projects being delivered across the State over the next 12 years will not be the result of a single Minns Government decision. Those projects will be the result of the hard work, dedication and diligence of the former Government. The current Government does not have the guts.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (14:59):** I am actually here to speak to the next motion on the *Business Program*, but as Parliamentary Secretary for Transport it would be remiss of me not to contribute to this debate and to reflect on the abject failure of the previous Government when it came to funding and supporting Western Sydney. It is an absolute shame. Even the good people of the eastern suburbs acknowledge that a huge amount of the growth in New South Wales is in Western Sydney and there has been disproportionate funding—not put where the growth is in this city.

The member for Kiama has a pretty short memory when it comes to this stuff. In all seriousness, the Premier opened the metro with former premiers from the other side. In no way, shape or form have we ever claimed that we can take full credit for it. I know that opposition is hard. It is a bit difficult, and it is easy to get hysterical. But there are some uncomfortable truths for members opposite. Maybe they should take a deep breath and take it all in. We are completely forthcoming when it comes to this stuff.

The motion acknowledges congestion issues in Leppington. I must also reflect on congestion issues in the eastern suburbs. I have talked plenty of times in this place about significant issues regarding public transport in my area and the significant congestion issues that now happen because the previous Government privatised our buses and removed 32 bus routes—all to force people onto a light rail that had more than doubled and blew out. When it rains, it does not work. It shuts down, forcing people onto the roads and adding to the congestion.

There is a very long history—the previous Government was in power for more than a decade—of absolute abject failure to invest in good projects that address the growing demands of a complex and diverse city. I commend the member for Leppington for bringing the motion to the House. I acknowledge the remarkable work of our Ministers for roads, education, transport—

**Mr Stephen Kamper:** Crown land?

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL:** Sport—I acknowledge everyone for the work that they are doing, having to play catch-up. For more than a decade there has been abject failure, particularly when it comes to the western suburbs. It is interesting, as I look to the member for Camden, that an area that in recent history was considered rural is now a growing metropolis. As someone who has gone out, leading our bus passenger taskforce, that is the first time anything like that had happened in more than 25 years. Not since the Unsworth review had a government sought to review our public transport system and acknowledge that our buses do the major lifting. There are communities where people cannot even get—

**Mr Mark Coure:** And they are still not fixed.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL:** Yes, because you cocked up the contracts, mate.

**Mr Mark Coure:** You've had two years to do it.

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

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL:** As I said, opposition is hard, mate. Keep talking from the cheap seats. There was abject failure of the previous Government—huge neglect—and we now have the mammoth task of trying to clean up the mess that it created.

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (15:03):** By leave: I speak in this debate to try to persuade everyone in this House to vote for the amendment moved by the member for Oatley. I was not going to seek leave and speak, but I felt compelled to, particularly about the amendment that recognises the importance of continued investment in road and transport infrastructure to meet the needs of Liverpool's growing community. That is something that all members can agree on. What really compelled me to speak was paragraph (4), which congratulates the shadow Minister for South-Western Sydney, Mark Coure, for his strong advocacy and support for this vital project in the region. When he was elected in 2011 everyone thought he would do good work for four years, but would have a tough time. He is in the most marginal seat. Twelve years later, he is still here. He continually works hard for the people of Oatley and southwest Sydney.

The motion of the member for Leppington was titled "Congestion in Leppington". We all dislike congestion. There are ways to combat congestion. The key thing is to build infrastructure. Building infrastructure is key for any government. I am proud of the Liberal-Nationals record when it comes to investment in infrastructure. You cannot go past the Sydney Metro. It is a transformational project. Even the Labor Party endorses the project. And it should! It is an amazing project. I am glad that it is now going to Bankstown. That will open later this year. Getting the metro took a lot of political capital, particularly by the former transport Minister, Treasurer and Premier, Gladys Berejiklian.

Looking at Labor's record on metro, in 2008 Morris Iemma, who was Premier, had a vision of metro, but of course that was all on the back of the privatisation of assets—something that he championed. The Labor conference said no, and the caucus rolled Morris Iemma. The metro was then reimagined in 2009 by Premier Nathan Rees. Nathan Rees—big picture man—said, "Let's build a metro from the CBD to Rozelle." Who wants to get a metro to Rozelle? Then Premier Keneally came to office and she cancelled the Rozelle Metro. But it was not just cancelling a metro; it cost taxpayers half a billion dollars with absolutely nothing to show.

**Mr Stephen Kamper:** Western Sydney, mate.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** The Australian Labor Party has great form when it comes to metro and it took a coalition government, with people like Mark Coure in it, to build it. I acknowledge the interjection by the Minister talking about Western Sydney. I am proud that west metro will be built.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The last time I checked, Rozelle was not in Western Sydney.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** I uphold the point of order. I draw the member back to the leave of the question.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** I am talking about congestion. I care about congestion in the seat of Leppington like the member for Leppington does. One way to bust congestion is to build infrastructure and one piece of infrastructure is west metro. That is going to be a transformational project, something that was planned and funded by the previous Liberal Government, something that I think the Australian Labor Party has really struggled to get behind. I am glad it is behind it. That will definitely be a congestion buster for the people of Leppington.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (15:07):** In reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Oatley, Camden, Liverpool, Kiama, Coogee and Davidson for their contributions. I am disappointed that the member for Holsworthy did not make a contribution as she was on council with the member for Liverpool on the night we were advocating for it. But credit where credit is due: She has not got herself kicked out of question time this week. Well done! There is another member missing. Fifteenth Avenue effectively runs through the electorates of Liverpool, Leppington and, when it shoots through at the airport, Badgerys Creek. Where is the member for Badgerys Creek? I thought she would be in here advocating. She must be elsewhere.

**Mr Stephen Kamper:** Getting inspired somewhere.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** Getting inspired elsewhere. I want to correct the record on a number of things that were raised during this robust debate. Firstly, this is not an election commitment. It is funded. It is in the budget. Money is allocated and we are getting on with the job. That is a fact.

I set the timeline straight on the election commitments. I understand that the amendment from the member for Oatley proposes to acknowledge the council's leadership in fast-tracking upgrade works, but I must correct the record on that. The council had nothing to do with it.

**Mrs Tina Ayyad:** Point of order: The member for Leppington is misleading the House. The councillors on Liverpool City Council, along with the mayor, have advocated for an upgrade to Fifteenth Avenue for many years now.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Given that I am not on the council, I will take the word of the member for Holsworthy. Members will be careful about what they say.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** I am happy to clarify that point in terms of funding. The funding is coming from the State and Federal governments, with no funding from Liverpool council. As I said earlier, the then Opposition leader, now Premier, came with me in November 2021. I was elected and made that commitment in 2023. To answer the question from the member for Oatley, within months of being elected, I exchanged letters and held meetings with Transport for NSW, so I continually advocated. While we are on the subject of timelines and acknowledging who did what and when, I note an article from *The Daily Telegraph* from July 2024, which goes to the comment from the member for Oatley about election promises. One astute local said the following:

This is a cynical attempt by Ned Mannoun to paper over his litany of broken promises and get his face on signs funded by the ratepayer as we come up to another council election ...

Who said that? It was the member for Liverpool. It was a very astute observation but, if we want to talk about election commitments and saying things before an election, I thought it was important to correct the record. I also correct the record by easing some concerns. Thousands of people are watching this debate online in Leppington right now, and my phone has blown up. They are concerned because they heard that the council might have something to do with the project. I assure them that the council has nothing to do with the project. It will be happening through Transport for NSW and the State Government.

They are concerned because there is another road in Austral called Edmondson Avenue, which the council got \$60 million to upgrade in 2021. It was supposed to be finished in June 2024, but the council has not even put a shovel in the ground. It has not even started. I allay those concerns—the council will not work on this road. There is one more concern about the Liberal mayor in Liverpool. Again, to allay concerns, the council will not be involved and there will be no tolls on Fifteenth Avenue. It is a great motion and I ask members to support it.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....31  
Noes .....47  
Majority..... 16

AYES

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

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	Harrison, J	Saffin, J (teller)

## NOES

Butler, R	Haylen, J	Saliba, D
Car, P	Hoenig, R	Scully, P
Catley, Y	Holland, M	Shetty, K
Chanthivong, A	Kaliyanda, C	Stuart, M
Cotsis, S	Kamper, S	Tesch, L
Crakanthorp, T	Kirby, W	Vo, T
Daley, M	Li, J	Voltz, L
Davis, D	McDermott, H	Warren, G
Dib, J	McGirr, J	Whan, S
Donato, P	McKeown, K	Wilkinson, K
Doyle, T	Mehan, D	

## PAIRS

Di Pasqua, S	Washington, K
Speakman, M	Minns, C
Toole, P	Watson, A

**Amendment negatived.**

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Business of the House*

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

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit:

- (1) If any messages from the Legislative Council regarding Government business are received before or during private members' statements, business before the House to be interrupted for the consideration of the messages forthwith, and to resume once the consideration of the messages has concluded.
- (2) The House to continue to sit after the conclusion of private members' statements to consider any messages from the Legislative Council regarding Government business, including the option for the Speaker to leave and resume the chair on the ringing of one long bell, with the House to adjourn without motion moved once consideration of the messages has concluded.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Committees*

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE AND ETHICS**

**Reference**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (15:22):** By leave: I move:

That this House refers to the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Privilege and Ethics for inquiry and report:

- (1) The implications for this House of orders for the production of papers held by the Executive pertaining to the operations of the office of Speaker.
- (2) Any related matters.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (15:23):** I indicate that the Opposition supports the motion.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Motions*

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

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) (15:24):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Condemns the Government for its complete failure to manage and negotiate with the Rail, Tram and Bus Union.

- (2) Notes the serious impact that this industrial strike will have on millions of families, commuters, pensioners and some of the most vulnerable members of the community.
- (3) Notes the impact that this strike will have on the New South Wales economy, particularly small businesses.
- (4) Calls on the Government to adequately compensate all those affected.

I have never claimed to possess any psychic abilities, but I reckon I read the tea leaves pretty well in November when I submitted this motion. I was not going to fork out any money on a psychic to tell me what we all could see coming. Of course this whole situation was going to spiral into anarchy, of course, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union [RTBU] was going to put itself before the entire State, and of course the Government was going to be utterly incapable of keeping its union mates in check. If anyone did pay a psychic for that insight then they have been taken for a proper ride. I would feel sorry for them, but they are the only people in Sydney to have gotten a ride recently.

The Industrial Relations Commission has given the Government an underserved reprieve—a stay of execution, so to speak—conveniently until just after a Federal election. I think a lot of Sydneysiders will view that as more than a coincidence. Federal Labor members must be absolutely filthy about it. Not only do they have their own failed legislative agenda and dismal economic management to try to explain to voters, but their mates in New South Wales cannot even run a train line so that everyone can get to the second jobs they have had to pick up to try to afford the mortgage. But, not to worry, the Prime Minister as always will be as far away from responsibility as he can possibly get.

The Feds have the ability to step in at any point to try to sort this mess out but, as soon as the Premier mentioned their involvement, they ruled it out. They ran away. They disappeared. They vanished! God forbid that they take any responsibility for the mess their union backers have caused. I think the best we can hope for as a State is that the Prime Minister returns to his beloved roots in factional horsetrading. We have all seen *Rats in the Ranks*. The Prime Minister yearns for those wonderful days of being a hack, cutting backroom deals and buying people off. He would be almost gleeful at the prospect of hitting the phones to organise an upper House stitch-up for the RTBU. He might not be able to run the country, but by God can he run a caucus deal. The question is, who is going to get that prized MLC spot? Will it be Alex Claassens or will it be Toby Warnes? Better yet—for us—who is the poor person in the other place who is about to be punted? I reckon we will leave that one for the caucus psychics.

All I ask, on behalf of the people of New South Wales, is that Labor gets this stitch-up sorted out quickly. People are sick and tired of getting to the train station in the morning just to be greeted by cancellations and delays. Quite frankly, there have been some pretty audacious actions from the RTBU. Every strike and every inconvenience caused to the people of New South Wales is just another reminder to commuters of why they fell in love with the metro in the first place. In comparison to the on-time rating of 4.5 per cent that the rail system had last Friday, the metro was smooth and seamless. I reckon the only thing that would slow down those driverless trains is a RTBU driver.

A driver on a driverless train is truly the definition of a utopian socialist paradise for the unions and their Government supporters. It is inefficiency and bureaucracy that most of them can only dream of, but the union and this Government have made it a reality. There is a cherry on top. I reckon those drivers on driverless trains will end up with a \$4,500 bonus once the Government concedes to the union yet again. It is not exactly a concession, is it? After ripping off the New South Wales taxpayer, there will be an obligatory hike in those juicy union dues, and that is the very crux of the issue.

After all of those long lunches on their members' dime and maybe refreshing the leases on a couple of Audis for the union fleet, in case they have to actually go out onsite, those union grifters funnel all of that money straight into the loving arms of the Labor Party campaign coffers.

That is why members of the public are sick and tired of this industrial action. They already know the unions are going to get exactly what they are asking for, and they just want the Government to drop the charade. They know the Government is not actually negotiating, because that might put the gravy train of cash at risk. All that the voters are asking for are a couple of scraps off the fantastic gravy train that the unions and their Labor mates have got going for themselves. A week of free travel days is the least the Government could do for the patients who missed long-awaited appointments, the students who missed classes, the workers who missed their shifts, the parents who were not able to put their kids to bed, and the many other hardworking people that this Government does not give a second thought to. I commend the motion.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (15:30):** I speak to comrade Roberts' motion and begin by noting the sheer hypocrisy shown by the Opposition in bringing forward this motion. I acknowledge how absolutely frustrating the past few months have been for train passengers right across New South Wales. We all have immense sympathy for them and want this resolved as quickly as possible. We are talking about people who are

just trying to get around Sydney. They are trying to get to work or trying to get home after a long, stressful day. They are kids who just want to get to school on time—or maybe they like being a little bit late—or to a doctor's appointment. They are the people who have to face the real consequences caused by this dispute. This Government understands how tough this situation has been for passengers and thanks people for their patience during this time.

I absolutely get it. This has been incredibly frustrating. That is why Government members have always worked to find a resolution to this dispute, and it is why we will continue to do everything we can to protect passengers. That includes taking legal action in the Fair Work Commission, which the Government successfully used to protect New Year's Eve and to remove hundreds of bans at the start of this year. The members opposite are well aware that the Government was successful last night, when the full bench of the Fair Work Commission ruled in favour of Transport's section 425 application to suspend industrial action on the New South Wales rail network until 1 July. I know the members opposite love a conspiracy and will not let the truth get in the way of a good story. Whether or not they want to spread a conspiracy about this is their prerogative. But people would know that applications under section 425 are not regularly granted by the Fair Work Commission.

That is for a good reason: The bar is very high. But the Government's application has been successful, and that is something we welcome. I am sure passengers have also welcomed it. The only people who do not seem to be welcoming that decision are Opposition members, and that goes to the heart of their hypocrisy on this issue. The Government has put a fair offer to the rail workforce, in good faith. We want to make sure our rail workers get a real pay increase and real improvements in conditions, and we also think we can unlock real productivity gains that deliver better train services for passengers. When it comes to fare-free days for passengers, the Government has always said it will look at that once it gets a resolution to this dispute. Let's be clear about that. The Government has not taken it off the table. Anyone who chooses to say that has not been reading. The Government's approach to this dispute has always been a reasonable one. It is an approach that puts the interests of passengers first, and it is focused on getting a resolution to this dispute.

Let's compare the Government's approach with the approach taken by the Opposition—an approach which is becoming more novel by the day, with its flip-flopping and hypocrisy. What is the shadow Treasurer's latest suggestion? In Monday's edition of *The Daily Telegraph*, the Hon. Damien Tudehope is quoted as saying, "The Government could better guarantee services on Monday if it promised workers who engage in the train go-slows would be paid." The Hon. Damien Tudehope, a true believer and custodian of the wages cap—"Let's suppress wages and keep them down"—has a plan to stop unbridled industrial action. What is his plan? To pay the workers who take more action. Let's reward those workers who do it more. His proposal is to pay rail workers to take industrial action and create more disruption to passengers. Government members do not think that will help resolve this dispute. We do not think that will make things easier or better for passengers. What it shows is just how inconsistent the Opposition has been on rail disputes. I expect a lot more from the comrade for Lane Cove.

The Opposition members have spent months trying to work both sides of the street on this issue. As I said, they continue to flip-flop. On the one hand they cry industrial vandalism and call on the Government to use the strategy that failed them when they were in government; on the other hand, they call for the Government to implement a strategy that would prolong this dispute. They call on the Government to pay workers to take industrial action. Those are measures that would extend the dispute, not resolve it. That sort of approach is no surprise from a Coalition that failed on industrial relations during its time in office. Its record in government includes the disastrous and dangerous wages cap policy that led to an exodus of teachers, nurses and bus drivers—actually, a plethora of essential workers. It caused a decade of pent-up wage restraint that the Government is now working to fix.

I get it. After a decade of wage suppression, I understand why people want it resolved now. They trust that a Labor Government will deliver on it, and it will, but it will not happen overnight. The reality is that undoing a decade worth of damage takes more than two years. When the Coalition was in government, its failed strategy prolonged rail bargaining for 22 months. The previous Government completely shut down the rail network with no notice in February 2022. People remember that the Minister at the time, David Elliott, was having a nap and forgot to tell the Premier at the time. It was wonderful. He was sleeping on the job, he did not tell people that the rail network was down, and then all of the commuters woke up. Great strategy! Opposition members try to work both sides of the street, but they have no credibility on either side of the street. On the one hand they cry industrial vandalism and demonise the workers; on the other hand, they say, "Just roll over and let disputes continue." Then they tell the Government to use their failed strategy. It is a fundamentally unserious approach. With last night's Fair Work Commission decision, everyone now has an opportunity to cool off and conclude a fair agreement.

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping) (15:37):** This is my first time speaking in a debate on a motion. This is a piece of parliamentary procedure I take particular interest in as an Opposition member, because we can always tell which of the Government members want to be Ministers. They rush to the House to speak on a motion. They are nervous. They go to the Whip, they get their speaking points, and they are hoping that the Premier is

watching and that his staff do not have him in a meeting. They are hoping that he will tune in and that he is thinking, "You know what? You should be a Minister." As someone who has worked for a Premier, I can tell members that he is not watching. He is not going to give members a call to say, "Well done defending the Rail, Tram, and Bus Union." The Premier is not watching.

**Mr Jason Li:** Point of order: It is relevance. This has nothing to do with the subject matter of the debate.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I uphold the point of order.

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE:** The Premier is not going to give members a call for defending the Rail, Tram, and Bus Union. That is okay. Members will go back to their offices and their staff will tell them they have done a great job, clip their speech for them and put it on their social media, because that is what the Government members are about.

They are all about feeling good and telling themselves they have made a contribution. My contribution is to feel sorry for those Labor backbenchers, because they have to go back to their electorates and defend what is happening.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** I move:

That the question be now put.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....32

Noes .....45

Majority.....13

AYES

Anderson, K  
Ayyad, T  
Clancy, J  
Cooke, S  
Coure, M  
Cross, M  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Griffin, J  
Henskens, A  
Hodges, M  
James, T

Kemp, M  
Lane, J  
Layzell, D  
McGirr, J  
Moylean, B  
Petinos, E  
Preston, R  
Provest, G  
Roberts, A  
Saunders, D  
Singh, G

Taylor, M  
Thompson, T  
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  
Butler, R  
Car, P  
Catley, Y  
Chanthivong, A  
Cotsis, S  
Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Davis, D  
Dib, J  
Doyle, T

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

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

PAIRS

Di Pasqua, S  
Sloane, K  
Speakman, M

Washington, K  
Watson, A  
Minns, C

**Motion negatived.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The time allocated for the debate has expired. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later time.

*Bills***INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AMENDMENT BILL 2025****Returned**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.

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

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Legislative Assembly's amendment.

*Community Recognition Statements***PROSPECT VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY LUNAR NEW YEAR**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (15:47):** On Tuesday 28 January, I was delighted to join our local Vietnamese Australian community to celebrate Lunar New Year's Eve at Phuoc Hue Temple in Wetherill Park. The electorate of Prospect is home to an historic Vietnamese Australian community. Every year, more than 10,000 people flock to the temple to celebrate Tết, which is one of the most important events in the annual Vietnamese calendar. This year I was joined on stage by both State and Federal parliamentary colleagues for the official ceremony, which included wonderfully choreographed lion dances and martial arts performances. Buddhist prayers were recited onstage before a masterful fireworks display lit up the midnight sky in celebration. My heartfelt congratulations go out to Abbot Venerable Thich Phuoc Tan, OAM, and Vice Abbot Venerable Thich Phuoc Vien, from Phuoc Hue Temple, and to all our Vietnamese Australians. I give everyone my best wishes for 2025, the Year of the Snake. Chúc mừng năm mới!

**LUNAR NEW YEAR**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (15:48):** I wish everyone a happy Lunar New Year as we celebrate the Year of the Snake. People born in this year are said to be courageous, confident and dynamic, which are traits that we can all aspire to. This celebration is deeply rooted in history and tradition. It brings people together in unity, love and gratitude, which are qualities that are sometimes lacking here on Macquarie Street. Some of the customs surrounding Lunar New Year include families reuniting, preparing meals, lighting fireworks, handing out red envelopes of money and offering prayers for good health and prosperity. I had a wonderful time attending the St Ives Lunar New Year Markets at the St Ives Village Green. The markets had carnival rides and plenty of food stalls to keep children and adults happy. I joined the mayor and councillors for the "walking of the lions" ritual. This ritual is about empowering the lion to fulfill its duty of bringing protection, good luck, health and prosperity to the Ku-ring-gai community.

**THE PONDS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (15:49):** The start of a new year is always a time of excitement, with fresh beginnings, new classes, new opportunities and new leaders. I congratulate The Ponds High School student leadership team of 2025. Being recognised and chosen as a leader among your peers is a remarkable achievement, and they should be incredibly proud of this honour. I extend my special congratulations to the school captains, Austin Boyd and Georgina Reece, and the vice captains, Deeya Bhatt and Vidun Silva. Their roles have a unique importance in the context of our area. The Ponds High School is now the largest public school in New South Wales. These student leaders are tasked with leading and building a huge section of our north-west Sydney community. Under the leadership of Principal Jenny Weal, I trust they will make a great difference to The Ponds High School community. I look forward to hearing of their successes as they carry out the school's core value of "inspired learning".

**UPPER HUNTER ELECTORATE JUNIOR SPORTSPEOPLE**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (15:50):** What an incredible summer it has been for the junior sports stars in the Upper Hunter. Denman-born all-rounder Caoimhe Bray was Australia's top run scorer at the Under-19 World Cup cricket in Malaysia. The 15-year-old averaged almost 30 for the tournament, to cap off a

season that included her Women's Big Bash League debut with the Sydney Sixers. Singleton's Bailey Carter took out the chequered flag at Lake Liddell Speedway to win the NSW Junior Formula 500 Microsprint title. Bailey is now invited to contest the Tulsa Shootout in the United States of America in December this year. In the rodeo, there were championship buckles for Singleton's Logan George and Judd Thomas at the Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association's national finals in Tamworth. Logan was crowned Australian national champion in the under-14 mini bull ride. Judd got a second in the under-11 mini bull ride. It is great to see our local junior sportspeople doing so well on the State, national and international stages.

### **CATHOLIC JUBILEE YEAR**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (15:51):** The year 2025 marks a Jubilee year for those of the Catholic faith. The motto of this year's Jubilee is Pilgrims of Hope, with Catholics across the world flocking to pilgrimage sites in Rome and other places around the world. One of the pilgrimage sites for the Jubilee is All Saints in Liverpool. Archbishop Anthony Fisher recently designated All Saints as one of 12 places of pilgrimage where full Jubilee indulgences can be obtained. Under that proclamation, Catholic pilgrims will be able to receive the sacrament of penance, eucharistic communion and the opportunity to pray for the intentions of the Holy Father. The Jubilee year is particularly important as it marks the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, the assembly of Christian bishops to attain consensus over the divine nature of Jesus as God's son. I congratulate All Saints on its proclamation as a place of pilgrimage. My best wishes go to parish priest Father Paul Monkerud, the assistant priests, the church volunteers and the entire congregation during this Jubilee year.

### **KELLYVILLE PRIVATE HOSPITAL**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (15:52):** I acknowledge Kellyville Private Hospital and its dedication to providing high-quality mental health care to patients. In my capacity as shadow Minister for Mental Health, I was invited to tour the hospital and witness firsthand the treatment, facilities and programs available. Operated by Aurora Healthcare Australia, Kellyville Private Hospital specialises in a number of services relative to mental health. Those include subacute adult psychiatry, inpatient therapy, young adult services, dialectical behaviour therapy and a broad range of day therapy programs geared towards supporting ongoing recovery and wellness. The 85-bed hospital is fully accredited to the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards and caters for a wide range of mental health disorders, supporting the needs of Hawkesbury and Western Sydney. I commend the staff for their work in offering those quality programs and also thank them for their advocacy in supporting the mental health of our veterans. Using evidence-based practice to deliver care in a minimally restrictive manner is a testament to the priorities of the hospital, with patient safety and wellbeing being of utmost importance.

### **SHAHID AFRIDI FOUNDATION**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (15:53):** While no doubt many members in this Chamber spent last Friday with their dear loved ones for Valentine's Day, I instead spent the evening with the Shahid Afridi Foundation at Liverpool Catholic Club where, once again, it held its annual fundraiser. The mission of the Shahid Afridi Foundation is to spread education, healthcare services and access to water across Pakistan in order to empower underprivileged communities for a better future. I have been attending its annual fundraisers for a number of years, and it has been fantastic to see the work it is doing on the ground. After the devastating floods in 2022, it raised tens of thousands of dollars. On the evening, the foundation showed us 100 new houses it has built in a village that was completely wiped away just two years ago. It is fantastic work. I congratulate everybody in the organisation and everyone who made a donation on the night.

### **TERRIGAL SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:54):** I acknowledge and congratulate the dedicated surf lifesaving volunteers of the Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club, who were recently recognised with the prestigious National Medal. That medal, a cornerstone of Australia's honours system, celebrates long and diligent service by individuals who risk their lives or safety to protect or assist the community in times of emergency. We honour Bruce Moy, Emma Amies and Greg Hobson for their 15 years of unwavering commitment to our community. Their dedication has made a lasting impact, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of countless individuals who enjoy our beautiful beaches. Bruce, Emma and Greg exemplify the spirit of surf lifesaving in their bravery and service. The National Medal is Australia's most recognised civilian award, celebrating those who have shown exceptional dedication in critical roles in both government and voluntary organisations. Those volunteers embody the spirit of service, and their contributions are invaluable to the surf lifesaving movement and our community. I congratulate each of them on this remarkable accomplishment. We deeply appreciate their many years of service and thank them for the positive impact they continue to make in our community.

### WILLIAM MCINNES

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (15:55):** It is an honour to acknowledge the contributions of William McInnes, or Bill as he is better known, who has dedicated 30 years of service to the community, volunteering for the Ulladulla SES unit. Bill's commitment to the SES began in June 1994, when he and his family moved to Ulladulla. Joining the SES in 1992, Bill became the backbone of the driver education program, working with emergency services, mechanics and the community to equip young people with vital road safety skills. After retiring from teaching, Bill served nine years as the SES commander, leading emergency responses, wielding chainsaws, steering flood boats and climbing rooftops. Over the past 16 years, Bill has focused on flood planning and preparedness, developing response plans for Lake Conjola, Burrill Lake, Lake Tabourie, Willinga Lake and the Clyde River. Bill's contribution to the SES is unmatched. Bill has made our community safer and stronger. He is a fount of knowledge and a true gentleman. I wish Bill all the best on his move to Melbourne.

### COFFS HARBOUR ELECTORATE CRICKET TEAMS

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (15:56):** Under-14s and under-16s cricketers played their grand final matches with Coffs Harbour, going up against Clarence River juniors. Coffs Harbour's under-14 cricketers clinched the North Coast Cricket Council interdistrict title with a 106-run win against Clarence River in Grafton. Coffs Harbour batted first and scored an impressive eight for 226 in 50 overs. Riley Wood top scored with 42 and took two for 25 in five overs. Denzel Wynne-Primus added 30. Sahibjit Singh made 27 and took three for 16 in six overs. Charley Perrett claimed three for 23 in six overs, and Joshua de Groot claimed two for 23 in seven overs. With 227 to chase, Clarence River was bowled out for 120. Well done to the under-14s. Our under-16s played Clarence River in Coffs Harbour and scored 132 in 49 overs, with top scorers Manat Singh hitting 22 and Balkaran Singh Johal hitting 21. Defending the target, bowlers did the city proud—Zane Guthrie got two for 21 off 10 overs; Lachlan Richardson got two for 25 off 6.5; and Elijah Carle got two for 16 off four. But unfortunately Clarence River made the runs.

### PIERRE ESBER

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (15:57):** I recognise Pierre Esber for his service to the City of Parramatta from 1999 to 2024 as councillor and deputy lord mayor, and as lord mayor from 2023 to 2024. Pierre was a thoughtful leader, who shepherded Parramatta and the wards he represented through many changes as the city evolved. Pierre's time on council coincided with a period of significant growth for Parramatta, across the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Pierre was passionate about the importance of growing the CBD, focusing high-density housing close to the city centre and transport hubs, while retaining the suburbs as low- to medium-density housing. His mantra was clear: Councils are primarily responsible for rates, roads and rubbish, and, if they deliver those essential services, the community will be fair in their assessment. While serving as a councillor, Pierre continued to operate his plumbing business and was very passionate about placing the priorities of his family first. Parramatta will remember him as a stalwart of stewardship, and I personally thank him for his service to our community and the Labor Party.

### PAUL KERNICK

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (15:58):** Today I congratulate valued frontline worker and Wakehurst constituent Superintendent Paul Kernick, who was awarded an Ambulance Service Medal on Australia Day. Paul has been a member of NSW Ambulance for nearly 40 years, working in a number of vital roles including as a swiftwater rescue operator and a helicopter critical care paramedic. He was one of the first responders as an intensive care paramedic at the tragic Thredbo landslide in 1997, helping to rescue patients from the rocky terrain while under enormous pressure from an unpredictable and rapidly unfolding disaster. Today Paul continues his distinguished service to the community as the senior manager of helicopter training at the Bankstown helicopter base training centre. He ensures that all staff working in NSW Ambulance's helicopter operations are trained to the highest clinical and safety standards, and he is deployed across New South Wales as a special casualty access team member during bushfires, floods, landslides and other natural emergencies. I congratulate Paul. This award is extremely well deserved, and I thank him immensely for his decades of service.

### MACARTHUR HOMELESSNESS STEERING COMMITTEE

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (15:59):** I recognise the invaluable work of Macarthur Homelessness Steering Committee in my electorate of Campbelltown and the broader Macarthur area. The steering committee is a network of key stakeholders who bring expertise from their respective areas, working in collaboration to increase awareness and support practical solutions to address homelessness across our region. Recently I invited the Minister for Housing and Homelessness, the Hon. Rose Jackson, to meet with members of the steering committee and discuss the explicit needs of the Macarthur community, in particular, the need for specific services for our young people. The steering committee is also responsible for running weekly support

hubs for the local community, where anyone who needs support can come and speak with representatives from government and non-government organisations who are in a position to help. This wonderful initiative successfully takes processes that can often be difficult to access and brings them all under one roof. I specifically recognise Cathy Chopping, the chair of the steering committee, and everyone involved in this essential service.

#### **ARCHBISHOP HAIGAZOUN NAJARIAN**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (16:00):** I acknowledge His Eminence Archbishop Haigazoun Najarian for his remarkable service to the Armenian community in Willoughby and beyond. For over a decade, as the Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Australia and New Zealand, Archbishop Najarian has been a guiding force, strengthening the faith, culture and unity of the Armenian diaspora, which is very prominent in our area. His leadership and unwavering commitment have enriched the lives of so many people and communities, ensuring the continued growth and resilience of the Armenian Australian community and beyond. As he marks 50 years of priesthood and prepares to return to Armenia, I extend our deepest appreciation and our community's deepest respect for his service, his dedication and the profound impact he has had on not only the Armenian community here in Australia but the greater Willoughby community. His legacy will be long remembered. I wish him every success and happiness and all the very best in the next chapter of his journey.

#### **LADIES LIKE TO LUNCH**

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (16:01):** Ladies Like to Lunch is a not-for-profit organisation that makes a real difference to women battling cancer in south-west Sydney. By providing holistic support to women facing the challenges of a cancer diagnosis, it tailors its services to cater to the physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of those survivors. Through offering an array of programs, which include acupuncture at Fairfield Hospital, oncology exercise programs, gardening workshops for therapeutic healing and wig services, Ladies Like To Lunch demonstrates its deep commitment to comprehensive care. I thank founding director Antoinette Sulfaro and the numerous dedicated volunteers who work tirelessly to support those initiatives. Antoinette is an asset to our community, providing invaluable support to women through their cancer journey.

#### **COMO WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (16:02):** I congratulate the 2025 student leadership team of Como West 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 develop the skills that shape the community and help them become professional leaders of the future. I acknowledge the student leaders for 2025: captain Kieran Hinton; vice captain Kenta Steele; prefects Bronte Tremlett, Harley Dade, Jade Holley and Zoey Wright; Bradman captains Chloe Donovan and Oliver Bowdidge; Freeman captains Chase Davies and Zoe Morris; and Thorpe captains Chace Roberts and Freddie Howard. With the guidance of their incredible principal, Felicity Preston, I have every confidence that the 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 the student leaders as they continue to exemplify Como West Public School's motto of being "Our best always".

#### **LUNAR NEW YEAR**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (16:03):** The 2025 Lunar New Year welcomes the Year of the Snake, a year symbolising transformation, wisdom, personal growth and new beginnings. Lunar New Year is one of the most widely celebrated festivals across the world and in my electorate of Cabramatta it holds special significance for our vibrant and diverse community. I had the pleasure of joining some of the incredible celebrations held locally, including the Lunar New Year Eve festivities at Phuoc Hue Temple on 28 January 2025. The evening commenced with lion and dragon dance performances, followed by incredible displays of firecrackers and fireworks. Traditionally such performances and firecrackers are believed to ward off evil spirits while bringing good luck, prosperity and happiness to those celebrating. I express my gratitude to Venerable Thich Phuoc Vien, Vice Abbot of Phuoc Hue Temple, along with the dedicated organising committee and temple members for their warm invitation and hospitality.

#### **TONY CLOUGH**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (16:04):** I congratulate Tony Clough on being awarded a Fire Service Medal as part of this year's Australia Day Honours, a testament to his dedication and service to the community. At age 19, Tony embarked on his journey with the Rural Fire Service, standing shoulder to shoulder with his father in the battle against fires. Over the years he followed in his father's footsteps, ascending to the role of captain for the Wantabadgery Rural Fire Brigade and later group captain for the Riverina. Now with 52 years of service under his belt and a career that has been marked by countless challenges and rewards, Tony's dedication, leadership and commitment to supporting the community has been duly recognised. Among his many experiences,

Tony and his fellow RFS members were notably tested during the Dunns Road bushfires in December 2019. The fires, which erupted on a private pine plantation near Adelong, presented significant challenges that Tony navigated bravely and skilfully. Tony's leadership and courage were on full display. His actions during that time truly embody the spirit of service that has defined his career.

#### **DINA KHEIR**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (16:05):** I congratulate my community's Volunteer of the Year, Dina Kheir. Dina received that important recognition at the City of Canterbury Bankstown's Australia Day awards celebration. Her dedication to serving our community goes far beyond her role as a successful florist. As a respected advocate and role model, particularly for Muslim women, Dina has inspired many through her leadership and generosity. Her active involvement with Sydney Community Connect has made a real difference, from welcoming newly arrived Palestinians at an honorary dinner event to supporting those facing challenges through the Let's Talk Addiction program. Dina's compassion shines through in everything she does. During Ramadan her commitment to helping others was evident with the Ramadan Alkhier daily food distribution, ensuring that no-one was left behind. Dina's selflessness and dedication to building a stronger, more inclusive community are truly inspiring. I thank Dina for her remarkable contributions and congratulate her once again on her well-deserved recognition.

#### **WILBURS DELI**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (16:06):** I give a big shout-out to local sandwich staple Wilburs deli, which recently celebrated its third anniversary. Good on you, Rob. Since opening its doors on Pittwater Road three years ago, Wilburs has well and truly made its mark on our local hospitality scene as a go-to spot for locals and visitors alike. Using only the freshest ingredients, the small but mighty establishment prides itself on slinging some of the best sandwiches Sydney has to offer. What is even better is its commitment to supporting local producers, helping to boost small businesses and keep Manly's hospitality community thriving. I congratulate the team at Wilburs—including its passionate owner, Rob—on reaching that fantastic milestone. We in Manly are lucky to call Wilburs one of our own. I cannot wait to see what the future holds. If members are ever visiting Manly, swinging by Wilburs is a must.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** That was a great plug from the member for Manly. I am looking forward to going there.

#### **MICHELE ARENTZ**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (16:07):** Camden had some fantastic nominations for Camden Citizen of the Year, and Michele Arentz was one such nomination. Her nomination read:

Michele Arentz has made significant contributions to the Camden community through her artistic work, both professionally and as a volunteer. Her murals, workshops and art installations have enhanced the visual appeal of the area while also engaging and inspiring local residents.

Notably, Michele's artwork has been featured along the Nepean River Art Trail, celebrating the region's heritage and creating a welcoming space for the community. She has also been an active participant in the Unlock Camden workshops, where she shared her skills by teaching others how to draw the heritage architecture of the Camden area.

In addition to her artistic contributions, Michele has demonstrated her commitment to supporting local artists and fostering creativity in the community. As a committee member of the Macarthur Art Group, she has helped organise events to raise funds for the group and share her expertise through workshops on eco-printing and heritage drawing.

#### **TRIBUTE TO CATHERINE YOUNG**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (16:08):** It is with deep sadness that I acknowledge the passing of a wonderful member of our local community Catherine Young. Catherine was an exceptional person and a much-loved and active member of the Balmain and Rozelle community. Community was so important to Catherine and she did so much to contribute, including her work with Balmain and District Football Club, her role as treasurer of Phoenix Preschool and her key involvement at Rozelle Public School and after-school care over many years. Catherine co-founded the Balmain Rozelle Dining Facebook page to support local businesses and connect them with our wider community, which had a huge, positive impact on so many businesses, particularly during COVID. Catherine was also a passionate advocate for the arts and worked alongside council to bring beautiful public art to our community. I acknowledge the significant contribution that Catherine has made to our community and extend my deepest condolences to her husband, Richard; her sons, Bodie and Hunter; and the wider Brown and Young families, as well as her friends and community. Catherine represented the best of us and will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

### LAO COMMUNITY ADVANCEMENT CO-OP

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (16:09):** On 26 January 2025 I had the pleasure of joining members of the Lao Community Advancement Co-operative [LCAC] in celebrating Australia Day. It was a wonderful occasion to celebrate our shared values and the contributions of the Lao Australian community. The spirit of Australia Day was truly cherished by the Lao community, reflected in their vibrant celebrations. The venue was beautifully decorated with Australian flags, and attendees dressed in both traditional Lao attire and Australian-themed outfits, symbolising the harmony between cultures. The event brought people together through a fusion of Australian barbeque and Lao cuisine, alongside music, dance and singing that showcased the rich cultural heritage of the community. I also had the honour of presenting my community recognition statement certificates to the esteemed leaders and elderly pioneers of the LCAC, who have devoted many years to supporting their organisation and the broader community. I thank President Mr Bountham Vongsaya for the kind invitation and all the volunteers for their invaluable contributions to this wonderful celebration.

### MARTIN MEREDITH, OAM

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (16:10):** Today I acknowledge a hardworking Wakehurst constituent, Martin Meredith, who was recently awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia as part of this year's Australia Day Honours. There is no doubt that Martin is a rugby league diehard. He has dedicated much of his life to serving the community as a rugby league administrator at all levels, from grassroots to the elite competitions. Locally, he played with the Manly-Warringah Rugby League Football Club from 1977 to 1987 and coached the Narrabeen Sharks Under 17s team from 2010-2011 and the Under 19s team from 2011-2012. Martin also spent a number of years managing the Australian Junior Kangaroos team and selection committee, and was the manager of the NRL's Affiliated States League from 2016 to 2020. Currently he serves as Chair of Wheelchair Rugby League Australia, which is doing exceptional work to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to play this awesome sport. A huge congratulations to you, Martin. This award is very well deserved, and our community is incredibly proud of all that you have achieved.

### TUGGERAH LAKES UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (16:11):** I acknowledge the work of the Tuggerah Lakes University of the Third Age [U3A] in my community. U3A is a worldwide movement that grew out of the desire of retirees to continue to lead active and mentally stimulating lives. In New South Wales we have an umbrella body, U3ANetwork NSW, which coordinates 64 groups serving 30,000 members. Tuggerah Lakes U3A currently has 80 members and runs 10 classes per fortnight led by volunteer tutors, who deliver a spectrum of life-enhancing offerings, all of which are delivered on a shoestring budget to enable those on an age pension to be involved. They provide a range of courses providing intellectual stimulation and offer social connections to combat isolation and loneliness, including cryptic crosswords, walks, music appreciation and play reading, in addition to a range of other options. On this note, I encourage all retirees who are interested in maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle to check out the U3A. I thank the U3A for the work it does in our community.

### STUDIO ARTES

**Mr JAMES WALLACE (Hornsby) (16:12):** A favourite part of my new job has been my visits to Studio ARTES, a community organisation celebrating 25 years of service in our area. This incredible organisation provides creative programs for adults living with disabilities, running classes across Hornsby, the inner west and Crows Nest. Studio ARTES offers everything from dance and art to gardening and video production. The personalised approach ensures that each participant receives the attention they deserve, which is why this program is so beloved. Studio ARTES began with the vision of Wendy Escott and Sue Byatt, who saw the need for a creative outlet for young adults with disabilities. From humble beginnings in a garage, they now support 250 members across three sites. Wendy's leadership earned her a Medal of the Order of Australia and many other honours, and Sue remains actively involved. I greatly enjoyed my afternoon tea visits with the members of Studio ARTES and watching a performance from the Swamp Dogs. I extend my heartfelt congratulations on 25 years of active community service.

### THOMAS VALASSIS

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (16:13):** Congratulations to Thomas Valassis, a standout athlete from Picnic Point High School who recently made waves at the Australian Open Water Championships held in Busselton, Western Australia. Thomas, coached by Alex Clarke from the Revesby Workers team, helped bring in a huge haul for the New South Wales Mighty Blues at the four-day competition. In what were extremely challenging conditions, with choppy waters and plenty of stingers to contend with, Thomas showed incredible resilience and determination. In a photo finish win against the reigning champion, he came out on top, claiming victory as the Australian Champion in the 15 years five-kilometre open water event. Thomas also helped the

Revesby Workers team win silver in the mixed 14-15 years, 4 x 1500 relay. This achievement is a testament to Thomas's hard work, focus and dedication to his sport. We could not be prouder of him. Congratulations again, Thomas. I am excited to see what the future brings for you in the world of swimming and beyond.

#### **JOHN BOOTH, AM**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) (16:14):** I wish to acknowledge and pay tribute to Mr John Booth, AM on his ninety-third birthday. John has made immense contributions to the Lane Cove electorate and beyond with *The Weekly Times* newspaper, the Scouts, and much, much more. Sharing news of local achievements, sporting events, politics, initiatives of community groups and economic updates, John's idea of a free local paper has remained a strong source of information for the local community of Lane Cove. Thank you, John, and happy birthday.

#### **JOHN ARNOLD**

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping) (16:15):** I rise to proudly acknowledge the contributions of Mr John Arnold to the Beecroft Bowling Club. I have had an opportunity to witness his work firsthand. We are very fortunate to have him as a leader in our community. Mr Arnold is the President of the Beecroft Bowling Club. In this role he has sought to ensure the sustainability of the bowling club, which has had a long association with the suburb of Beecroft in my electorate. However, his efforts extend beyond just the sport of bowls. He is dedicated to making the club a true community asset. Recently I had an opportunity to meet with Mr Arnold as part of his efforts to introduce blind bowling, in consultation with Guide Dogs Australia. This initiative seeks to ensure that those with vision impairment have an opportunity to take part in the sport of bowling. I commend Mr Arnold for his work in advancing this initiative.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### **JESSICA SKINNER**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (16:16):** In regional New South Wales, sport plays an enormous role, both socially and economically, in our communities. Sport is the heartbeat of our towns, bringing people together, creating opportunities and fostering a sense of pride and identity. It is no secret that regional New South Wales has produced some of the State's most outstanding athletes, including in rugby league. In fact, many would argue that right now we are witnessing one of the greatest eras in western rugby league history. In my area we are home to some of the game's finest, including the co-captain of the Penrith Panthers, numerous male and female Australian representatives, and an ever-growing list of NRL and NRLW players. Our junior pathways programs continue to nurture future stars, proving that talent thrives in the regions.

Today I want to focus on one special person whose remarkable achievements and dedication to sport and her community really deserve our full recognition. Last week a proud daughter of regional New South Wales, Trangie's own Jessica Skinner, was appointed the interim coach of the Jillaroos. On 1 March she will step onto the grand stage of Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas—a world away from her hometown—to guide the national team as the Jillaroos take on England as part of the opening to the NRL season. A proud Barkindji and Wongaibon woman, Jess has been a trailblazer in rugby league coaching. She is the NRLW Indigenous All Stars head coach and was previously involved with the First Nations Gems and NRL Indigenous Academy, as well as the Prime Minister's XIII, the Newcastle Knights and as an assistant in the national team set-up.

Her journey began in her hometown of Trangie, where she still lives. Growing up with six brothers, Jess was pretty much always surrounded by rugby league. Rather than just being a spectator, she saw the opportunity to use sport as a tool to empower and strengthen her community. As well as being a coaching pioneer, Jess is a PDHPE teacher. She was a deputy principal and is a mum of two. Determined to get local women involved, she and a few community members introduced rugby league tag to the west and far-western areas. That initiative eventually evolved into structured rugby league programs for women, creating a Western Women's academy and implementing tackling for young female players aged 13 to 17.

In 2018 Jess started her professional development after she was picked up by the Jillaroos. In 2019, she got her first opportunity at the elite level as assistant coach of the Prime Minister's XIII. In 2021 she was appointed as assistant to coach to the inaugural Newcastle Knights NRLW team. She then went on to be appointed as assistant coach to the New South Wales Rugby League All Stars and head coach to both the First Nations Gems and the NRL Indigenous Women's Academy.

Jess' appointment as the interim coach of the Jillaroos is not the first time that she has been a ground-breaker. She was appointed as the first-ever female coach of the NRLW Indigenous Women's All Stars—the same All Stars who on Saturday night sealed victory over the Maori Ferns by slotting in a goal after the full-time siren had sounded. Jess' success is driven by two fundamental motivations: ensuring that country men and women know

that they can rise through the ranks and reach the elite level, and increasing Indigenous representation, particularly for women.

She firmly believes that pathways and grassroots development are crucial to the success of the sport, and in December last year she took the NRLW Indigenous Women's All Stars to Trangie. The visit allowed players to connect with the communities that they represent, reinforcing the message that achieving at an elite level is challenging but far from impossible. Jess has shown that anything is possible through dedication, hard work and sacrifice. Her journey serves as a testament to what can be accomplished when passion meets perseverance. There is no doubt that Jess has inspired countless young girls and boys, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to follow their dreams, believe in themselves and strive for greatness. She exemplifies the power of sport not just as a competition but as a platform for change, community building and breaking down barriers.

As we celebrate Jess' remarkable journey, it is also worth taking a moment to recognise the broader impact of sport in regional New South Wales. From local competitions that unite our communities to the elite pathways that launch careers, sport is a driving force behind social cohesion and economic growth. With continued investment in facilities, programs and opportunities, we can ensure that more athletes like Jess have the chance to shine on the world stage while remaining connected to their roots. We say congratulations and best of luck to Jess. Her journey is an inspiration to us all, and we cannot wait to see the impact she will continue to make in rugby league and beyond. And on 1 March, go the Jillaroos!

### GEORGES RIVER NATIONAL PARK

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (16:21):** I speak about one of East Hills' most beloved community assets: the Georges River National Park. We are incredibly fortunate to have that amazing green space right on our doorstep, offering us all a place to connect with nature and spend quality time with family and friends. The national park sits on the banks of the Georges River, which snakes around the southern border of my electorate. It is the land of the Bidjigal people of the Eora Nation, who cared for it for thousands of years. It is one of the oldest declared national parks in the region and boasts a rich tapestry of community history. As early as the 1920s, working-class communities along the river campaigned to preserve the river and its surrounding habitats. They protected it from rapid industrialisation, pollution and the encroaching private development.

Those residents recognised the importance of safeguarding not only the natural environment, but also communal spaces for water sports, relaxation and leisure. They formed grassroots organisations to care for and advocate for the establishment of a protected national park. It was through their tireless advocacy and the collaboration with local councils and conservation groups that the Georges River National Park was established, serving as a lasting symbol of our community's dedication to conserving this natural treasure for generations to come. With this history in mind, it is wonderful to see so many residents enjoying the park and the river on the weekends. Whether it is a peaceful walk along the national park trails, a family picnic along the waterside, a day on the river, or simply taking in the beauty of the surroundings, it is clear just how much the park means to all of us in my local community.

Throughout the years, Georges River National Park has not only provided a space for recreation and relaxation but has also played a vital role in bringing us together. It is a place my children and I walked along on summer weekday evenings and it is still a place where I have picnics with my growing and extended family on the weekends. Unfortunately the Georges River National Park was neglected by the previous Liberal Government over its 12-year term. But, as my community want to continue to enjoy this amazing space, it is important that my Labor Government focuses on it and ensures it is accessible to everybody. From ensuring that the walking tracks are safe and welcoming, to maintaining spaces for families to gather, accessibility is a key priority for me moving forward.

My advocacy for this community treasure includes a commitment of \$80,000 in funding for creation of new shelters within the park. This will help improve the experience for visitors and create more places for people to relax and enjoy the outdoors. Work on those shelters will begin soon and I look forward to seeing these improvements. In addition, I recently met Brendon and Matt from National Parks and Wildlife to discuss the future needs of the park. We toured Revesby Beach, Cattle Duffers Flat picnic area and Fitzpatrick Park, and talked about how we can continue to improve the park while preserving its natural beauty and maintaining the environment for future generations.

I will soon meet with locals to gather feedback on what matters most to my community when it comes to our national park. Whether it is a suggestion for improvements, ideas for new initiatives, or residents simply sharing what they love about the park, those voices are crucial in helping to guide the future of the space, much like locals have guided it since the 1920s. I am grateful for the opportunity to work to continue that legacy and to be part of ensuring that Georges River National Park remains a treasured asset for us all, not only for this generation but for all future generations to come.

## GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (16:25):** My constituents want the Government to end native forest logging within the proposed Great Koala National Park boundaries, and to urgently declare the region as a national park. Koala numbers in New South Wales are plummeting, with a 2019 upper House inquiry finding that they will be pushed to extinction by 2050. A key driver of the decline is habitat destruction from native forest logging, which the report found is removing the mature and larger trees that koalas rely on. Native forest logging in the Great Koala National Park is having a huge impact on biodiversity across many species, not just the koala. Threatened species living in the proposed boundaries currently being logged include the Hastings River mouse, spotted-tail quoll, powerful owl, sooty owl and greater glider.

Logging is increasingly moving into forests with older trees that provide vital habitat through hollows for nesting and breeding sites. Native forest logging increases fire risks by opening up the canopy and drying the forest floor, which makes it easier for fire to travel and burn through landscapes more intensely. Young trees planted in logged areas are more flammable than older mature trees. Fires add to the destructive impact on species, as can be seen with the Black Summer bushfires, which killed an estimated three billion animals and destroyed habitat for more than 14,000 species. The number of threatened species in New South Wales has now passed 1,000, with 18 species recently added. The number of critically endangered species has grown to 116.

We need urgent action to reverse biodiversity loss. The National Parks Association of NSW proposed the Great Koala National Park 10 years ago. The park would add 175,000 hectares of publicly owned State forests to the national park estate, protecting habitat for almost 20 per cent of the State's wild koalas, including 14 koala meta-populations. Important habitat in the biodiversity hotspot of the Coffs Harbour hinterland would be included. The Government promised to deliver the Great Koala National Park as a pre-election commitment and has commenced planning and assessment work, but native forest logging is continuing within proposed park boundaries, with only koala hubs with strong evidence of multi-generational high-density populations excluded.

While the exclusion of koala hubs is welcome, it leaves over 90 per cent of the proposed park open to logging. The NSW Forestry Corporation has been intensifying logging in the region to get the most out of the forests before they are closed off and is lobbying to have park boundaries reduced to retain more areas for harvesting, including areas of critical koala habitat. The integrity of the Great Koala National Park and its ability to protect koala populations and other threatened species are being diminished, a concern that *The Washington Post* recently covered. The cost of operating native forest logging is rapidly rising, and the value of hardwood produced is declining.

Native forest logging is now operating at a loss, with estimates that the industry lost \$30 million in the last two years. Native forest logging now relies on State and Commonwealth subsidies and grants, and forestry's profitable plantation arm. Native forest logging exposes taxpayers to risk from unpredictable financial losses, as well as from losses of carbon sinks, bushfire and flood catastrophe buffering, hydrology, tourism, recreation and air filtration. Creating the Great Koala National Park has a strong environmental and economic business case. Savings from subsidising forestry could be used to help affected workers and communities transition to new jobs and economies.

The Great Koala National Park would be a great public asset and support massive tourism in the region. A new report from environmental groups found that the Great Koala National Park would be eligible for World Heritage status. The park would create substantial job opportunities, including track development and maintenance, where skills transfer would be high. If we let logging continue within the Great Koala National Park boundaries, we will lose important old trees, which will take decades to recover and make the park vulnerable to fire and invasive weed infestation. It will degrade its resilience and potential values. There is a community expectation that the Great Koala National Park will be protected this year and that logging within the boundaries will cease.

If done now and done properly, the Great Koala National Park promises to be a world-class asset that attracts visitors from across the State and the globe with unmatched recreation opportunities. It will be a true legacy of the Government and Parliament. Native State forests are public assets that belong to everyone. I call on the Government to declare the Great Koala National Park as a matter of urgency and support a transition for the forestry workforce and affected communities to sustainable jobs.

## ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULT HOSPICE, MANLY

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (16:30):** The Adolescent and Young Adult Hospice [AYAH] in Manly is a world-class facility that continues to provide compassionate care and respite to young people with life-limiting illnesses and their families. Since opening its doors two years ago, AYAH has evolved into more than Australia's first dedicated young adult hospice. It has become a place of warmth, dignity and community. The environment

is made possible by the dedication and professionalism of AYAH's incredible staff, nurses, volunteers, donors and individuals who continue to support the AYAH mission. I thank the NSW Health Infrastructure team—now headed by the outstanding Emma Skulander—and the entire team at NSW Health, including Susan Pearce, for their support of the hospice. I thank Fugen Constructions, which helped build the place; Team2 Architects, which helped design the place; and the many community members who worked so hard over many years to open the doors of the AYAH.

Today, the AYAH has delivered another milestone: its very first newsletter. The very important publication is a great update for families and people across New South Wales on the activities of the facility, fundraising efforts and recent community support. It captures the spirit of the AYAH and the generosity of those who make the place so special. The most recent newsletter acknowledged the incredible support from local businesses and community groups, including the Boathouse Group, Bucketty's Brewing Co and Dee Why RSL. It gives special mention to the Lions Club of Manly for the generous donation of a new digital camera. The newsletter also celebrated the many experiences made possible for patients, including a meet-and-greet with popstar Olivia Rodrigo, a new partnership with the Humour Foundation's Clown Doctors—they would probably go well here in Parliament—and a visit from the Taronga Zoo team, who brought reptiles and furry friends to the hospice. Over the holiday period a special Christmas lunch was sponsored by Ben and Jerry's in Manly, the Manly Fire Station and Chas Clarkson, which brought joy and festivities to the patients and their families.

I have spoken in this place many times about the importance of accessible transport for AYAH patients, noting that they come from all across New South Wales—from the farthest flung corners to Greater Sydney. Thanks to Community Bank Freshwater, the Rotary Club of Manly and additional funding efforts in the community led by the Pilu at Freshwater team and event partners, the AYAH now has a dedicated accessible vehicle. It is wonderful to read that the new bus is being put to great use. I see it around Manly. It goes up past the office of the member for Wakehurst as well. It facilitates patient outings to foster meaningful and memorable experiences for people staying at the hospice and their families.

I congratulate the AYAH team for their work to create the community newsletter. It is a really important initiative to raise awareness of the incredible work they do. By sharing stories, updates and the powerful impact of community support, it is my hope that the newsletter will not only inform but also inspire. I encourage those who are interested to learn more about this Australia-first facility and how to get involved. I encourage all members because there will be people in their communities who will, unfortunately at some point in time, make use of the service. It is the only hospice of its kind in the State. It is a home where young people who contract a terminal illness and their families can stay for free four times a year. They receive hospital-grade care in a resort-style location. It was proudly built and delivered by the former Government and has been embraced and supported by the current Government. I thank the nurses, staff and volunteers at the hospice for their unwavering dedication. They are making a profound difference in the lives of so many. I look forward to celebrating more milestones in the years to come.

### SOUTH COAST ELECTORATE HOUSING

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (16:34):** I have spoken about housing on the South Coast many times in this place. The fact is that we need more now than ever before. My stance on housing development has always been clear: We need to be strategic in how and where we build. As I stated in my inaugural speech, there is no doubt that the South Coast electorate needs more housing. But how and where we build is crucial. The South Coast is special. Whilst growth is necessary, we must preserve the character of our coastal villages and protect our endangered wildlife. If we allow unchecked development to cover the landscape from the mountains to the sea with houses, we risk driving tourists away, harming small businesses and facing a different kind of crisis than we faced five years ago in the fires.

My vision is to develop our major town centres, Nowra and Ulladulla, by building up rather than sprawling out. This approach will protect our coastal villages and environment whilst ensuring that housing is accessible, affordable and close to employment opportunities. We must create vibrant, well-planned living spaces and revitalise our town centres. However, growth must be accompanied by essential services, including schools, hospitals, community facilities and infrastructure to support the population. That has been my unwavering position from day one. I make no apologies for standing up for our unique coastal villages while advocating for housing developments that genuinely benefit the region. That is exactly what the Minns Government is doing. The Government announced plans for build-to-rent homes on the South Coast. Last week, it announced that the successful tender was a builder from Ulladulla, Zauner Construction. That will keep the money and work in the community.

The site identified at Bomaderry is just outside my electorate. It absolutely kills the member for Kiama that I identified that parcel of land and approached the Government to secure it for the scheme. It does sit just outside my electorate, but I recognised it is an important opportunity for Bomaderry and an invaluable initiative

for the broader South Coast. Whether it is Nowra or Ulladulla, development going up makes sense. The land is already there. It will revitalise businesses. Last week, I spoke at a community meeting in Ulladulla about two medium-density developments that are going up. Combined, they will provide more than 200 houses. Medium-density housing is the missing link in Ulladulla. Many young people in town were priced out of the market by the increases in house prices that occurred during and after COVID. People wanted to escape larger cities and discovered that they could work from home. In fact, my own children were priced out of the market.

The South Coast does not have enough medium-density housing. I like to call it entry-level housing and exit-level housing. I will not apologise to anybody for advocating for that housing for our younger people to get into the market. When I cannot manage my house and garden any more, I will need somewhere to transition to. The member for Kiama has said that I am anti-development. If he attended the community meeting that I spoke at in Ulladulla, he would have heard me advocating for three developments rolled into one that the community did not understand. I asked the council to explain the development face-to-face with the community.

While the member for Kiama continues to spread misinformation, demonstrates a fundamental lack of understanding of the issues at hand and resorts to name-calling and distractions, I remain focused on the job that the people of the South Coast elected me to do: fighting for responsible, well-planned growth that serves our community. The disingenuous member for Kiama can continue wasting time fabricating childish names and acronyms. I remain focused on the real task alongside the Minns Government: rebuilding a better New South Wales and ensuring that the South Coast gets the housing, the attention and the investment that it needs.

### NORTH SYDNEY COUNCIL

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (16:39):** I rise on behalf of my community within the North Sydney local government area to express our strong condemnation of North Sydney Council's obscene rate rise proposal. North Sydney councillors have voted recently to slug residents and local businesses with an extraordinary 87.05 per cent increase in council rates. This is an almost doubling of our council rates. It is excessive; it is extreme and it is out of touch. There is no justification for it at all. It is an unconscionable impost on a community already doing it tough during a cost-of-living crisis. An increase of this scale must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. There has been strong community concern and feedback against this rise.

A council meeting on 10 February drew out hundreds of people protesting. Despite this, the teal-aligned Independents, Labor and The Greens teamed up to wave the proposal through. It is damning that the Independent-led majority on council has rejected our community's legitimate and understandable concerns. There was an arrogance and contempt shown towards our community by too many councillors. This should be called out. Ratepayers were apparently called "entitled Karens". The people of North Sydney have genuine, well-held concerns as to what is being proposed. Pensioners, young families, small businesses—all are worried how they will pay for this increase and worried about what they will need to cut from their own budgets. A quarter of residents earn under \$1,000 a week. Rates for many would increase by over \$1,500 a year. This will have a real impact. People need empathy and understanding from their elected representatives, not scorn from out-of-touch local councillors.

This process has been lacking in integrity and transparency. Council's desire for such a large rate hike was not disclosed until mere days after the 2024 local government election. There is absolutely no mandate here. It is impossible not to be cynical over the timing of all this. It was sprung on ratepayers when councillors knew they would not have to face voters for another four years. Council could not find support, despite holding a deeply flawed community consultation process. This was held over the Christmas-New Year period, when nobody was really paying attention, to be frank about it. There were limited options presented, ranging from a 65 per cent to a 111 per cent increase. You could not choose to support anything less than a 65 per cent increase. Even then, only 5 per cent of survey respondents supported the option that council eventually endorsed.

Council would have you believe that there is a big budget crisis justifying an urgent and steep increase. But let's look at what has been proposed. The rate rise would be permanent, not temporary, with ratepayers continuing to be slugged for years and years to come. This would raise an extra \$544 million over 10 years. That is more than half a billion dollars, to be clear, and \$112 million of this will go straight from the bank accounts of hardworking residents and small businesses into council's bank account to sit there in fact in reserve. Clearly it is not urgent enough to impose on ratepayers in a cost-of-living crisis.

About a third of the total will fund new pet projects for council. This is not a council that wants to live within its means. It is not looking to tighten its belt. Instead, it is loosening the purse strings, reaching into ratepayers' pockets, extracting anything it can get away with and with the intent of going, in effect, on a spending spree—all during what council now says is a financial crisis. Let us not pretend, as some have, that this is about the North Sydney pool. Costs on that project have increased by about \$50 million. That represents less than

10 per cent of the total raised by council's rate rise. It is no justification whatsoever for a near doubling of rates. It is nothing more than a cash grab when ratepayers can least afford it.

We have seen similar from the teals on the northern beaches, so-called community Independents ignoring their community. Council must stop treating the community with such contempt. It should regain control of its budget, find savings and make a genuine attempt to contain costs. There are many alternative options: trim costs, make savings, optimise assets, and so much more. Ratepayers should not be left paying the price for council's mismanagement of its own finances. The mayor would blame previous councils when indeed she has been in the role for over three years now. Indeed, this mayor said pre-election that council remains in a strong financial position. I am deeply concerned about the lack of transparency, consistency and, frankly, integrity in all of this.

I am concerned, too, at the impact on the many small businesses, including in Crows Nest and North Sydney, which were flourishing with the recently opened metro. Small business is doing it tough. Insolvencies are high. The Government should be doing all it can to make it easier, not adding to their costs. The proposal will now go to IPART. I am calling on all in our community to make a submission and for IPART to reject such an excessive rate increase. I am calling on the Minister for Local Government to call an immediate public inquiry into North Sydney Council. I thank those local councillors who have stood up for our community to push back on this: councillors Jessica Keen, Efi Carr and James Spenceley. I will keep standing by the people of my community to seek to overturn this outrageous proposal.

### PARRAMATTA ELECTORATE WETLANDS

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (16:44):** Sunday 2 February marked World Wetlands Day, dedicated to the vital role wetlands play in the ecosystem. Whether they are naturally occurring or manmade, wetlands are one of the most productive natural environments in the world and are home to native species, fish nurseries and migratory birds. They help to prevent flooding, improve water quality and store carbon. Numerous wetlands can be found in the Parramatta electorate which aid with water filtration, flood mitigation and erosion prevention, not to mention providing a home for local wildlife and beautiful landscapes across the electorate. At Sydney Olympic Park, three different wetlands can be found in the diverse Bicentennial Park. Lake Belvedere is a breeding habitat for a large variety of waterbirds. The Badu Mangroves contain 65 hectares of the largest stands of mangrove forest and coastal saltmarsh in New South Wales. The Waterbird Refuge can also be found in Bicentennial Park: a 10-hectare wetland, rich in birdlife, that provides habitat for large numbers and species of birds, including migratory species protected under international agreement.

Baludarri Wetland in Parramatta, found on the northern banks of the Parramatta River, west of James Ruse Drive, was named after Baludarri, the eldest son of Burrumattagal elders who were displaced from Parramatta during the first European occupation of Rosehill in 1788. He was one of the first Indigenous Australians to develop friendly relations with early Europeans and was befriended by Governor Arthur Phillip in 1791. At Baludarri Wetland you can find a variety of local fauna, such as the Australian wood duck, as well as flora specific to both coastal saltmarsh and freshwater wetland. Milson Park is located behind Westmead Private Hospital. Finlaysons Creek runs through the park, connecting to Toongabbie Creek at the northern end. The vegetation here is categorised as Cumberland river-flat forest and Cumberland swamp oak riparian forest. Milson Park has a high diversity of birds that utilise the dense forest understorey for shelter as well as a range of microbat species and other fauna, including frogs and lizards.

George Kendall Riverside Park in Ermington is located along the northern side of the Parramatta River and forms part of a linear network of parks and recreation trails along the river. Originally part of land granted to marine Alexander McDonald by Governor Arthur Phillip, George Kendall is home to mangrove vegetation, saltmarsh communities and regenerating native vegetation. Lake Parramatta Reserve in North Parramatta is a reserve that was originally set aside to protect the quality of Parramatta's drinking water supply following the damming of Hunts Creek in 1855. The reserve's extensive areas of native vegetation act as a habitat for native wildlife and also house three different creeks. Lake Parramatta Reserve was the first wildlife refuge created in the Sydney metropolitan area.

The New South Wales Government protects approximately 19 per cent of coastal wetlands and 7 per cent of inland wetlands through its conservation reserve system, ensuring the sites are managed and protected over the long term. The Government actively monitors the health of New South Wales wetlands and evaluates the effectiveness of its site management strategies. The NSW Wetlands Policy promotes the sustainable conservation, management and use of wetlands. It emphasises the need for collaboration among stakeholders to protect wetlands and their catchments.

The New South Wales Government is also working with communities to protect wetlands across the State through wetland recovery programs aimed at restoring wetlands that have been affected by various threats, and through managing and delivering water for the environment to provide wetlands with enough water to support

their plants and animals. Conservation agreements are also made with landowners to help protect wetlands on private lands by providing incentives and support for conservation efforts. Ongoing research into wetland ecology and regular monitoring of wetland conditions is essential for informing management and conservation strategies. Educational programs and volunteer opportunities for wetland conservation are also provided to communities, local councils and other agencies to raise awareness and involve the public in wetland conservation efforts.

Our local wetlands are an asset to the Parramatta region—and, for many, an asset they are not aware of. Collectively, New South Wales Government initiatives aim to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of more than 20,000 wetlands across New South Wales. In the coming weeks, on Clean Up Australia Day, I encourage people to get out and about and clean up the wetlands that we cherish and that do so much to provide a wonderful ecosystem for the flora and fauna of the Parramatta region.

### **RIVERSTONE ELECTORATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (16:49):** My election and the election of the Minns Labor Government marked a decisive shift in the Riverstone electorate. The community voted for a change, recognising the former Liberal Government's blatant neglect of infrastructure. We have promised to build a better community for everyone and that is precisely what we are doing. One of the key areas that had been ignored was public transport. While the metro is a welcome addition to the area, the decision to deviate from the original plan to run the metro through Box Hill and across to Marsden Park, instead ending the line at Tallawong, has meant that tens of thousands of people in those new suburbs who want to use the service have to travel around 10 kilometres to get to the station.

It is little wonder that so many people are forced to rely on private vehicles, adding even more pressure to our already failing road network and car parks. The Tallawong car park is the most obvious example of the disconnected nature of our public transport system. It is typically full by 7.00 a.m., partly because the then Government reduced it to only 1,000 spaces instead of building the recommended 1,600, but mainly because travel by private vehicle is the only option available to residents in the surrounding suburbs due to the failure of the previous Government to update bus services to and from the metro.

Before I decided to run for Parliament, I knew the state of bus services was problematic. However, it is fair to say I did not fully understand the extent of the issue. Shortly after being elected, the Minns Labor Government initiated the Bus Industry Taskforce to review and improve the State's bus services. To ensure that our voices were heard, I reached out to my community to ask them to take part. The response was overwhelming, with over 12 per cent of the submissions coming from the North West Growth Area. That underscores what our residents already knew: Bus services to support our growing population are woefully inadequate.

In addition to the Bus Industry Taskforce, the Government called for a performance review from the Auditor-General, which was delivered in January 2025. The findings were nothing short of damning, revealing the extent of mismanagement and neglect, which has left our communities underserved and our transport system failing. Regarding Transport for NSW, the Auditor-General's report confirmed:

TfNSW is not effectively managing bus contracts to ensure that operators are meeting contractual performance obligations and customer needs.

It also highlighted:

TfNSW has not responded strategically to ensure bus contracts are delivering effective services in the context of an evolving transport system and changes in work and travel patterns.

While I readily acknowledge the difference between the elected Government and the departments that serve it, the findings of both the Bus Industry Taskforce and the Auditor-General's report demonstrate that the former Liberal-Nationals Government placed little emphasis on the benefits of public transport, and buses in particular. But the Government is responding. I am working with the voices for improvement in my community, and we are starting to see great results.

In January this year our bus services received huge improvements. Peak-hour services for the 742 and 747 routes, which travel between Marsden Park, Riverstone and Schofields, have doubled. The operating hours for those routes, along with the 746 between Riverstone and Rouse Hill, have also been extended. We have realigned the 748 route through Schofields, making it easier for 5,500 residents to access essential transport links. Those changes also reduce the pressure on the on-demand buses, which will improve the overall efficiency of that service as well.

While that progress is encouraging, there is still much more to be done to support the growing suburbs of Box Hill, Grantham Farm and Nirimba Fields. Residents in those communities are more than willing to use public transport, but they have no choice but to drive when the services simply do not exist. A reliable public transport service will provide significant benefits, offering reduced traffic congestion, less pressure on car parks, lower fuel

costs, more convenient access to jobs and a better quality of life for all. It will also lead to a more sustainable and connected community.

The explosion in population we have experienced over the past decade was no accident. The former Government planned and approved those precincts, opening the door for developers to build thousands of new homes, but it failed to accept its responsibility for the infrastructure needed to support the emerging suburbs. What makes it even more frustrating is that suburbs such as Stanhope Gardens, Kellyville Ridge and The Ponds, developed under the Labor Government, are examples of what well-planned infrastructure looks like. Those suburbs were built with families and community wellbeing in mind, not based on the priorities of property developers. It is clear that residents in Tallawong, Schofields, Grantham Farm, Nirimba Fields and other growing areas across north-west Sydney are now paying the price for that shift in emphasis.

The Minns Labor Government is committed to building a better future for all of us. While the first round of bus service improvements marks a significant step forward, our work is far from finished. The residents of Riverstone deserve a reliable, accessible and connected public transport system. We need a system that reduces congestion and ultimately improves the quality of life for all of our communities. The Government has repeatedly shown that it listens to our community and delivers real results. The work is far from over, but I stand fully committed to working with my community to ensure that everybody gets the transport options they deserve.

### PROSPECT ELECTORATE TAMIL COMMUNITY

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:54):** Vanakkam to my Tamil community in the electorate of Prospect. Pongal is the Tamil harvest festival, celebrated during Tamil Heritage Month. The festival is celebrated by Tamils worldwide, from our community in the Prospect electorate to our friends and families at home in Sri Lanka, Tamil Nadu and across every country in the world where Tamils reside. Pongal signifies the cultural celebration welcoming the end of farming season. Harvest is an important time to recognise agricultural tradition, acknowledge hard work and celebrate the fruits of labour. It is an occasion to offer prayers, spend time with family and friends, enjoy a bowl of pongal and renew our commitments to one another.

The pongal dish is a mixture of boiled sweet rice, spices and fruits. It is absolutely delicious. In Tamil Heritage Month, I look forward to sharing many bowls of pongal with my Tamil friends. During Pongal this year, I could not help but reflect on the significance of the dish. The word "pongal" originates from the Tamil word "pongu," which means to boil over. As I enjoyed a warm bowl of pongal at the Pongal street festival in Pendle Hill, I thought about how we too are boiling over, brimming with a vibrant and connected community. In Prospect and across New South Wales, our community is enriched by our Tamil Australians. Whether they are laying roots as new migrants or long-term residents, or are visiting friends and family, our Tamil community is vital to the diverse cultural tapestry of New South Wales.

Tamil is one of the oldest spoken languages in the world. The Prospect electorate is the number one State electorate for Tamil speakers in all of Australia, and I could not be prouder of that fact. Over 4,360 people in our Prospect electorate speak Tamil at home. It is wonderful to see that cohesive community share language, carry on traditions, share stories and celebrate its beautiful and timeless culture. I am so very proud of the resilience of our local Tamil community, with its generosity and community spirit. Steeped in culture, historic descriptions of Pongal have featured throughout Tamil literature, art and architecture for over 1,000 years. It is important for our Tamil community across Western Sydney to continue celebrating that rich cultural inheritance. I was pleased to see our Western Sydney community embrace Pongal wholeheartedly, holding many festive celebrations.

The Community Migrant Resource Centre, or CMRC, worked with our Tamil community to host a Pongal celebration this year at Parramatta Town Hall. Welcoming over 300 attendees, CMRC showcased the rich cultural heritage of Pongal. The event highlighted the social cohesion and inclusiveness experienced by newly arrived migrants as they integrate into our Prospect electorate and the wider Western Sydney community. I thank CEO Melissa Monterio and all the other people who helped coordinate the day and host such a wonderful event. For the very first time, it was wonderful to see the Governor-General of Australia attend the event and enjoy a bowl of pongal.

The Cumberland Tamil Society (NSW) hosted a wonderful Thai Pongal celebration. The heartfelt occasion united our community to express gratitude to the sun god, the earth, the rain god and the natural elements for their bountiful harvest. The Cumberland Tamil Society is dedicated to enriching our local Tamil community in the Prospect electorate. Its range of fitness programs, educational and networking forums, and cultural events unites our community. The Thai Pongal festival was an incredible example of its mission to enhance our community by promoting vibrant Tamil culture. I thank Thiru, the president, and Ravi, the secretary, for coordinating such a fantastic event.

I congratulate the Tamil Arts and Culture Association, or TACA, which hosted Pongal in Parliament. It connected our Tamil community of all ages with local leaders and members of Parliament. It was wonderful to see that event, which I have enjoyed for many years, becoming so popular. A volunteer organisation, TACA is committed to building a strong and cohesive Tamil diaspora to contribute to and strengthen Australia's multicultural fabric. I congratulate the president, Thiru, and all of the team at TACA. Finally, I congratulate the organisers of the Grand Tamil Pongal Festival. Held on Pendle Way, Pendle Hill, the vibrant street festival connected over 60 Tamil organisations and small businesses to share their culture. I thank them all. Nandri Vanakkam.

### TWEED VALLEY HOSPITAL

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:59):** The opening of the brand-new \$723.3 million Tweed Valley Hospital last May marked a new chapter in health care in the Tweed electorate. We now have a state-of-the-art hospital with more beds, additional emergency department treatment spaces and new services such as an interventional cardiology service and integrated cancer care service with radiotherapy and PET and CT scanners. The new hospital has transformed health care in the electorate. However, since opening day, the new facility has been plagued by serious parking issues. Parking is free—we campaigned on the issue and made that commitment to the local community. There are more than 1,100 parking spaces within the hospital grounds. However, the lived experience of those using or working at the hospital has been one of headaches and stress when it comes to parking.

I received feedback that the design of the multi-level carpark made it difficult to navigate, and there was a serious shortfall in the number of available car spaces within the hospital grounds. Those problems were exacerbated at high traffic times, such as shift changeovers. The parking problems meant that the wonderful health care a patient receives at the hospital and the modern workplace now provided for healthcare workers were often overshadowed by a negative parking experience. Last year I had encouraging conversations with the CEO of the Northern NSW Local Health District about the parking issues, and plans were made to alleviate the parking problems at Tweed Valley Hospital.

So I was extremely pleased by the announcement last week of more parking spaces for Tweed Valley Hospital. An additional 130 street-level parking spaces will be installed by transforming one lane of the ring road surrounding the campus into on-street parking, with more spaces to be provided in the grassed area just south of the existing multi-deck western car park. New signage, line marking and enhanced parking management systems will also be installed in existing parking areas. Those works will begin as soon as possible and will be carried out in stages to minimise disruption. Work is expected to be completed before the end of this year. The additional parking spaces will help ease the pressure on parking at the hospital and alleviate some of the stress for those visiting the hospital or arriving at work on time.

The announcement of more car parking at the hospital came at an opportune time for my Federal counterpart, a Labor member who is in full election mode and happily posing in front of the hospital. When the hospital was announced, that member protested and wanted it moved to another site. Curiously, they were also quoted in the health Minister's press release, even though the parking improvements are funded as part of the Tweed Valley Hospital redevelopment being delivered by the Northern NSW Local Health District in partnership with Health Infrastructure. Success has many fathers, it would seem, and that was never truer than in this case. Campaigning politicians on all sides with very short memories are claiming credit for the successful hospital.

I welcome the announcement of more parking spaces for the fantastic Tweed Valley Hospital, and I look forward to continuing to work with the Northern NSW Local Health District to enhance the facility. Although I am blessed, there are still problems that I know the health Minister is working on. Believe it or not, nurses who work one kilometre from the hospital earn 15 per cent more than they would earn in New South Wales. That inequity between New South Wales and Queensland extends to a number of health professions. Six psychiatrists have resigned from the hospital over the past month.

The hospital is doing an excellent job. In the past six months, 30 per cent of its patients came from Queensland. That is fine—we like looking after our brethren just north of the border—but it is also a major problem. One could argue that our front door is Queensland and our back door is New South Wales. The hospital is a great facility, but I have a word of caution for newer members. We campaigned for nine to 10 years for a hospital. We got the announcement, turned the sod and cut the ribbon eight years later. Trust me, it takes time and it can be extraordinarily frustrating. Anyway, I remain 100 per cent for the Tweed.

### FAIRFIELD ELECTORATE HEALTH SERVICES

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (17:04):** I acknowledge the comments of the member for Tweed about hospital delivery. Fairfield Hospital in my area is getting a \$550 million upgrade, which we want to make sure is delivered as soon as possible. I understand that is a lesson for me. As a new MP, I am totally on board with going

on that journey. I also speak about health care. There is good news in my electorate. A new Medicare Urgent Care Clinic has just opened on Spencer Street in the Fairfield CBD, which is a welcome addition to the community. Health care is a Government's paramount accomplishment, and in my area of Western Sydney accessibility is critical. Many families, particularly in Fairfield, do not have cars and cannot travel far to access health care. They do not have a lot of disposable income. The Medicare Urgent Care Clinic in Fairfield will go a long way to improving health outcomes for the area.

People may be wondering what an urgent care clinic is. The clinics are staffed by doctors and nurses who provide treatment for non-life-threatening, urgent medical conditions. The key differentiation is that if a condition is life threatening, people should go to a hospital emergency room. If it is urgent but not life threatening, people can visit the urgent care clinic. Conditions that might be treated there include sprains and broken bones, issues requiring X-rays, insect bites, breathing problems, cuts that need stitches, eye and ear problems, minor burns, vomiting et cetera. The crux of the matter is that people with those conditions will be seen and treated sooner at an urgent care clinic, and it is free for anyone with a Medicare card. As I said earlier, that is critical for families in Western Sydney.

The Fairfield clinic is open from 8.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m. seven days a week. It supplements the other work that the Government has done in the healthcare space. I add a caveat by noting that the Fairfield Medicare Urgent Care Clinic is funded by the Federal Government. I acknowledge Chris Bowen, the Federal member for McMahon, for his strong advocacy for health, particularly in Western Sydney. We have worked together to plug the gaps. The Labor Government is upgrading Fairfield Hospital, and its \$550 million allocation will go a long way. In addition, \$1.3 billion has been allocated for the construction of Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital at Chapel Road, which services the eastern part of Fairfield. The existing Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital will remain open at Eldridge Road. I give a plug for the funding boost for the Fairfield Women's Health Service.

From memory, \$13 million will also go to Karitane in a 50/50 split with the Paul Ramsay Foundation to set up a world-leading family and child hub in the health precinct at Carramar in my electorate. That will go a long way to helping families, especially those with young kids and toddlers, with their healthcare needs. Urgent care clinics are forming part of the health ecosystem, and the Fairfield clinic is a welcome addition to the area. I look forward to seeing many people being treated there, which will relieve the pressure on Fairfield Hospital. The member for Liverpool is sitting behind me in the Chamber. I acknowledge her hard work and advocacy for funding and upgrades at Liverpool Hospital. There is an urgent care clinic in Liverpool, and another one in Bankstown. The Government is starting to deliver on a health ecosystem that will go a long way to making lives better.

## INSURANCE AND NATURAL DISASTERS

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (17:09):** I emphasise again the need to not put new homes in areas with high bushfire risk. We need robust New South Wales Government policies that deliver strategic planning decisions that prepare us for the future and that do not make the problem worse. The recent fires in Los Angeles and our own devastating 2019-20 bushfires demonstrate that need beyond question. In an era of escalating climate change, we must focus our efforts on disaster risk mitigation, not just mopping up after disasters happen. The last thing we should do is knowingly, unnecessarily and recklessly increase risk by putting new homes in harm's way. Insurance companies are acutely aware of the need to focus on disaster risk mitigation. I refer to comments from Suncorp CEO Steve Johnston, just last week. Suncorp is one of Australia's largest insurance companies, with brands including AAMI, GIO and APIA. In Suncorp's profit result report, Mr Johnston said:

Severity and frequency of extreme weather is becoming an increasingly large part of everyone's premiums through natural hazard budgets and reinsurance protection.

...

Suncorp remains committed to working with Governments, other insurers, banks, technical experts, community organisations and homeowners to reduce Australia's exposure to natural hazard risks. Reducing risk will not only protect lives, homes and businesses, but it will also go a long way in reducing the risk of a claim, in turn ensuring Australians and New Zealanders can access affordable, fit-for-purpose insurance.

Many in the insurance industry are calling for a dollar-for-dollar, pre- and post-disaster spending ratio. That means that for every dollar spent mopping up after disasters, a dollar is invested in mitigation. Given our insurers pay out billions of dollars in claims each year, risk mitigation will be expensive. Not allowing homes to be built in high-risk fire zones is an obvious solution to keeping insurance premiums and risk mitigation costs low for all Australians. The need to stop building in areas vulnerable to natural disasters is one of the reasons I support the New South Wales Government's focus on increasing density over greenfield developments.

I was encouraged to hear the Secretary of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Kiersten Fishburn, also explain that logic in comments at the recent Sydney Summit run by the Committee for Sydney. She said that one of the reasons we need density is because we cannot keep building in areas with high natural hazard risk, including bushfire. I am glad to hear this clear-eyed view from the leader of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. I am particularly glad given that staff in her department have not shown the same wisdom in recent months. In fact, I was shocked to read the department's recommendation to the Sydney North Planning Panel to approve the Patyegarang planning proposal, despite the RFS's position that the rezoning proposal was too dangerous. The department thought it met the requirements of the Planning for Bushfire Protection Policy 2019; the RFS thought it did not. I am glad that the RFS was not ignored by the Sydney North Planning Panel, and a final decision about this specific proposal is yet to be made, which may be a concern. The Planning for Bushfire Protection Policy 2019 is providing the framework for assessment and decision-making in this case, but the reality is that it is out of date.

I turn now to the draft Bushfire Prone Land Package. This policy was originally slated to be finalised by mid-2024, but it has not been. The Bush Fire Prone Land Package was a response to recommendation 27 of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry following the devastating 2019-20 bushfires. The New South Wales Government at the time adopted all of the recommendations of the inquiry report, including recommendation 27. The draft package would result in amendments being made to update section 4 of *Planning for Bush Fire Protection*, making it far more robust. The pending bush fire policy for land use planning provides objectives and strategic planning principles to guide planning authorities when making merit-based decisions on or near bushfire-prone land.

The strategic planning principles in the draft policy include avoiding inappropriate developments in high-risk bushfire locations or circumstances. Critically, the updated policy will also consider climate change impacts on future fire behaviour, as well as landscape context fire risks, which refers to the capacity in the larger landscape for a fire to build momentum, generate its own winds and become a firestorm. We need robust planning frameworks for bushfire risk that apply the best available science and minimise future risk to life and property. I was grateful to meet with the Minister's office today to get an update on the Bushfire Prone Land Package. I look forward to continuing to raise this issue so that we can make systematic improvements, make better decisions to save lives, and stop ignoring our RFS firefighters, who know best.

#### FREEDOM RIDE

**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) (17:14):** I acknowledge the sixtieth anniversary of the 1965 Freedom Ride in the context of having many constituents who moved from places like Walgett and Moree in regional New South Wales to Wyong and the Central Coast to make their homes. I knew a little bit about the Freedom Rides from people such as BJ Duncan. His grandmother started the Eleanor Duncan medical service in Wyong, now known as Yerin Aboriginal Health Services, which provides myriad important services. I was having a conversation with BJ, who is now getting on in years—although he would not like me saying that—and he told me that, as a young boy in Moree, he would hold his grandfather's hand because the Aboriginal families were not allowed to access the supermarket until after the other residents had finished their shopping and it had effectively closed.

Minister Sharpe and I visited Walgett on Monday, and it was with great pleasure that we took part in the ceremony honouring those Indigenous and non-Indigenous students who took part in the Freedom Ride. The Freedom Riders witnessed firsthand the segregation, poor living conditions and lack of basic rights that Aboriginal communities endured in towns like Moree, Kempsey and Walgett. The students witnessed Aboriginal peoples being denied access to public spaces, including swimming pools and cinemas, and even hospitals having separate birthing units. However, those students did not just witness discrimination; they stood up to it and they challenged it. They confronted exclusionary practices in pools, cinemas and public spaces. They stood tall against the backlash they faced from angry locals, as happened in Walgett when their bus was run off the road.

That movement drew national and even international attention to the issues being faced by Aboriginal peoples. The Freedom Ride forced Australia to see the reality that many had been ignorant of—or ignored—the systemic racism and discrimination Aboriginal peoples faced on their own land. Their work played a crucial role in building momentum for change not only in New South Wales but also across Australia. It was a key contributor to the 1967 referendum that saw Australians vote overwhelmingly to recognise Aboriginal peoples in the census and gave the Federal Government power to make laws for them. It is still mind-boggling to think that, in my lifetime, Aboriginal peoples were still facing that level of segregation.

One of the most important things about Closing the Gap is that we engage in truth telling and accept that those things did happen, and people were treated that way. It is not about apportioning blame. It is not, to a certain extent, about taking responsibility now, but by acknowledging the past, we can make the future better. I made a statement in my speech that the young Indigenous people and Elders, particularly those involved in the land rights

movement, say that they stand on the shoulders of giants, and that acknowledges the work of those people who raised these issues in the past, fought against them and created a better future.

In my electorate of Wyong and across the Central Coast we have the largest Aboriginal population in New South Wales. We have the most amazing leadership programs for those young people. I have watched some of them come through Wyong High School and through its student council to become student captains, and they are now giving back to their community by mentoring and training young people. That is the bright future we want for young Aboriginal people. We want them running their own businesses, supporting families and doing positive things. That is what Closing the Gap is all about. I remain committed to that.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** I also acknowledge the Freedom Riders. We are travelling on the shoulders of giants.

### WINSTON HILLS ELECTORATE CLUBS

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (17:19):** I speak about and recognise the various community clubs across the Winston Hills electorate. We are fortunate to have three major club organisations that service our community by providing hospitality venues, hosting events and celebrating days of significance. Those clubs include Toongabbie Sports Club, NBC Sports Club at Northmead and Seven Hills RSL Club. Firstly, I acknowledge Toongabbie Sports Club, which has been the cornerstone of the Toongabbie, Seven Hills and Pendle Hill since 1959. Toongabbie Sports Club provides a venue for a variety of community events and is known for its live music acts that support local and aspiring musicians. The club provides grants and sponsorships to a number of local sporting and charitable organisations each year, which keep our community thriving. I take the opportunity to thank the club CEO, Andrew Lauridsen, for all his work to ensure that Toongabbie Sports Club remains a community hub for local people. I also thank chairman Duane Gorry and deputy chairman Tim Heyes for their tireless work in ensuring the longevity of the club. I recognise the directors Rob Brownlow, John Burgess, David Hartigan and David Rothery.

I acknowledge the NBC Sports Club at Northmead for the great work that they do in our community by providing a safe and fun environment for the families of Northmead and Winston Hills. The club has a proud history that dates back to 1951, when the club formed as a bowling club in the district. The history of lawn bowls at Northmead continues to live on, as they host a variety of State and interdistrict lawn bowl tournaments each year. On that note, I take this opportunity to acknowledge Dilys Kindleysides, president of Bowls NSW and an outstanding member of my local community. Dilys has, for a long time, been a passionate and enthusiastic supporter of all levels of bowls. NBC Sports Club continues to support the local community with generous sponsorships and charitable donations. I thank the recent board of directors, including Trevor Oldfield, Peter Kindleysides, Livia Janovics, Stephen Rochester, Phil Nixon, Richard Wallace and vice-president David Wells.

Another valued club in the Winston Hills community is the Seven Hills RSL, which underwent significant renovations in recent years to expand its venue and modernise the facilities. In November last year I attended the Remembrance Day service at the club, supported by the Seven Hills-Toongabbie-Wentworthville RSL Sub-Branch. The ceremony was a profound tribute to the many Australians who lost their lives during the First World War and a heartfelt acknowledgment of all those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation. The service provided an enriching commemoration of the anniversary of the end of World War I. It was great to see so many local school students in attendance that day, including those from Toongabbie Public School, Toongabbie West Public School and Vardys Road Public School. Their engagement in the tradition of remembrance is testament to the importance of clubs, such as the RSL, which keep alive the memory of those who made that ultimate sacrifice.

I also thank Seven Hills RSL for its wonderful annual Anzac Day, and I look forward to attending next month. Like Remembrance Day, Anzac Day commemoration is crucial in preserving the memories of those who have fallen and those who have served our nation. That message is essential to pass on to the next generation. I commend the RSL for the work it does with the local students and children of the area to educate them on all historical matters. The RSL's subcommittee is also responsible for maintaining an exhibit of Anzac memorabilia and historical artefacts, which includes artillery pieces, rifles, uniforms and vehicles that form a vital resource in the remembrance of the Anzacs, as well as educating our wider community. I have toured the memorabilia on many occasions and each time I am amazed by the significance of such artefacts and the historical messages they symbolise.

I especially thank the board of directors, including Barry Wilson, vice-president Graham Black and directors John Burgess, Peter Harrington, Terry Shepherd, Annie Moore and Peter Morris, whose dedication makes all of those ceremonies and the collection possible. Their commitment to honouring our veterans and educating our community is deeply appreciated. I look forward to continuing my support of those fantastic community clubs and maintaining a relationship with their managerial teams and board members. On behalf of

the community, I thank them for their work across our community and for providing a safe and exciting place for people to eat, play and socialise.

## SOCIAL COHESION

### BANKSTOWN STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (17:24):** In light of the horrendous recent Islamophobic attack on two women in Melbourne, I use my private member's statement as an opportunity to talk about unity rather than division. Society at the moment is looking at things that divide us and set us apart rather than what brings us together. Society is looking at ways that we can demonise one or the other. The Islamophobic attack, particularly on women, is incredibly distressing. Like members in the other place, I have condemned in this place acts of antisemitism and any act of hatred. There should never be a competition about which group is suffering more than any other group.

To speak about one thing does not reduce the impact of another. It acknowledges where we are at any given point in time. There are times when we have to talk in this place about things that bring people together. I am worried that I am starting to see an erosion of that kindness, compassion and togetherness that are hallmarks of who we are. I am starting to see more people look at someone else as "the other" rather than saying, "How do we make sure that we come together?" It has not been an easy summer or an easy year. But, as a society, we do not move forward when we pitch one group against another. We must call out any acts of hate or violence against anybody who is victimised or picked on, particularly because of their faith, colour or race.

With that in mind, I remind the House of the good things that happen in communities. That brings me to talking about the Bankstown SES. In my job, I get to travel all around the State. I get to see people who do amazing things and go out of their way to support one another, whether it is in the RFS, SES, VRA Rescue or Marine Rescue. They are volunteers who go above and beyond to help because they believe in that ethos of helping one another. I brought up the Bankstown SES unit because that unit reflects the modern multicultural Australia that we are. I join them regularly. It is a big unit, and it is a great unit, made up of people from all parts of the world. I think about one particular person, Carmen, who was the SES member of the year for that unit. Carmen joined because she was getting her Australian citizenship, and she heard me talk about giving back to the community. As a result of that—the men backed it in—she joined her SES. She wanted to belong to something.

People in Bankstown face many different language barriers, but our SES unit is reflective of our community. Everybody has a strength, and the strength of that unit, in particular, is that it takes everybody's positivity and brings it together. When a disaster strikes or when the community needs help, they are all there together. I am proud to say that, as a unit, the 140 members come from 25 different cultures, including from Middle Eastern, Chinese, Vietnamese, the Pacific Islands and European communities. As no small token of pride, since the last year there was a 20 per cent increase in the number of members, which is fantastic. I will not take credit for it, but I do take any opportunity to encourage people to join their local emergency service volunteer organisation, particularly around the Bankstown area. We always have spots available.

Over 70 per cent of the Bankstown SES members speak a language other than English, in addition to English—what an advantage at a time when people need support and quick messaging. They engage with the community on a regular basis on how they can better prepare their homes. They do community activities, and they spread the safety messages in language to make sure that people know what to do in an emergency. I cannot stop thanking the Bankstown SES. I have a super soft spot for it.

I also use this opportunity to ask people to come and join us this Sunday at the Bankstown SES, where it will hold a multi-agency expo. Fire and Rescue, RFS, the surf lifesavers and the ambos will be there. It is about all of our community coming together—in all our colours, faiths and languages—because that is who we are. I circle back to my starting point, which is that right now we need things that bring us together and unify us, not things that divide us. Every member in this place has an opportunity to make sure that we do things that bring people together. No-one deserves hatred, and no hatred is worse than another. It is just terrible all-round.

### UPPER HUNTER ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY EVENTS

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (17:29):** I would like to give the House a feel for the way Australia Day was marked recently in the Upper Hunter. I start by acknowledging Singleton Council and how the Twilight event in Townhead Park has established itself as the Upper Hunter's Australia Day party starter. As the sun set on the evening of Saturday 25 January, the community converged on the Townhead Park precinct for a program of free, fun activities and entertainment. This year I spent my Australia Day in the most western part of the Upper Hunter electorate, at the Cassilis-Merriwa Australia Day awards ceremony held at Cassilis Bowling Club. I felt very honoured that I did because the Cassilis-Merriwa Citizen of the Year was also the Upper Hunter

Shire's Citizen of the Year. Jane Hegarty was recognised for her dedication to volunteering and shaping countless community initiatives. She leads the Cassilis District Development Group and organises the Giro de Cassilis bike ride and Cassilis Spring Ball fundraiser, which supports local initiatives and education. Receiving the award was a humbling experience for Jane, who emphasised that every achievement is made possible by the collective efforts of many.

Archie Constable was the local Young Citizen of the Year for volunteering to raise funds for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service and for his trucking photography page, which now has over 1,800 followers. Cassilis Public School P&C association was the Local Champion of the Year recipient. Neville and Leanne Hook's 30 years at Merriwa Newsagency earned them the Sustainability in Business award. The Sporting Achievement Award was presented to Rihanna Hunt for excelling in rugby league and athletics. Rihanna is regarded as a leader on and off the field. The Young Citizen of the Year for the Upper Hunter Shire and the Scone community is Hannah Gillett. Hannah's contributions are diverse, from raising awareness for breast cancer to promoting Where There's a Will, representing the Upper Hunter at the National Youth Leadership Summit in Adelaide and being a mentor for the Scone Public School junior cattle paraders. Upper Hunter Shire's other award recipients included Moonan Flat's Susan Scott, who was named Scone's Citizen of the Year; Murrurundi's Citizen of the Year, Judith Wilson; and Joy Dallah, who was honoured as Aberdeen's Citizen of the Year.

Around the electorate Muswellbrook Shire Council awarded Citizen of the Year to Tim Seymour and Young Citizen of the Year to Brayden Dever. Singleton named paramedic Nigel Korff as its Citizen of the Year. Nigel has given 40 years as a volunteer with the NSW Rural Fire Service and is recognised for his role as an RFS aircrew member, who was part of the record number of helicopter rescues in a single day during the 2022 Lismore floods. Singleton High School alumni Dr Jared Lawrence was Young Achiever of the Year, honoured for his impact on improving the health and wellbeing of the Singleton community. Dungog Shire recognised a one-of-a-kind community champion as its Citizen of the Year Clarence Town's Trudy Balstad, who received nominations from five separate community-based volunteer organisations: Clarence Town Public School and Glen William Public Schools P&C associations, Clarence Town Lions Club, Rural Aid Community Builders Program, Clarence Town Museum and Clarence Town Senior Citizens Centre. Trudy is always willing to generously lend a hand to any local organisation in need. Young Citizen of the Year award recipients were Jack McBlane and James Ryan, with Allen Shrimpton and Brad Lean receiving the Volunteer Service to the Community Award.

The Gloucester Australia Day awards were announced at Gloucester Showground, with Belle Mulder named Local Citizen of the Year and Findlay McIntosh awarded Local Young Citizen of the Year. I congratulate Gloucester Rotary Club on being awarded Local Project of the Year for the Bush Poetry in the Saleyards initiative. Australia Day may mean different things to different people. That is okay. The most important thing is that our communities get the opportunity to come together, celebrate what is good about our modern-day nation and, most of all, thank and recognise those, often our volunteers, who give of themselves to make our community a better place.

### LIVERPOOL ELECTORATE HEALTH SERVICES

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (17:34):** As I have shared with this House before, health care and wait times in Liverpool Hospital are a key issue for my community. We inherited from the Liberals a system that was overwhelmed and under-resourced. Furthermore, the Federal Liberal Government's freeze on Medicare rebates contributed to people either delaying GP care or not seeking care at all. It meant that they were forced to wait for hours in an emergency department [ED]. EDs are not designed to provide the care of GPs. My community was struggling to access emergency care in a timely manner, which was then putting strain on those trying to access non-emergency care and surgical procedures. However, I am glad to say that our Premier and the Minister for Health made addressing that a key priority. The day after the 2023 State election, when many would be forgiven for taking a day to recover, they turned up to Liverpool Hospital to share how the New South Wales Labor Government would better serve the people of south-west Sydney.

In the almost two years since this Labor Government was voted in, we have led efforts to create more pathways to care outside our busy hospitals via HealthDirect and urgent care services; reduced the numbers of overdue surgeries by safely increasing short-stay surgeries; empowered pharmacies to prescribe low-complexity medications, relieving pressure on our GPs; and established the emergency department and surgical care taskforces. Furthermore, Liverpool Hospital was announced as one of two trial sites for the rollout of safe staffing levels. I also acknowledge the Federal Labor Government's significant investment in primary and urgent care across the region. Liverpool has significantly benefitted from an urgent care clinic located in the heart of our CBD. Almost 6,000 patients have been diverted from EDs across south-west Sydney, thanks to the Federal and New South Wales governments' rollout of urgent care services and clinics across New South Wales.

Today I can share some good news with the House. Never-before-seen figures show that emergency department wait times at Liverpool Hospital have halved over the past year. The time to treatment for triage 2 patients has been slashed from 18 minutes in December 2023 to nine minutes in December 2024. Labor's measures to address the health needs of our community are bearing fruit but I appreciate that there is more to do. The removal of the wages cap has initiated a community discussion about how much we value our health workers. I put on the record my hope that we come to a speedy resolution to negotiations with nurses, psychiatrists and other health workers, who are the backbone of our health system. I also highlight the work being done by my Federal colleague the member for Werriwa, Anne Stanley, who is campaigning for the establishment of another urgent care clinic in Busby. A clinic in the 2168 postcode would make a huge difference to our community. I look forward to supporting her efforts to make it a reality.

It comes as the New South Wales Government rolls out its half-a-billion-dollar emergency department relief investment, which includes a \$171.4 million investment to introduce three additional virtual care services, helping prevent 180,000 trips to the ED; a \$100 million investment to back in our urgent care services to become a mainstay and key instrument of the health system by providing pathways to care outside of our hospitals for an estimated 114,000 patients; a \$70 million investment to expand emergency department short stay units to improve patient flow to reduce emergency department wait times by nearly 80,000 hours; a \$15.1 million investment for an ambulance allocation matrix that provides real-time hospital data to enable paramedics to transport patients to emergency departments with greater capacity, reducing wait times; a \$31.4 million investment to increase Hospital in the Home across the State, allowing over 3,500 additional patients each year to be cared for in their own home rather than a hospital bed; and a \$53.9 million investment to improve patient flow and support discharge planning for identified patients early on who are suitable to be discharged home with the appropriate supports in place.

As other speakers in the debate have explained, the measures that this Labor Government has introduced in partnership with the Federal Labor Government have gone a significant way to ensuring that the health needs of our communities are met, especially those at Liverpool and the broader south-west Sydney region who are struggling after a decade of neglect.

#### SYDNEY FISH MARKET

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (17:39):** The proposed new site for the Sydney Fish Market is in my electorate of Balmain. Its astronomical cost of \$836 million—almost a billion dollars—is being borne by the people of New South Wales. Make no mistake, that kind of money buys a very nice building. I have been shown around by the project team and it looks spectacular. It overlooks the charms of Blackwattle Bay, with the wonderful heritage cottages of Glebe, Annandale and Rozelle to the west and Pyrmont and the Anzac Bridge to the east. The building itself has all the hallmarks of a future icon, with bespoke beams and ceiling cassettes, cavernous auction rooms and a grand public promenade. The Sydney Fish Market will move in towards the end of the year on a peppercorn rent. At least, that is the current plan.

It is important to note that once upon a time the Sydney Fish Market was owned by the people of New South Wales. It was privatised in 1994 by a Coalition government—sold off to a private company for \$20 million, which must have seemed like quite the windfall at the time. But that absolutely pales in comparison to the price tag we are looking at for its new home today. Thirty years later, reports are that it could be heading into insolvency. Last week a local paper ran the story that:

Sydney Fish Market is on the brink of insolvency just as the roof takes shape on its taxpayer funded billion-dollar new premises, with auditors refusing to sign off on the company's accounts three months after the mandatory reporting deadline.

Apparently they are concerned about increased cleaning, insurance and other operational costs associated with the new building. Alarm bells are ringing. It will be an absolute travesty if the people of New South Wales end up bailing out this privatised company in order for it to take up residence in its new, taxpayer-funded space. I sincerely hope those reports are overblown. With such an obscene amount being spent on the new site, it will be important for public benefits to flow.

I note there has been some talk of a planning agreement to make sure all the parks, public walkways, cycleways and the like that are included in the precinct's plans can be funded. That is critical. But, as I spoke about yesterday, redevelopment of the adjacent site that the markets will be moving from is set to deliver up to 1,500 apartments on what is a very large and very public piece of land with no public or social housing to be included in the mix. It is a great shame that the Government has spent so much money to free up such a big piece of public land when there will be no public housing on it. But it is not too late. The Greens will continue to call on the Minns Labor Government to reconsider its plans for the site and make sure it gets used for public housing. That is what my community wants, and it is what Sydney and New South Wales desperately needs.

But it is not just the housing mix that is raising concerns in my electorate. I have heard a lot about implications for local transport, with a doubling of capacity at the new site. It is expected that there will be many

more visitors, but no additional parking provided. There is talk of a new ferry service, but there are concerns that the wharf will be designed to cater primarily to private vessels and not public ferries. And what of additional bus services to give visitors the options they need to leave the car at home? Unless we provide those alternatives, people will continue to drive and look for places to park nearby, which we do not want to see.

I have also heard concerns that the potential energy use on the new site will be beyond its capacity for supply. We need to make sure it is energy neutral and does not need to resort to noisy generators during peak times like Christmas. Locals have been subject to enough noise and disruption during the building's construction, and they really do need a break. When the pilings were being put in, there was reverberation and banging for months, which was a lot for the local community to deal with. Finally, I am concerned that, with the increasing effects of climate change, the stormwater systems in the area will not cope. Last week we had a significant weather event in Sydney. Many would have seen images of flooded local streets on the news. The whole site was completely cut off. A cafe's furniture even floated down the street. It became incredibly dangerous, and people were unable to travel through.

The Sydney Fish Market is a significant part of our city's culture, and clearly its new site will be a significant building. We want it to succeed. But, with its nearly billion-dollar price tag, these concerns must be taken seriously, and they need to be addressed.

### CANTERBURY HOSPITAL

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (17:43):** I put on record my acknowledgment of the commitment and dedication of the Premier, the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health, as well as members who won electorates from the Coalition so we could win government, because it means that my community of Canterbury will now have a new, upgraded hospital. Just a couple of weeks ago, the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health visited Canterbury alongside the CEO of the Sydney Local Health District, Deb Willcox, representatives from Health Infrastructure and the amazing Canterbury Hospital team. I place on record my huge appreciation to the community, community organisations, sporting clubs, religious groups and women's groups who worked alongside me and participated in a large petition and rally for the hospital. Over nearly eight years, I have made numerous speeches in this place urging the Coalition Government to upgrade Canterbury Hospital. Although the Coalition Government saw with its own eyes that we needed an upgraded Canterbury Hospital, particularly during COVID, it is the election of a Labor government that finally delivered this commitment and investment.

Canterbury is part of the Sydney Local Health District. Many in our very large multicultural community are elderly and have complex needs as well as chronic diseases such as diabetes and high cholesterol. Our community also has challenges accessing GPs, making Canterbury Hospital its first port of call. We also have a very large number of community members with small children. Our local government area has seen one of the largest increases in population, yet our maternity ward has not had an upgrade for close to 30 years. Our antenatal unit is a very large room that is like a cattle call for women who turn up wanting to talk about very personal and private matters. Unlike other hospitals, equal access is particularly challenging, as the community has a lot migrant and refugee women.

I am more than ecstatic at the outcome. It has been a huge fight over a very long period. A couple of weeks ago the Minister for Health, the Ministry of Health, our wonderful nurses, health workers, staff specialists and infrastructure team came together with our community to announce the master plan, which I am so pleased that the community can now see. I assure the community that we will have a Tresillian service, which I am fortunate to have used with my second child many years ago. It is an incredible service that will always be part of the network and the care. I also acknowledge the 900 wonderful staff at Canterbury Hospital. A lot of the feedback I hear is that people are treated like family members. I encourage my community to get onto Sydney Local Health District's Canterbury Hospital website and register for an online forum at 7.30 p.m. on 25 February, where there will be further information about the wonderful redevelopment at Canterbury hospital.

### TRIBUTE TO ERNIE PAGE, OAM, FORMER MEMBER FOR WAVERLEY AND FOR COOGEE AND MINISTER OF THE CROWN

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (17:48):** I pay tribute to Ernest "Ernie" Page, OAM, a former member of this House and former Minister of the Crown, and acknowledge his dedicated public service and commitment to the labour movement. Ernie would have been 90 years of age this week. I regret that I could not attend the plaque unveiling hosted by Waverley Council. Ernie's plaque is located adjacent to Waverley Council Cemetery and overlooks the coast of New South Wales. It will provide a moment of reflection and opportunity to honour Ernie's extraordinary legacy. Ernie was one of Labor's favourite sons. He was dedicated to his local Waverley community, the community now covered by the State electorate of Coogee, and the Labor

Party. His decades of service to local government, this Parliament and the Government of New South Wales left an indelible mark on this State.

When people occasionally ask me about my longevity in public office, I tell them it is because of the guidance and mentorship I received from a number of the great Labor mayors and political figures of our time. Ernie Page was one of the most significant. At 27 years of age, Ernie was elected as an alderman at Waverley Council, beginning a lifetime of public service. Alongside other great Labor mayors—including Lew Herman from Ashfield; John Murray from Drummoyne, who became a member of this House and then Speaker of this House; and Gary Punch from Hurstville, who became the Federal member for Barton and a Federal Minister—Ernie helped shape my understanding of what it means to be an effective community representative. More than any other politician, Ernie had a profound influence on me.

Whilst I grew up in the Botany area, which was sometimes in and sometimes out of the eastern suburbs, I spent a considerable period in the eastern suburbs. Initially I could not understand why Labor had such strong success in a council area that included traditionally conservative suburbs such as Dover Heights and Rose Bay. How did Labor control Waverley Council in an area that encompassed some of the most conservative and wealthy people in Australia? I knew one thing: Ernie had mastered it. I watched everything he did and listened to everything he said. I obtained every piece of material that he circulated. His ability to connect with community and listen to and advocate for their needs, regardless of their political leanings, was a lesson I took to heart.

My admiration continued when Ernie entered State politics. As I said, I made a point to read all of his material. Ernie's influence extended to this House even before he was Minister when he shaped the Local Government Act 1993. He later became the Minister for Local Government. He effectively represented and was admired across the local government sector irrespective of the membership of political parties of the local governments. Ernie had a profound effect on everyone he dealt with. I looked into some of his most significant council decisions, and I am trying to emulate them today. Ernie believed in taking the responsibility for decisions for local communities away from the State. He believed in taking decisions away from bureaucracies and giving them to locally elected councillors. That was always Ernie's mantra, and he was respected for it. I regret not being able to attend his plaque unveiling, but I acknowledge Ernie's incredible service to this State.

#### LIVERPOOL MOSQUITO INFESTATION

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (17:53):** In late October 2024, Liverpool was inundated with mosquitoes, particularly in Chipping Norton, Warwick Farm and around Liverpool Hospital. The inundation reached a point where outdoor activities became unbearable. Schools faced disruptions and public health concerns escalated. Supermarket shelves were emptied of insect repellent as families struggled to protect themselves from relentless levels of mosquitoes. Liverpool City Council launched an investigation and discovered the source was the eight-hectare oxidation pond at Sydney Water's Liverpool water recycling plant in Warwick Farm, a stone's throw away from residents in Chipping Norton.

During the inspection by representatives from Liverpool City Council, Sydney Water and Associate Professor Cameron Webb, samples from the oxidation ponds revealed the presence of mosquito larvae. Oxidation ponds function by allowing microorganisms, bacteria and algae to break down organic matter in wastewater. This process relies on sunlight, oxygen and biological activity to purify the water over time as a means of sewerage treatment and water recycling. Oxidation ponds have been used since the early 1990s and were first adopted in Australia during the 1950s and the 1960s. It is considered a simple and low-cost method of purifying water to pump back into waterways.

In March 2024, the invasive aquatic weed frogbit was detected at Warwick Farm. By September, it completely covered the oxidation pond. The weed is known for its quick growth. It can double its biomass in approximately one week. The weed created a perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes. The water became stagnant as the weed formed protection from the wind and increased humidity, creating a microclimate that allowed for exponential breeding of mosquitoes. Sydney Water quickly identified treatment options and sprayed the pond with mosquito larvicide. It proceeded to remove the frogbit weed with excavators. Liverpool City Council also contributed by spraying public amenities, contacting households with unclean pools and ensuring bodies of water were appropriately aerated—all potential breeding spots for mosquitoes. The New South Wales Government sprayed schools and created a management plan to deal with an inundation of mosquitoes in Liverpool Hospital's emergency rooms.

Thankfully, after three weeks, there was a 98 per cent reduction in mosquito larvae in the oxidation ponds. After approximately four weeks, the entire oxidation pond was clear of the frogbit weed. Whilst there was swift action undertaken by Sydney Water once the source of the mosquito infestation was identified, the truth is that the problem should have never occurred. Whilst I am sure lessons were learned across government and Sydney Water, there are ways to ensure this never happens again. Covering oxidation ponds is an effective strategy to

mitigate mosquito breeding and reduce the unpleasant odours associated with wastewater treatment facilities. By installing physical barriers over the ponds, the exposure of standing water to mosquitoes is minimised, disrupting their breeding cycle. Additionally, covers help contain and reduce the emission of malodorous gasses, thereby improving air quality for nearby communities. This is an issue many Chipping Norton residents complained to me about long before the mosquito plague.

Several materials are available to effectively cover oxidation ponds to reduce mosquito breeding and odours. Floating covers made of high-density polyethylene or other flexible materials create a full barrier, preventing mosquitoes and trapping foul-smelling gases. These covers often include vents and gas-collection systems. Shade covers made of tension-fabric or netting provide a partially open solution. They have been successfully used in Fresno, California, where floating covers significantly reduced hydrogen sulphide emissions, and Brisbane, Australia, where modular shade structures minimised evaporation and improved air quality. Implementing similar solutions at the Sydney Water Warwick Farm facility would enhance efficiency and protect residents from odours and mosquito outbreaks. The 2024 mosquito plague was a wake-up call that we cannot ignore. Whether through floating covers, shade structures or alternative treatment methods, we must eliminate the risks posed by open oxidation ponds to ensure better public health, improved air quality and long-term liveability for our growing community.

### LITHIUM ION BATTERY FIRES

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (17:58):** I pay tribute to Haidar Ali, who tragically passed away on Tuesday morning in a house fire in Guildford in my electorate. Haidar was a 21-year-old international student from Pakistan who studied civil and construction engineering in Sydney for the past two years. He lived with seven other young men in a share house and worked in a factory in Auburn and as an Uber Eats delivery rider to support himself while studying. The fire broke out when his bike battery exploded while charging in his bedroom. The five other flatmates who were home at the time escaped but, sadly, Haidar died. Haidar's flatmates have said that the battery often overheated on the charger. To make matters worse, there was no working smoke alarm in the house, even though it is illegal to not have one.

Haidar's parents, brother and sister in Pakistan are heartbroken. I offer them and Haidar's flatmates my deepest condolences. Haidar was taken from them far too soon. I also thank Hamid Saroha from the Pakistan Association of Australia and the Pakistani consulate for the support provided to Haidar's family and his flatmates.

Haidar's tragic death highlights a matter of urgent public safety: the escalating risk of fires caused by lithium ion batteries. The statistics are alarming and the potential for catastrophic consequences is undeniable. The proliferation of lithium ion powered devices in our daily lives from smartphones and laptops to e-bikes and e-scooters, has brought unprecedented convenience. However, this convenience comes at a price: a heightened risk of fire. In just the first few weeks of this year we have witnessed 25 lithium ion related fires, and there were 318 last year. Clearly, this danger demands our immediate attention.

A recent survey conducted by the Department of Customer Service has revealed a deeply concerning level of community complacency. While 44 per cent of respondents acknowledge the risks associated with lithium ion batteries, a significant majority continue to engage in dangerous practices: 73 per cent charge devices unattended; 70 per cent charge them near living spaces or exits; 64 per cent leave devices plugged in after charging; and a staggering 51 per cent use low-quality chargers or batteries. Furthermore, the survey highlighted a critical knowledge gap: 32 per cent of respondents admitted they do not know how to implement safety measures and 29 per cent are unsure. The lack of awareness coupled with risky behaviour creates a volatile and potentially deadly combination.

In response to this growing threat, the New South Wales Government has taken crucial steps to enhance consumer safety. The introduction of product standards for e-bikes, e-scooters and other micromobility devices under the Gas and Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act 2017 is a welcome development. These standards, set to be implemented in stages starting this month, will ensure that these products meet stringent safety and quality requirements from the design and manufacturing stages. However, regulation alone is not sufficient. We must also empower consumers with the knowledge and tools they need to protect themselves.

The Fair Trading website provides invaluable guidance on safely handling lithium ion batteries. It is imperative that we disseminate this information widely and effectively, especially to people who may be hard to reach, such as international students and food delivery riders. Key safety guidelines include recognising the warning signs of damaged batteries, such as swelling, leaking or overheating; using only chargers recommended by the manufacturer; monitoring charging times and disconnecting devices promptly; charging batteries away from combustible materials, such as beds, sofas or carpet; and storing batteries in cool, dry places, away from direct sunlight and doorways.

Equally important are the "do nots": never leave batteries unattended or charging overnight; avoid using damaged or overheating batteries; refrain from altering or modifying devices; and never buy or use altered or modified products. The new standards for lithium ion batteries in e-mobility devices, classifying them as declared electrical articles, will mandate compliance with prescribed safety standards before sale. This, along with the proposed information standard requiring suppliers to provide clear safety information at the point of sale, will significantly enhance consumer protection. We must continue to raise awareness, enforce regulations and educate the public about the risks associated with lithium ion batteries.

I also welcome the work of the Minister for Industrial Relations to improve worker safety. SafeWork NSW is currently working with Fire and Rescue, Fair Trading and the Environment Protection Authority on the Shop, Charge, and Recycle Safely campaign to raise awareness among food delivery riders and food delivery platforms on the safe use, purchase, charging and disposal of lithium ion batteries used in the food delivery industry to power e-bikes. I further understand that the gig economy was one of SafeWork's 2023 regulatory priorities with a focus on increased safety and workplace health and safety compliance in the food delivery rider and healthcare sectors. I urge all members to do what they can to promote understanding of these important safety measures in their communities for the safety of all.

### DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (18:03):** The Hunter is experiencing an emergency in domestic and family violence [DFV]. Specialist DFV services and specialist homelessness services in the region report that pervasive rates of domestic violence, together with the housing crisis and increased cost of living, are driving an overwhelming increase in demand for their services. Adding to this pressure is the growing complexity of victim-survivors' needs. An increasing number of women are presenting to Hunter organisations, including those who have mental health and addiction issues, or those who find it difficult to rent properties because they are blacklisted on tenancy databases, like TICA, or have social housing debts. Frontline services are also seeing more women and children living in poverty, needing urgent medical attention, sleeping rough or living in cars and needing food and access to showers and laundry facilities.

Domestic and family violence and homelessness services in the Hunter are brilliant. But they are stretched. I acknowledge the lifesaving work of just some of the organisations supporting the Lake Macquarie electorate. They include NOVA for Women and Children, Jenny's Place, Survivor's R Us, Southlakes Incorporated and Macquarie Care's Car 2 Home project. However, the reality is that they just cannot help everyone that comes to their doors. The growing complexity of victim-survivor needs is also placing more pressure on an already understaffed workforce, including volunteers. Staff are undertaking more casework hours and, most often at crisis refuges, managing complex interactions between victim-survivors experiencing trauma and mental health struggles.

Many organisations are running programs far above their funded capacity. For example, NOVA for Women and Children, one of the largest service providers in Lake Macquarie and the western suburbs of Newcastle, operated its specialist homeless service program at 148 per cent of its funded capacity in 2023-24. NOVA's Domestic Violence Response Enhancement program also ran at 423 per cent of its funded capacity in this period. That cannot go on. I know the Hunter is not alone in dealing with issues of domestic and family violence and homelessness. They are statewide issues—perhaps some of the most pressing facing the Government.

The sector has welcomed recent State and Federal funding. But the fact remains that need outstrips available services. If we want to protect the lives of victim-survivors and address the far-reaching harm caused by DFV, more investment in specialist DFV and homelessness services is needed. Frontline services need not only more baseline funding but also increased funding for brokerage, resourcing and staffing costs. They need additional transitional accommodation and supported temporary accommodation in areas of identified need. Programs providing co-located advocacy support and hearing support need to be funded and extended. Specialist workers for children and young people should be funded in all DFV specialist services. Those are some of the urgent requests of Domestic Violence NSW and the Hunter Domestic and Family Violence Consortium. I have written to the Government to voice my support for their funding requests.

I also commend the coordinated approach of the regionally focused Hunter Domestic and Family Violence Consortium, with member organisations coming together to collaborate, undertake joint advocacy and leverage their collective resources. Specialist DFV and homelessness services are at the coalface of caring for women and children escaping violence. This care should not be a luxury, coveted because it is unattainable and increasingly rare. It should be available to all those who seek it and who are in need of it. The sector is overwhelmingly populated by good-hearted volunteers working with people in great need. I urge the New South Wales Government to honour its strong commitment to preventing domestic and family violence and supporting victim-survivors by prioritising the need of the DFV sector in its upcoming budget.

## CRAIG WRIGHTSON

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) (18:07):** For the past two decades Lane Cove Council has been blessed with a man of strong character and commitment. For 12½ of those 20 years, Craig Wrightson served as the general manager of Lane Cove Council. Craig is leaving council this month, so I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the immense and irrepressible legacy Craig will leave behind him in Lane Cove. Being a general manager is difficult at the best of times and Craig rarely had the best of times, which makes his achievements all the more remarkable. The Lane Cove of today would be unrecognisable to the residents of 12½ years ago. Since Craig assumed the role of general manager, he has led an infrastructure and capital works program that would rival councils five or 10 times the size of Lane Cove.

The award-winning Canopy redevelopment, a complete transformation of the rundown Rosenthal car park, has been nothing short of spectacular. It has brought a new level of vibrancy and energy to the Lane Cove Plaza. Beyond delivering convenience and amenity with the extra parking and supermarkets, the Canopy has added green space to what was once a desert of bitumen. It has delivered a swathe of new restaurants and has helped to further pedestrianise the plaza.

I mention all those fantastic features and attributes because, without Craig's tireless effort, leadership and expertise, we would have nothing close to it. The same could be said of Wadanggari Park in St Leonards. The outstanding 4,750 square metres of public open space was built over a railway line, and it is quite possibly the only park of its kind in Australia. Beyond being innovative and transformative, that infrastructure has been a necessity for that area.

Since I began representing Lane Cove in 2003, the local government area has been undergoing change at a remarkable pace. In 2003 it was dominated by single-family homes and low density development, and now two-thirds of the residents live in apartments. Whilst the change has been rapid, Craig and his successive councils have been among the few Sydney Basin councils that have kept up. He helped to prioritise the needs of young families and sports clubs with the redevelopments of Lane Cove Sport and Recreation Centre, Bob Campbell Oval, Tantallon Oval and Blackman Park, as well as the refurbishment of the Lane Cove aquatic centre. Those redevelopments and upgrades will ensure that our community and its residents have access to world-class and well-maintained sporting grounds and open space as usage increases. Craig's tenure has also seen the expansion of musical, cultural and neighbourhood events thanks to the implementation of a dedicated team focused on fostering community connection and improving services.

I could go on endlessly about what Craig has managed to achieve for our community during his time at the council. He has truly made Lane Cove the greatest place to live in Australia. Members often say that, but in this case I can back it up with data. During Craig's tenure, Lane Cove was voted the most liveable place in Australia in the 2021 Australian Liveability Census, and in 2023 it came a close second and was voted the most liveable local government area on the east coast. Craig is truly a once-in-a-generation general manager, who has helped to transform Lane Cove into the remarkable community it is today. I once again thank Craig for his dedication to the people of Lane Cove and wish him all the best for his future endeavours. It was a true honour and privilege to work with Craig, and I thank Jo and the kids for lending him to us for the past two decades.

## COOGEE ELECTORATE STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (18:11):** I provide an update to my community on a very long-running issue, the Coogee stormwater problem. To provide the history, the Coogee stormwater issue long predates my time in this place; it dates back to the time of Michael Cleary. Michael, Ernie Page, Paul Pearce, Bruce Notley-Smith and I have all tried to solve the problem. For members who do not know, Coogee is a beautiful beach but a stormwater pipe empties onto its northern end. When there is any significant rainfall, what is called the first flush comes out and turns Coogee Beach into something quite awful.

Anyone who has been at Coogee Beach when that happens will know it is quite grotesque. The beautiful blue water turns brown very quickly. The first flush is when the first water from a significant downpour picks up everything in the gutters and on the roads and pushes it out to our stormwater drains. That includes animal faeces, soap on the concrete ground from people washing cars, and any pieces of litter that people have not disposed of properly. It all goes out in the first flush and turns our beautiful, pristine beach into something quite grotesque. As I have said, generations of members for Coogee have sought to solve the problem, but we are closer than ever to resolving it. We are working on a memorandum of understanding with Randwick City Council and Sydney Water to have the first flush diverted out to the Malabar treatment program and to build infrastructure to allow that to happen.

Work is progressing. Plenty of people continue to contact my office about the issue. Obviously, the black grime balls that have washed up throughout the eastern suburbs have sparked a continued dialogue around water

and beach cleanliness, as well as our sewage and stormwater management. We continue to work to solve the problem, but we all play a role in keeping our beaches and waterways clean and free of rubbish. As I have said, the problem starts because we have litter on our streets. In particular, people do not dispose of dog faeces properly and wash their cars on concrete. All of that goes into our stormwater drains and then ends up at Coogee Beach. I remind my community that we all play a role in keeping our beaches clean. People should put their rubbish in the bin and dispose of animal waste properly.

Randwick City Council does a remarkable job. As well as the Government working to solve the problem, Randwick City Council has spearheaded a revolutionary project to produce and install significant numbers of gross pollutant traps. Things that end up in our stormwater drains get captured in the big traps, which filter out as much waste as possible to stop it going into our drainage system. The problem is that when there is a significant downpour, a lot of that stuff gets missed. Again, I say to our community that we all play a role in keeping our beaches clean. I ask them to pick up after themselves and not be a litterbug. People who are able to should wash their cars on grass, because it acts as a filter. Between Sydney Water, Randwick City Council and the State Government, we are progressing a good solution to end the Coogee stormwater problem once and for all. If my community would like to stay up to date on progress, we have email list. I encourage everyone to engage in solving the problem.

### HORNSBY ELECTORATE AND SYDNEY METRO

**Mr JAMES WALLACE (Hornsby) (18:16):** The people of Cherrybrook and West Pennant Hills love the metro, but they struggle to actually get to the station in the morning and home from the station at night. While the metro itself is an incredible and convenient service for those of us who live in those communities, it is increasingly clear that getting to the station is becoming a challenge that needs to be addressed. Let me first acknowledge the enthusiasm and appreciation that the people of Cherrybrook and West Pennant Hills have for the metro. It has transformed the way many of us commute, offering a fast, reliable and efficient way to travel into the city. It has been a game changer, dramatically reducing the time spent on long commutes and offering a more comfortable ride. The service meets people's needs and gives them more time for family and community, letting us spend more time with our kids and more time building local social connections.

However, as much as we celebrate the metro, a critical issue needs immediate attention—actually getting to Cherrybrook metro station, over that last mile from home to the train. Getting the bus from home to the metro for some parts of Cherrybrook often takes longer than the train journey to the city. The biggest challenge is the lack of parking. The station car park is often completely full by 6.30 a.m., which is simply not good enough. The car park should have greater capacity and there should be different parking options, including four-hour and two-hour spots for those who wish to use the metro during the day but not necessarily for the morning commute. For many, the lack of parking and accessible bus services means they are forced to rely on being dropped off by family members or friends. That has resulted in road congestion, particularly during peak hours.

One immediate step that must be taken is to improve bus services to the station, increasing the number of buses, and their frequency, from all the different parts of West Pennant Hills and Cherrybrook. I call on the Government to invest in more frequent and accessible bus routes that run from all nearby suburbs directly to Cherrybrook metro station. We should not squander the fantastic metro service that the last Government funded and built. We have a world-class train service; let us also have a world-class service for that last mile to and from home. The issue has only arisen in my community in the past few months, but the people of Cherrybrook and West Pennant Hills deserve a transport network that works for them.

### E-WASTE RECYCLING

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (18:18):** Wade Cawley is many things. He is a young person—in fact, he won Shoalhaven City Council's Young Citizen of the Year award in 2022—a small business person, and a person living with disability; but, to me, he is an inspiration. I recently caught up with Wade to visit his business, Rekindle Me. Wade has a passion for disability inclusion, and he engages other people living with disability in his business. Wade's business is focused on recycling and diverting e-waste from landfill. In 2023 Wade saved over 31 tonnes of e-waste from landfill. Since he started the business, he has saved over 70 tonnes. Wade contacted me recently because his van needed a new battery. He simply could not afford a replacement, and that put his business in jeopardy. I reached out to WIN News to seek support from our wider community, and I am pleased to report that, as a result of the WIN News report, Wade received around \$15,000 in donations to help replace the battery in his van to keep his business afloat.

According to the United Nations, 62 million tonnes of e-waste was produced in 2022. That was up by 82 per cent from 2010 and it is on track to rise by another 32 per cent, to 82 million tonnes, by 2030. The world generates e-waste five times faster than it is recycled. More than five billion of the estimated 16 billion mobile phones possessed worldwide were likely discarded or stashed away in 2022. In Australia, only 22 per cent of

e-waste was properly collected and recycled in 2022, but Australians generate around 20 kilograms of e-waste per capita, which is more than double the global average. In 2022 alone, across the world, we collectively buried \$62 billion worth of recoverable natural resources as e-waste.

Last year I accepted an invitation to meet with Pan Pacific Recycling in Brisbane. That company recycles virtually all elements of solar panels and diverts tonnes of waste from landfill. This week I visited Sircel, located in Western Sydney, and I thank the staff for hosting me. Sircel has five key priorities to deliver on its mission: one, repurposing electronic assets that still have a workable life, because re-use is the best form of recycling; two, partnering with technology companies to ensure end-of-life solutions are an inherent part of the product design cycle; three, expanding their world-first capability to regenerate the precious resources used in electronics, making these once finite commodities infinite; four, providing regenerated commodities to electronics manufacturers so the materials we need tomorrow are no longer dug up but are liberated from the world's stockpile of e-waste; and five, educating, informing and engaging with communities, organisations, governments and the public to make that a reality within a generation.

I want to see more businesses recycling e-waste established in New South Wales, and I am keen to see the jobs that flow from this growth sector. I call on the New South Wales Government to follow other States and not only ban e-waste from landfill but mandate that it must be recycled here rather than shipped offshore. In 2013 South Australia imposed a landfill ban for discarded electronics. Victoria introduced a ban in 2019, and Western Australia committed to implementing a ban last year. Across Australia, e-waste recycling has increased over the past decade, with the number of organisations involved in e-waste recovery almost doubling. However, our rates of e-waste recycling are nowhere near what they should be.

The National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme is a key driver of e-waste recycling in Australia that aims to increase the recycling rate of televisions and computers from 37 per cent in 2015-16 to 80 per cent by 2025-26. South Australian law on recycling e-waste has undergone significant changes in recent years. Since 2013 all e-waste has been banned from landfills in South Australia. That ban was implemented as part of the Environment Protection (Waste to Resources) Policy 2010, making it illegal to dispose of electronic waste items in landfills. E-waste is defined as any item that has a cord, battery or switch. That includes televisions and computer monitors, computer towers and accessories, printers and scanners, whitegoods and microwave ovens, any items that use an electrical plug, and battery-driven items.

To comply with the law, South Australians must recycle their e-waste through approved methods, which includes the use of permanent collection sites at local waste and recycling transfer stations, approved retail outlets and landfill locations, and one-off collection and recycling events organised by local councils. Specific programs have been established to facilitate e-waste recycling, such as the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme that I mentioned earlier, which has 98 per cent accessibility across Australia; Electronic Recycling Australia's "Unplug n' Drop" initiative, which accepts a wide range of domestic electronic items; and Mobile Muster, which accepts all brands and types of mobile phones, batteries and chargers. Businesses in South Australia must also adhere to those regulations, and non-compliance can result in a maximum fine of \$5 million for wilful offences. We need that ban in New South Wales, and I call on the Government to act. We do not inherit this planet from our parents; we borrow it from the next generation.

### **BLUE MOUNTAINS WORLD HERITAGE AREA**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:23):** Picture, for a moment, temperate eucalypt forests, towering sandstone plateaus, the ancient and majestic Wollemi pine, waterfalls, canyons, caves, mallee heathlands, swamps and grasslands—a pristine wilderness. Picture a sacred place for ongoing cultural practices for Dharug and Gundungurra peoples. Known as Ngurra, it encompasses the lands, waters, native flora and fauna, and spirit of this special place. It is a unique place that holds a record of the evolution of plant life here on Earth, Aboriginal rock art demonstrating the ongoing custodial connection to land, and a rich system of waterways and complex geomorphology. It is an exemplary illustration of biodiversity, and it is one million hectares of national park right on Sydney's doorstep.

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations recognising the Greater Blue Mountains as a World Heritage Area. Protected and managed under both the Commonwealth and the State of New South Wales, there is a strategic plan in place to ensure the Greater Blue Mountains remains one of the most important conservation areas in the world. Creating a sustainable future is a huge task that requires significant input and cooperation from government, conservation organisations and business, and it requires hearing the lived experience and cultural knowledge of First Nation's Peoples and local residents.

Through evidence-based conservation practices, we must fiercely continue to protect and restore this place for the long haul, to ensure its natural values are not compromised. We face many challenges in this endeavour, and we must not be complacent. We face the complexities of the impacts of human-induced climate change,

development, intense bushfires, weed proliferation, invasive species, loss of habitat, and species extinction. It is a huge task. There are many organisations working tirelessly to ensure the ongoing stewardship and conservation of the Greater Blue Mountains. I acknowledge the incredible work of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, the National Parks Association, the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute, Wilderness Australia and the Blue Mountains City Council, whose shared vision and collaboration stand as the first line of best practice in conservation and sustainability measures. I thank them for the work they do every day in bringing their leadership, knowledge and expertise to the fore.

I also thank organisations in my community whose dedication, advocacy and efforts in conservation and land management practices really do change the game when it comes to protecting the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a constant voice in this dialogue, and I acknowledge its advocacy and knowledge-sharing around issues such as environmental weeds, habitat protection, plant studies, identification of native fauna and their ecosystems, and many more. It has a fabulous team of dedicated people committed to the environment. I also give a shout-out to the Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare team. The community collaboration and action that Bushcare promotes is remarkable. Each week over 55 groups of volunteers work in various pockets of land carrying out invasive weed management and restoration of damage caused from stormwater run-off.

The incredible work of the Connecting with Nature schools program is opening doors for our younger generations to develop a deep and experiential understanding of what it means to live in and care for the Blue Mountains. I congratulate Leura Public School, which was recently awarded a Bushcare milestone award, having dedicated 15 years to the Bushcare program. It is truly leading by example in this space. The important work of Bushcare is further assisted by organisations such as the Blue Mountains Wildplant Rescue Service, which sells native tube stock grown from locally harvested seed and provides essential knowledge to local communities about endemic plant species. Its important work empowers local communities, organisations and residents alike to make informed choices about the plants they grow in their garden. That has an extremely important flow-on effect to create safe environments for bees and other pollinators, and essential habitat for native wildlife.

It is that grassroots community action and engagement, along with overarching policy and input from government and experts in the scientific community, that will be essential in the ongoing preservation the World Heritage values of the Greater Blue Mountains. We can protect this place when we work together, when we deepen our understanding of this place, when we immerse ourselves in and learn from the rich cultural Aboriginal history, and when we experience firsthand the majesty of the expanse that is the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. I acknowledge Joan Domicelj, constituent extraordinaire and wonder woman who was the principal consultant and editor for the Greater Blue Mountains area's nomination to UNESCO's World Heritage List. I also acknowledge former environment Ministers Robert Hill and Bob Debus for their contributions. Happy 25 years!

### **TAMWORTH COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (18:29):** I recognise and celebrate the success of the fifty-third Tamworth Country Music Festival, held in January this year. The Tamworth Country Music Festival is the biggest, longest and the best country music festival in the Southern Hemisphere. Thousands of country music fans descend on Tamworth in January, enjoying the sights, sounds and atmosphere of our famous festival. Of course, our festival did not happen on its own. The Tamworth Country Music Festival was built off the back of decades of hardworking and dedicated staff and volunteers. This year the festival commemorated the five founding fathers—Warwick Higginbotham, John Minson, Max Ellis, Eric Scott and Kevin Knapp—unveiling a plaque to recognise their vision and commitment.

Their leadership and legacy have continued throughout the years and a number of people have taken up the mantle, taking on the incredible logistical challenge of organising the festival. They include people like festival manager Barry Harley, whose strong leadership has allowed the success of the modern festival, ably supported by local country music stalwarts like Cheryl Brown and others. I also recognise the Country Music Association of Australia chair Dobe Newton and vice-chair Jon Wolfe for their continued support of Tamworth and our festival, through the Golden Guitar Awards and the CMAA academy.

What makes our festival unique is that it is a city-wide festival. Live music fills the pubs, clubs, cafes, parks and gardens of Tamworth and surrounding towns and villages, with over 2,500 acts and up to 120 venues producing countless hours of live music over the 10 days. I recognise those local venue owners and operators who are staunch advocates of our festival and live music, like Luke Prout, Craig Power, Andrew Yeo, Andrew Coutts, Leanne and Mark Summers in Bendemeer, Rod Laing of Wests Entertainment, the Schofield family in Nundle, and the many other owners, licensees, managers and event managers who host live music throughout the festival. The fact that the festival is held across a number of venues means that its liabilities and benefits are shared among a number of businesses and the council. That has meant that the Tamworth Country Music Festival has weathered the storm of economic headwinds and come through with good turnover.

This year's festival was a big one. Camping sites were busy; accommodation sites were full. Crowds were up, and pubs, clubs and venues were full. That meant the economy was thriving—money through the tills of our local businesses. Whether it was on the deck of the famous Longyard Hotel, on the Kevin Bennett Stage at the Tamworth Hotel—where Keith Urban made a surprise appearance this year and accepted his Roll of Renown at the Golden Guitar Awards—or at Moonshiners Honky Tonk Bar, fans from across Australia and the world bootscooted and boogied along at some outstanding events.

I thank all those involved in organising this year's festival. I thank the artists—without them we do not have entertainment. To those artists who busked on Peel Street and to the stars who shone at the Golden Guitar Awards—like Troy Cassar-Daley, who took home five of those awards—I simply say, thank you for the music. I thank those who chose to come to Tamworth to enjoy our festival, and we hope they enjoyed the hospitality. I encourage anyone who may be thinking of ticking the Tamworth Country Music Festival off their bucket list to make plans for 2026. I note that the member for Blue Mountains always asks about Tamworth. We encourage her to come; we will roll out the red carpet for her. Country has always been cool in Tamworth. We will see you there.

### MUSEUM OF FIRE

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (18:33):** One of the many gems in my electorate of Penrith is the Museum of Fire. The museum is a not-for-profit, registered charity and the official heritage partner of Fire and Rescue NSW. The museum's collection is of national significance and celebrates the important and heroic history of firefighters and fire services across Australia. Many of the items in the museum's extensive heritage collection are listed on the State Heritage Register. The museum's history began with the establishment of the Historic Fire Engine Association of Australia. Fuelled by the association's passion for historic fire engines, its first meeting was held in March 1969. The museum has had several locations over the years, beginning with a vacant site at the newly constructed Fire and Rescue NSW training college in Alexandria.

The museum was completed in 1979 and, at the time, was called the Fire Services Museum. In the early 1980s the museum relocated twice to properties in Walsh Bay and Campbells Cove. In 1985 it made its fourth and final move to the vacant Penrith power station, where it remains today. The building took approximately 12 months to clean and convert into a modern museum for the community. On 16 November 1986 the Museum of Fire was officially opened to the public. Over the years the museum has hosted a variety of exhibitions and public programming. First and foremost, the museum's focus is the preservation of fire-related heritage and education about fire safety. Through its heritage, it maintains the physical link to history. The Fire and Rescue NSW Heritage Fleet is certainly the biggest draw for the museum. While the development of firefighting technology is an ongoing process that continues today, those vehicles are an important aspect of that history. The heritage fleet spans an era that ranges from 1841 to the late 1990s.

A few weeks ago, I was thrilled to attend the Museum of Fire 2024 Art Competition awards ceremony, representing Minister Dib. The event was lifted by the attendance of Fire and Rescue NSW Commissioner Jeremy Fewtrell, AFSM. Last year Fire and Rescue marked 140 years of service to the community. In honour of such a significant milestone, the Museum of Fire invited primary school aged children to produce artworks inspired by the theme of "blazing through history" for the 2024 Art Competition exhibition. As I looked through the shortlisted entries, the dedication of New South Wales firefighters was certainly captured by the children's artworks. It was lovely to see the Federal member for Macquarie, Susan Templeman, who is Special Envoy for the Arts, in attendance.

The artworks were a wonderful snapshot of the proud history of the incredible organisation. I was thrilled to present the People's Choice Award, which was voted on by the public. Hundreds of votes were received, and the clear winner was Vera, a year 2 student from Penrith. She created a fantastic and emotive artwork entitled *Trees in Bushfire*. Vera described her artwork in her own words:

I imagined me and dad standing there as though we were two trees, looking out into the valley in the middle of a wild bushfire, desperately waiting for the firefighters to arrive.

Vera was inspired to do the artwork when her dad took her into the mountains to show her the impact of bushfire on the environment and trees. I was amazed at how Vera injected her artwork with such emotion and understanding of what people in New South Wales have endured through bushfire seasons. The artwork, with its striking colour and hopeful description, will be added to the permanent collection of the Museum of Fire. I am sure the member for Blue Mountains will appreciate going there one day to look at it. I congratulate all the schoolchildren who entered the competition and the staff and volunteers involved. It was, no doubt, very hard to pick the ultimate winners. I eagerly await the 2025 event, when we will celebrate 40 years since women were permitted to join Fire and Rescue NSW as firefighters. I am sure I will see an exhibition of outstanding talent.

## NORTHERN BEACHES COUNCIL

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (18:38):** I speak about public concerns regarding the function and budget of Northern Beaches Council. I speak on behalf of thousands of local residents who are extremely concerned by the 40 per cent rate rise that the Northern Beaches Council teal-affiliated Independents voted to support on 28 January 2025. That vote was to support a 40 per cent rate rise special variation by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, known as IPART.

Let me say this very clearly: The 40 per cent rate rise in a cost-of-living crisis will negatively impact local households and small businesses. Despite spending nearly a quarter of a million dollars of ratepayer funds on a consultation, only 11 per cent of the almost 6,000 submissions supported the 40 per cent rate rise. The local community has been completely ignored. To defy feedback from their own consultation confirms that the consultation was clearly nothing short of a sham.

To support a 40 per cent rate rise confirms two things about those teal-affiliated Independents: The first is that they have lost complete control of their budget, and the second is that they failed to listen or empathise with the cost-of-living challenges that our community faces. They are completely out of touch. It is disappointing that, unlike households and small businesses who need to make often tough decisions about savings, Northern Beaches Council councillors feel that they can pass the economic mismanagement and the economic buck to the community, which includes our most vulnerable. For those who claim it is all due to amalgamations, I say that there have been seven budgets since the amalgamation took place. I share some emails from locals who will be impacted, the first of which states:

We too are concerned about the rate rise. We are self funded retirees. We are not rich.

Another email states:

I am totally against any rate rise as council just wastes our ratepayer's money and don't care about the fact that no money is going to fix ALL the problems that the council has.

A further email states:

The surveys that accompany rate hike proposals do not provide options for reduced Council expenditure and belt tightening.

Yet another email states:

I am deeply displeased with the Council's approach, which essentially presents ratepayers with an ultimatum: agree to pay above the rate peg or face a reduction in essential services. This letter reads more like a threat than a genuine consultation.

Those emails confirm the anxiety and concern in our community. I note the amount of misinformation that has been spread, especially from the teal-affiliated councillors. The fact remains that the Northern Beaches Council is supportive of increasing rates to be paid by households and businesses by 40 per cent.

IPART will now consider the matter. I call on IPART to not approve the 40 per cent increase. I encourage the community to join me by signing all the petitions, and I thank the over 2,300 people who have signed my community petition to date. I also call on the community to write to IPART when consultation opens to have their say and to have their voices heard. In recent weeks serious revelations have come to light about the financial management of Northern Beaches Council. One is the \$40 million increase on employee costs in 2023-24 compared with 2014-15. Currently the total wages cost is \$159 million for 1,800 staff. Another is the \$14.6 million more spent on contractors in 2023-24 compared with what was spent in 2016-17.

Currently the amount spent on contractors is \$74.5 million. It note \$500 in 2023-24 on alcohol for councillors, paid by the ratepayers when the councillors are undertaking ratepayer work. Drinking on the job is not acceptable, particularly when it is funded by ratepayers. Along with member for Pittwater, I also call on the Minister for Local Government to appoint a commissioner to conduct a public inquiry into Northern Beaches Council under section 438U of the Local Government Act in order to investigate their performance and efficiency.

## CAMDEN ELECTORATE ROADS

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (18:43):** Anyone who has listened to me speak in this place knows that one of the reasons that I wanted to become the member for Camden was the extreme amount of development we had had in the area that had absolutely no regard for the infrastructure needed. That affects not only places like Camden, but also the whole Macarthur region, whether that be Leppington, Badgerys Creek or Wollondilly. I think everyone except the member for Badgerys Creek has spoken about how the area of Macarthur has been hit extremely hard.

Last week Camden Council brought out a publication entitled *The Time is Now: Camden's State and Federal Government Election Priorities 2025-2027*. I will talk about why the time is now. It is important to realise that Camden will have over 257,000 residents by 2046. To put that in perspective, when I moved to Camden

16 years ago, we proudly had a sign stating that we had 40,000 residents. That is a very big difference. In my electorate there are no train stations—none. There are also no bus stations. There are bus routes—and a great bus company that I work very hard with—but there is no central bus hub. There are two town centres. There is Narellan Town Centre, which is a fantastic shopping precinct. My office is there, opposite the post office, if you want to come and see me. There is also Camden Town Centre, which is a traditional high street like those in the old pattern book that was gifted by the Macarthur family to the people of Camden a rather long time ago.

Our nearest train stations are Campbelltown and Leppington. I do not want to get bogged down in who is at fault, but I would like to point out that Leppington was the last train station in New South Wales that was planned and paid for as a brand-new train station by the Carr Government. In 12 years following the Carr Government, nothing was added. There were meant to be additions. The developers of Oran Park left a corridor for a train station. There is a big gap with a sign that states, "Future train station here", but in those 12 years, no train station was built. That is what we are dealing with in the Camden community and that has led to 65 per cent of workers in Camden leaving the Camden local government area to go to work and 70 per cent of houses in Camden having more than two cars. In order to get out of Camden to go to work, activities, forums and sporting and theatre events—which I will cover in my next private member's statement—residents need to get on major collector roads. One of the major collector roads that I spoke about earlier today is Camden Valley Way. It is a really important road.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** It is.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL:** The member for Leppington and I have worked very hard for an upgrade of Camden Valley Way. The other major collector road is Narellan Road. Narellan Road is currently the only road that gets us onto the Hume Highway. Everyone from Camden and further west has to take Narellan Road to get onto the Hume Highway. Next time members drive from Sydney to Canberra, I ask them to take note of how long it is to the next exit after passing the Narellan Road exit. I can tell you that as of August last year, it is not as far as it used to be because last August we opened stage one of Spring Farm Parkway. It is a fantastic addition to our area but it is not finished because it does not yet go to Spring Farm. The most important thing we need is another entrance onto the Hume Highway. Spring Farm Parkway stage two has to be a priority because at the moment every single person in my electorate is going on two roads and half the people in the electorate of the member for Wollondilly are also using those two roads. It is important that Spring Farm Parkway stage two becomes an imperative part of what we do next to allow the people of Camden to get to work.

### EPPING TOWN CENTRE

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping) (18:48):** Epping has long been a hub of growth and transformation, a place where history meets innovation and where families and businesses come together to create a thriving community. Between 2016 and 2020 Epping experienced a 21 per cent increase in population from 23,841 to 28,772. In 2021 the largest age group is forecast to be parents. Epping is and will continue to be a place where families want to live. As one of Sydney's most connected suburbs, there is significant opportunity for Epping to be transformed into a vibrant town centre.

Over the past decade we have seen significant changes in Epping. The expansion of transport links, particularly the Sydney Metro, has made Epping a key gateway between the city and the north-west.

That connectivity has brought new residents and businesses into our suburb. From talking to many residents, I know that the metro has been a game changer for the suburb and beyond. However, I also acknowledge that the significant change caused by that growth has put pressure on services and infrastructure. That is why we must ensure that development is well planned, sustainable and enhances the quality of life for everyone who calls Epping home.

At present, there is a dire need to rejuvenate the western side of the Epping Town Centre precinct. Residents routinely complain about the traffic, lack of pedestrian access and dilapidation of buildings. Now is the time for urgent action. A well-designed town centre should be more than just a place to shop and commute; it should be a place where people gather, where people can go out to eat and where there are spaces for families to do activities on weekends. That is why I am committed to advocating for smart planning that prioritises open spaces, better traffic planning and more car parking. Equally important is preserving Epping's unique heritage. Our older homes, tree-lined streets and even our parks tell the story of the suburb's rich history. Development must respect and complement that heritage.

I commend the City of Parramatta for the work that it is doing on a proposed master plan for Epping. I look forward to working with local councillors to ensure that the plans for Epping Town Centre are fitting for the transport hub that Epping has become and that they meet the needs of current and future residents. However, I would also urge that they act as quickly as they can in putting forward a vision for Epping Town Centre. I will

fight for and advocate for investment in the town centre. I commend the Government for continuing the work that was commenced by the previous Premier to invest in the Epping Bridge Project, but there is more to do.

In talking about Epping Town Centre, it would be remiss of me not to mention the lift at Epping train station. The lift on Beecroft Road has broken down many times and is a source of great frustration to the members of Epping. One local resident said, "Death, taxes and the Epping station lift breaking down." Our transport hubs need continued investment. I hope I can work with the new acting, and maybe long-term, transport Minister to find a solution to that particular problematic feature of Epping Town Centre. I finish on a positive note: The future of Epping Town Centre is bright, and I look forward to being part of the journey to get it transformed into the space that Epping deserves.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** I thank the member for Epping. The Epping station lift is a disaster and has been for many years. The day that lift is finally replaced will be a wonderful day for many people.

### LEARNING FOR LIFE PROGRAM

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (18:52):** I speak about The Smith Family and congratulate it for the wonderful work that it does in my electorate of Lismore by providing a sponsorship program for students called Learning for Life. The Smith Family does a lot more, but tonight I focus particularly on the Learning for Life Program. That sponsorship program changes the lives of young people. No child should suffer exclusion at school due to being from a poorer family. All students should be involved in all that public education has to offer. The Smith Family, through Learning for Life, makes sure that happens.

The program provides books, pencils and pens. I went through the list with my grandson and his mum at the start of term 1, and the excitement was palpable. All kids must experience that. It was so lovely. I do not want any kid to miss that, particularly in Australia. They had also been to the uniform shop and got all the gear. They then shopped for shoes. Learning for Life also helps to provide uniforms, shoes and bags—all of the things we sometimes take for granted. No child at school should be on the sidelines. That applies to excursions and all of the other events that happen during the school year. I quote the CEO of The Smith Family, Doug Taylor, who talked about filling the void. He said:

The Smith Family supports more than 67,000 students but has bold expansion plans over the coming years. A number of state governments are working with The Smith Family's frontline workers to share access to attendance data, and numeracy and literacy grades, through real-time Education Dashboards, as part of a push to improve early intervention when problems arise.

He goes on to say that "education is one of the most powerful change agents", and it really is. It gives people a life. Wherever we come from, education changes our lives. If people do not have an education, they can be excluded from jobs, social life and all sorts of things. Doug Taylor goes on to say:

Learning for Life gives a young person experiencing disadvantage the essentials needed to support every child's education. For a child experiencing disadvantage, it can make a world of difference to their school day, boosting their confidence and motivation inside the school gate.

The Smith Family is helping 8,325 students in 273 partner schools in New South Wales. If one sponsors a child—which I have done for 23 years—they help that child in the ways that I have talked about. Sponsorship helps by providing school essentials and support from a Learning for Life coordinator, and the learning and mentoring programs help to improve literacy and numeracy, as well as motivation and aspiration, and provide better opportunities for the future. Sponsors receive an annual report and get further opportunities to send birthday greetings and a gift voucher. There is another opportunity at Christmas. They sometimes get a note from the child that they sponsor, all done through the protocols that should be in place and through The Smith Family.

To give members a deeper appreciation for what sponsorship can mean to a child, I share some excerpts from a young woman named Palvisha Farooq, who went through the program. She spoke in this month's *The Australian Women's Weekly* about the difference that the program made to her life. She is now learning to be a teacher with a tertiary scholarship from The Smith Family. She talked about what a difference the program made to her. It included her in excursions. She was able to join the debating team, the drama club and more in high school and then get all of the things that one needs to be successful. There are 15,000 students currently waiting for a sponsorship. I encourage all who can to sponsor a child.

### PLANET LIGHTING

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (18:57):** It is easy to assume that globally competitive products come only from high-tech factories in major cities or overseas. But on the Mid North Coast, Planet Lighting is not just keeping pace with global competitors but also setting the benchmark in innovation and quality. It has even dubbed itself the "R. M. Williams of lighting". I think it is its quality and Aussie ingenuity. Founded in 1911, Planet Lighting ventured into lighting in 1930 and has been evolving ever since. Today it operates a full production lab

in Bellingen, crafting world-class agriculture, medical and public lighting solutions used across Australia and around the world. Members may have recently heard of Planet Lighting's incredible achievement at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Planet Lighting manufactured 1,800 red and amber LED lights to illuminate the pathways and ramps around the Olympic Village. It is not every day that you see a regional business contributing to an event on that scale.

The lights showcased Australian innovation on one of the biggest global stages, and the interactive installation has now become a permanent fixture in sweet Paris, the French capital. It is no surprise that the business was named NSW Exporter of the Year at the Premier's NSW Export Awards. But Planet Lighting's impact does not stop with events like the Olympics. Planet Lighting's groundbreaking work in aquaculture lighting is transforming the way that producers grow fish every day. A majority of farmed salmon in Australia now grows under Planet Lighting's smart lighting systems, with some producers achieving an impressive 0 per cent maturation loss, meaning healthier fish, better yields and a sustainable approach that benefits not just the producers but also the entire food chain.

Closer to home, Planet Lighting is the primary lighting supplier for all New South Wales hospitals, providing cutting-edge medical lighting systems, designed and manufactured in Bellingen. When we talk about supporting local businesses, it is about more than just buying a product; it is also about investing in the people who are part of our community.

We see those people at our local shops, at the sidelines of our children's sporting events and at community gatherings. When a local business like Planet Lighting succeeds, it is not just a financial win; it strengthens the fabric of our community.

While Planet Lighting exports to markets in Asia, Europe and the Americas, it remains proudly Australian, with 90 per cent of its production and materials sourced locally. That is no small feat in today's world of mass imports and overseas manufacturing. That commitment to local sourcing not only supports Australian jobs but also keeps a critical skill base in our country, ensuring that we continue to innovate and lead in niche markets. By keeping everything in house, from design to production, it is able to respond to challenges immediately, without having to rely on overseas suppliers or face long shipping delays. That is the strength of having local manufacturers in Australia. Planet Lighting's ability to adapt and deliver quickly is what allows it to compete successfully on a global stage, while continuing to provide top-quality service at home—not to mention that every light is tested in house. I saw lights in the process of being tested as we did the tour. Every light is quality tested and packed in Bellingen. Those that are returned get replaced and recycled into new lights. It is a true circular economy.

That level of care and attention to detail is what makes Australian products stand out from the rest. When we choose Australian made, we are choosing quality and craftsmanship that we can trust. Walking through the factory, I was amazed to see many young locals and tradespeople. Planet Lighting invests significantly in the next generation by offering training opportunities, which gives young people in our region a chance to develop real, practical skills that will serve them for a lifetime. Planet Lighting is not just a successful company; it is a shining example of what is possible when we invest in our own communities. Every time we choose to support local businesses, we make a statement about the kind of future we want for our region. We are saying that we believe in Australian ingenuity, we trust in Australian quality and we are committed to building strong, resilient communities where local businesses can thrive. That is the kind of success story that we need to champion. When companies like Planet Lighting succeed on a global scale, they carry the Australian name with pride and show our nation's capability to the world.

### INTEREST RATES AND COST OF LIVING

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (19:01):** Earlier this week, for the first time in over four years, the Reserve Bank of Australia cut interest rates, offering much-needed relief to families across New South Wales. For many in south-west Sydney, including the hardworking families in my electorate of Leppington, that cut could not come soon enough. The average mortgage in Sydney now sits between \$600,000 and \$700,000, so the rate reduction means an extra \$1,200 a year in the pockets of the average home owner. That money can go towards crushing cost-of-living pressures like groceries, bills and petrol. The median monthly mortgage repayment for households in the Leppington electorate is over \$2,300, among the highest in the State. That places enormous financial strain on local families who are already feeling the pinch from rising costs in other essential areas.

That financial pressure is a direct result of the previous Liberal Government's economic mismanagement, after more than a decade of wasted opportunities and poor decision-making. As a result, New South Wales was left with skyrocketing housing prices, a rental crisis and crumbling infrastructure. The Liberals prioritised corporate handouts and privatisation over the needs of working families, driving up tolls, energy bills and essential service costs. They sold off our electricity networks, leading to record-high power bills. They privatised

WestConnex, increasing tolls year after year and making it more expensive for people to travel to work. They failed to invest in social and affordable housing, worsening the rental crisis and leaving thousands struggling to find a home. They let developers dictate planning policy, allowing unchecked growth without the necessary infrastructure, schools or healthcare services to support new and growing communities. Their legacy is one of debt, higher costs and fewer services, making life harder for people in my region of south-west Sydney.

The interest rate cut comes on top of the suite cost-of-living relief introduced by the Minns Labor Government—real steps to ease financial pressure on families. That includes \$500 in energy rebates for eligible households, toll relief with the \$60 weekly cap for regular commuters, and support for first home buyers through expanded stamp duty concessions. The Government has also introduced increased rental assistance and more affordable childcare options, ensuring families can keep more of their hard-earned money. Additionally, investments in public transport affordability and healthcare support measures have helped reduce day-to-day expenses for many in our community.

I welcome the immediate decision by the big four banks to pass on the rate cut in full. That is the right move and will ensure that families in Leppington and across south-west Sydney feel the benefits as soon as possible. The quicker those savings reach households, the sooner we can help arrest the cost-of-living crisis. While I understand that banks have a duty to their shareholders, they also have a responsibility to their customers and the country. After years of bank closures and the damning findings of the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry, this is the least they can do to rebuild trust in the community. However, the big banks still have plenty of work to do.

Today Westpac announced its decision to offshore 190 jobs to the Philippines, including roles from South Australia and New South Wales. That is troubling to say the least, especially after reporting a \$1.7 billion quarterly profit. The Finance Sector Union has rightly criticised the move, highlighting potential risks to customer data security and negative impacts on staff and customer relations. Moreover, the closure of bank branches continues to affect communities across the State and the nation. My colleague the member for Blacktown shared his residents' frustration over the closure of the Commonwealth Bank branch in Doonside. He said that it was turning its back on the locals as well as the local business community.

In new areas in south-west Sydney, such as Leppington and Camden, where new houses and shopping centres are being built, the absence of nearby bank branches poses similar significant challenges for residents and businesses alike. Families in Leppington and across south-west Sydney are doing it tough. They have endured stubbornly high interest rates, rising rents and increasing grocery bills. The interest rate cut offers a chance to provide some much needed breathing room, and I am pleased to see the banks passing on those reductions in full. However, banks must also consider the broader impact of their operational decisions on local communities and the economy. Maintaining local jobs and accessible banking services is essential for the wellbeing and prosperity of our communities.

## ARTS EDUCATION

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (19:06):** Pablo Picasso once said:

Through education comes understanding. Through understanding comes true appreciation. All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once they grow up.

Until March 2023, the latter part of that quote hung on the door of my classroom, seen by students as they walked in every day, in a normal classroom and in a normal school, to do music education. The arts are an incredibly important part of a rounded education system. Great delivery of creative and performing arts is imperative to bringing up children who can see not only how the world is but also how the world could be. I used to have another quote in my classroom. Children would sit on the floor and look up and see a quote above the board that said, "The forest would be very quiet indeed if only the more talented birds sang."

I am a true believer that arts education must be available to every child. In Camden, it is very hard to access good live performances. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Opera Australia, Musica Viva and other educational programs and concerts are all brilliant. But many students in my electorate cannot afford an entire day trip to go to see a performance. In fact, in order to get a busload of students from Camden and Leppington, which is the area where I used to teach, to the city we have to leave the venue 10 minutes after arriving in order to make it back to school for the children to get home again.

We are not able to access those kinds of performances. In fact, many of my students have never seen a live performance. When they go to a live performance for the first time, they are a little shocked because they think it is like television and they can just heckle. They do not understand that there are real people on stage and that hurts their feelings. There is etiquette about when to applaud and not applaud, and they cannot just get up and go to the toilet when they feel like it. There is a need to incorporate live performances and performance experiences in

children's lives. Secondly, we also find it hard to access public art. We are very lucky in Camden because a long time ago Camden Council became aware of those problems and started to try to rectify them using local artists. We are lucky because people are quite parochial about being from Camden, which I know is true of the Blue Mountains as well. People are proud of their area. Groups like The Rubens—a great band, Camden boys—will put on concerts for minimal profit so that the people of Camden can experience real music.

We also have country music festivals and other festivals, but it is important that we do not forget how important arts education is—especially to those kids who are not good at sport or at school. Often those kids find reassurance in music and art that they do not find in other aspects of school. It can be the one place that makes them feel they can become something beyond what they are today. It is very important that we foster art and the love of art in all aspects of education, beginning in kindergarten when children will happily draw anything they are asked to draw without judgement. Maybe do not let them draw on the walls, but let us foster art as much as we can and make sure that arts education is at the forefront of what we are doing for our kids.

### SOUTH-WEST SYDNEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (19:11):** Earlier this month *The Sydney Morning Herald* published an article headed "The number of school students forecast to come to every suburb in New South Wales". The article listed school-age population projections from 2021 to 2031 and 2031 to 2041. It will come as no surprise to anyone who has had the misfortune to listen to me in this Chamber before that one of the areas highlighted in the article is my electorate of Leppington. The two areas with the highest adjacent growth in population of school-age children are in fact Austral and Leppington in my electorate. Between 2021 and 2031, it is expected that there will be 5,388 school-age children, which is an increase of 3,000 primary school children and 2,200 high school children. Just over the road in Leppington-Catherine Field there is a similar number of 5,346, comprising 3,200 primary school children and 2,000 high school children.

The previous Government used population projections that were simply flawed, which the department admits in the article. After digging into the projections and speaking to people in planning and education, it essentially used an assumption that developers would use the medium lot size. Developers want to develop areas and do it for profit, and the assumption was that they would just pick the lot size in the middle. Shockingly, they actually used the minimum lot size so they could fit in the largest number of houses and make the most amount of money. That means the projections were woefully undercooked, and we now have a situation in my electorate and throughout a lot of growth areas where schools are at capacity, and we are having to send students and families a lot further away than we otherwise would have.

It gets worse. During the previous 12 years of neglect by the Liberal-Nationals Government not only did poor projections come through the system, but also it failed to build any schools. I have said multiple times that across Austral, Leppington and Denham Court there is not a single public high school. There were announcements and re-announcements and re-re-announcements about building another public high school in Leppington, but it never came to fruition. Further to that, not only did the previous Government not build the schools but also it relinquished at least two sites in Austral that were earmarked for schools. That is an utter disgrace, and I will remind Opposition members of it at every opportunity. Not only was the Government not building schools; it was getting rid of sites. It was a complete furphy to say that they were not needed because both sites were purchased by private schools, which shows that the schools were needed but those opposite do not believe in public education so let the private sector pick up the slack.

The good news is the Minns Labor Government was elected in March 2023, and in two short years it has done everything to turn that around. The Government has announced a new high school for Leppington. The site has been chosen and it is adjacent to the existing primary school. On top of that, the primary school is getting a \$90 million investment to ensure that it grows with the growing community. Just up the road, Austral Public School—which is also growing—is getting \$90 million as well. On top of that, both schools are getting public preschools. That is fantastic news. It is especially exciting for the people of Leppington because it means that people travelling to Leppington station can drop off their kids across the road at the same spot, whether they are preschool, primary school or high school age.

More exciting news is imminent. If it has not already done so, the department is going to release the designs for the school. I encourage the community to have their say. It is their school, and it will be a focal point of not just the entire Leppington suburb but specifically the Leppington town centre. That shows the Minns Labor Government is committed to rebuilding public education in this State—and so am I, a proud product of public education.

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

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.

*[The Temporary Speaker (Ms Donna Davis) left the chair pursuant to resolution at 19:17 on Thursday 20 February 2025.]*

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Friday 21 February 2025

*Continuation of sitting of Thursday 20 February 2025.*

*[The bells having been rung, the House resumed at 04:05 with the Speaker (The Hon. Gregory Michael Piper) in the chair.]*

**CRIMES AMENDMENT (PLACES OF WORSHIP) BILL 2025****Returned**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.

**CRIMES AMENDMENT (INCITING RACIAL HATRED) BILL 2025****Returned**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill with amendments. In accordance with the earlier resolution of the House, we will now consider those amendments.

**Consideration in Detail****Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments.***Schedule of amendments referred to in message of an earlier hour***No. 1 IND No. 1 [c2025-041]**

Page 3, Schedule 1, proposed section 93ZAA(2), line 20. Insert "or discussion" after "teaching".

**No. 2 GRNS No. 3 [c2025-036A]**

Page 3, Schedule 1, proposed section 93ZAB(1), line 36. Omit "The Minister". Insert instead "Portfolio Committee No 5".

**No. 3 OPP No. 1 [c2025-038A]**

Page 4, Schedule 1, proposed Part 3A, Division 8A. Insert after line 3—

**93ZAC Repeal of division**

This division is repealed on the day that is 3 years after the division commences.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (04:08):** I move:

That the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

I will be necessarily and mercifully brief, given the time. I thank all members of this House for their forbearance and for hanging around until after 4.00 a.m. to wait for the Legislative Council to deal with the Crimes Amendment (Inciting Racial Hatred) Bill 2025. The Government accepts the amendments that have been passed by the Legislative Council. I will briefly point out what they are for the benefit of the House. New section 93ZAA (1) of the bill states that a person commits an offence if they "by a public act, intentionally incites hatred towards another person ... on the ground of race". New section 93ZAA (2) of the bill states that that "does not apply to an act that consists only of directly quoting from or otherwise referencing a religious text for the purpose of religious teaching." That was a narrow exception.

The Hon. Tania Mihailuk moved an amendment to insert the words "or discussion" into that new section and, bewilderingly, the Opposition supported it so that amendment has passed. New section 93ZAB of the bill states that:

- (1) The Minister must review this division to determine whether—
  - (a) the policy objectives ... remain valid, and

(b) the terms of the division remain appropriate for securing the objectives.

That is a standard clause. It basically means that the Department of Communities and Justice does a statutory review, not the Minister's political office. The Greens have moved that Portfolio Committee No. 5 of the upper House should do that review instead. Bewilderingly, the Opposition followed them on that and that amendment has passed as well. I accept that. If the members of the Legislative Council, who complain that they have too much work to do, want to draw unto themselves more work instead of having the department do it and take upon the responsibility of the department to do the wider community stakeholder consultation—if they think they can do a better job—that is fine. But the most bewildering and unacceptable amendment is the one moved by the Opposition to insert new section 93ZAC, which states that "this division is repealed on the day that is three years after the division commences." So it provides for hate speech laws to be not sunsetted or reviewed but "repealed".

**Mr Alister Henskens:** That is a sunset clause. It is the way it is expressed. You wouldn't know that, but it is.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** It says "repealed". The member for Wahroonga has had one of the most embarrassing weeks I have ever seen a member have in this place. He apparently "led" for the Opposition on the bill with a rambling 30-minute dissertation yesterday, and one could not, upon examination of his speech either as he delivered it or in writing afterwards, work out what the Opposition was doing, only then to allow free-range chickens from his backbench to come into the Chamber and say anything they wanted.

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** Those opposite have now teamed up with The Greens to weaken hate speech laws in New South Wales. They complained that we were moving too quickly but at the same time they said we were not moving quickly enough. Then they complained that we did nothing and now they are saying we did too much. That is not political leadership. That is not the sort of support that the Jewish community in New South Wales and Australia are looking for. The shadow Leader of the House and the man who would be Attorney General and Premier stands condemned for the weakness that he has shown on this. I thank all other members who supported this bill. The Jewish community wanted this, and the Government has delivered it to them.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with the earlier resolution, the House now stands adjourned.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 04:13 on Friday 21 February until Tuesday 18 March 2025 at 12:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

**CASTLE HILL PLAYERS-IMPROBABLE FICTION**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—The Castle Hill Players have been entertaining audiences since 1954. I was present at the Pavilion Theatre for the performance on 5 February 2025 for the first production of the year, 'Improbable Fiction' by British Playwright and Director, Sir Alan Ayckbourn CBE FRSA. The play is set in the home of fictional character Arnold Hassock who has is the chairman of the village writers club. It is nearly Christmas and members of the club attend a meeting at Arnold's old house. The play was wonderfully performed by the Castle Hill Players. I commend Jem Rowe who played Arnold Hassock, Lauren Asten-Smith who played Ilsa Wolby, Anthea Brown who played Jess Bales, Vanessa Henderson who played Grace Sims, Will Ship who played Vivvi Dickens, Wills Burke who played Clem Pepp and Brendan Iddles who played Brevis Winterton. I also recognise and commend Director Dave went. Dave Went in his Directors note states, "Expect the unexpected" which is certainly true. I recognise all those who played a part in the production of 'Improbable Fiction.' The next play which will be performed by the Players will be 'Glorious' by Peter Quilter which will commence on 4 April 2025.

**LIFETIME CONTRIBUTION AWARDS**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—It is with deep admiration to honour two extraordinary individuals whose lifelong dedication has shaped and enriched our community. Mary Button, a proud Ngaku woman, has been an advocate for Aboriginal people, bringing her wisdom to both education and cultural preservation. As an educator, Mary has not only taught the next generation but has been a guiding light, instilling a sense of pride, and understanding in the hearts of students. Her work has been instrumental in supporting Aboriginal

communities, ensuring that the stories, and histories of our First Nations peoples continue to be valued and shared. Evelyn Jacobs has also been a pillar of our community, through her significant contributions to the Kempsey Basketball Association, Crescent Head Surf Life Saving Club and as a teacher is incredible. Dedicating herself to provide opportunities for young athletes to grow and develop lifelong skills. Evelyn's selfless support, in the water, the classroom and on the court, has given many individual's incredible opportunities. Mary and Evelyn embody the absolute best of what it means to serve others. Their tireless work, genuine care leaves an indelible mark on our community.

### **VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Geoff Clarke, President of the South West Rocks Maritime Precinct, has been honoured with the Volunteer of the Year Award at the 2025 Australia Day Awards. This award recognises individuals who selflessly give their time and energy for the betterment of the community, without any financial gain. Over the past five years, Geoff has demonstrated exceptional dedication to overseeing the transformation of the heritage district. His leadership has been instrumental in maintaining and improving the Heritage Listed 120-year-old Maritime Precinct, Museum, and the Pilot Boat, which is a registered NSW Historic Vessel. Geoff's commitment ensures that the rich maritime history of the area is preserved for future generations. The precinct houses several original items used aboard the MV Macleay, including the helms wheel, anchor, propeller, klaxon and boat horns, boat hook, life buoys, life jackets, and compass. In addition, the precinct features an Art Gallery, Maritime Museum, Arts and Crafts Cottage, and the Toy Boys Shed. Geoff's tireless efforts to maintain and share the region's maritime heritage have not gone unnoticed. His passion and dedication are a representation of why he truly deserves this recognition. Congratulations Geoff.

### **KUNDABUNG CHAMPION**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Kundabung's own Levi Ward has proven himself as one of Australia's top young rodeo riders, securing the Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association [ABCRA] Under-18 Bull Riding Championship after a thrilling final in Tamworth. The 16-year-old claimed victory by just half a point, finishing the season with 100.5 points. This achievement marks back-to-back success for Levi, who also won the Junior Bull Ride title in the 14-18 division at last season's ABCRA National Finals. Incredibly, this latest title is his 14th Australian championship since beginning his rodeo journey in 2015. Earlier this year, Levi competed in the Australian High School Rodeo Finals in Bendemeer, where he was the only rider to stay on all three bulls, earning him the Australian High School Champion title and securing his place to represent Australia on the world stage in America this August. His dedication is remarkable, competing in at least 52 rodeos each year, often travelling over 1,000 kilometres in a weekend. Congratulations, Levi, the community will be cheering you on every step of the way!

### **YOUNG WOMAN COMPETITION**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the The Land Sydney Royal AgShows NSW Young Woman competition as it showcased our region's brightest young advocates for agriculture. From a competitive field of 11 outstanding entrants, Bonnie Cox from Berry and Ellie Eather from Dapto were named as the two young women advancing to the prestigious State final at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. I acknowledge the Mayor of Kiama Cameron McDonald and Councillor Yasmin Tatrai who were also in attendance. The competition, which has a rich 60-year history, aims to develop leadership, networking, and public speaking skills among young women, preparing them for greater involvement in their local communities. Bonnie Cox, 25, grew up on her family's Angus cattle farm in Berry, where her love for agriculture started. Ellie Eather, 19, is a Dock Master Assistant at Shellharbour Marina and a marine science student at the University of Wollongong. Grace McGlinchey, Kiama's outstanding entrant, shared her journey growing up on a family farm in Jamberoo, where she has been deeply involved in the local show scene. I thank the event coordinator Michelle Young and MC David Young for their great work.

### **NATIONAL WOODEN BOAT FESTIVAL**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises two outstanding local residents. Kiama was exceptionally well represented at this year's Wooden Boat Festival in Hobart, held from 7-10 February, with two boats – the MV SIGNA and Wayfarer II – featured at the prestigious Constitution Dock. Both boats were the result of long, multi-year restoration projects by Kiama locals passionate about the craft of boat building. The MV SIGNA was restored by a crew of men in their 70s and 80s, led by owner John Hansen, while Wayfarer II was overseen by 79-year-old Rick Scott-Murphy. Both boats sailed to Hobart, each facing its own set of challenges. Rick sailed Wayfarer II from Shellharbour in January to ensure he'd make it to the festival. John and his crew left on 22nd January 2025, giving themselves a bit less time to reach Hobart. They ran into mechanical issues when they discovered a blockage in the heat exchanger on top of the gearbox and

stayed two nights in Batemans Bay. John and Rick expressed relief when they finally reached Constitution Dock in Hobart. Congratulations to both boats for being recognised at the National Wooden Boat Festival.

### JAMBEROO SEVENS

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Jamberoo Sevens. On Friday 7th February 2025, I was extremely pleased to attend the Jamberoo Sevens competition, with local teams and women's teams battling it out across multiple divisions. I would like to acknowledge the Jamberoo Football Club President Mr Alan Smith, JFC Vice President Kristin Nisbet, Mayor of Kiama Cameron McDonald and Kiama Councillor Erica Warren who were also in attendance and one of the co-founders of the competition Shane Gallagher. The finals delivered everything local football fans could have dreamed for. In the Men's Open final, South Coast FC proved too strong for Navy FFA, securing a decisive 4-1 win. Their attacking pressure was relentless, with clinical finishing making the difference. Despite a solid effort from Navy FFA, South Coast FC controlled the game. The Women's Open final was a battle of grit and determination, with Aria's Aunty Bevs sealing a 1-0 victory over defending champions Old Bags. I acknowledge Captain Michelle Carney. Another Jamberoo Sevens has wrapped up with teams displaying skill, passion and a love for the game. A huge congratulations and well done to all participants, organisers and volunteers.

### WINGECARRIBEE AUSTRALIA DAY

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Australia Day in the Wingecarribee Shire was a heartfelt occasion, bringing together the diverse and vibrant communities of Wollondilly and the Southern Highlands. It was a day to connect, reflect, and create lasting memories that remind us of the values which inspire and unite us. At the Wingecarribee citizenship ceremony, we proudly welcomed 34 new Australian citizens. We are fortunate to have individuals from various nations choosing the Wingecarribee Shire and the Wollondilly electorate as their new home, and we welcome them to the region and to Australia. Wingecarribee was fortunate to have Damien Leith attend with his wife and son as the Australia Day Ambassador, and I give a special mention to the talented performers and Amelia Jane from the Wingecarribee Vocal Muster for the magic they added to the event. I extend my congratulations to Jenny Kenna, the Wingecarribee Citizen of the Year, and to Peter Bray OAM and Lindy Deitz PSM for being honoured for services to the community in this year's Australia Day's Honours List.

### WOLLONDILLY AUSTRALIA DAY

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Australia Day in the Wollondilly Shire was a heartfelt occasion, bringing together the diverse and vibrant communities of Wollondilly and the Southern Highlands. It was a day to connect, reflect, and create lasting memories that remind us of the values which inspire and unite us. At the Wollondilly citizenship ceremony, we proudly welcomed 29 new Australian citizens. We are fortunate to have individuals from various nations choosing the Wollondilly Shire and the Wollondilly electorate as their new home, and we wholeheartedly welcome them to the region and to Australia. Congratulations go to the Wollondilly Shire award winners for 2025 - Young Citizen of the Year Ellen Stucki, Achiever of the Year Mick Seccull, Sportsperson of the Year Renee Fitzsimmons, Local Hero Brian Page, Local Hero Community Group the Blue Butterfly Institute, Environmental Citizens of the Year Mel Johnstone and Mitch Peronis, Disability Inclusion Award Jessica Cronje, Special Age Award Willow Gumbley and Senior Citizen of the Year Evelyn McDonald. A special congratulations to Annette and Rob Pearce, Wollondilly Shire Citizens of the Year for 2025, for their recognition of their remarkable contribution to local community groups.

### STEPHEN JONES

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I wish to pay tribute to Stephen Jones, the Federal member for Whitlam, as he prepares to leave politics at the next election after 15 years in the Federal Parliament. Stephen has represented the electorate of Throsby and, after redistribution, the electorate of Whitlam with great distinction since his election in 2010. He is justifiably proud of the role he has played in progressing marriage equality, gambling ad reform, securing the future of the local steel industry, and rebuilding TAFE. Stephen's contribution as Assistant Treasurer has also been valued from fighting scams to protecting the superannuation of workers, increasing the accessibility of financial records, and strengthening consumer protections for all of us. He has also played a significant role in finalising the Commonwealth's response to the Banking Royal Commission. Politics is not an easy business and after 15 years of public life, Stephen has decided to leave parliamentary service. But I, along with Whitlam locals, hope that Stephen continues to play a role in public service, for his dedication to his community is one of his greatest strengths. I wish Stephen and his family all the very best, and give him my thanks for his service.

**RYDE PROFILE IN COURAGE AWARD: KATIE PARK - ST THERESE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—Mr Speaker, I ask the House to join me in congratulating Katie Park, who is St Therese's Catholic Primary School's recipient of the 2024 Ryde Profile in Courage Award. This esteemed recognition celebrates Katie'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, Katie has exemplified integrity, leadership, and compassion. Navigating the complexities of youth while remaining steadfast in one's convictions is no small feat. Katie'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 Katie 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, Katie, on this well-deserved recognition. Always be courageous.

**RYDE PROFILE IN COURAGE AWARD: LACHLAN SHIU - EPPING BOYS HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—Mr Speaker, I ask the House to join me in congratulating Lachlan Shiu, who is Epping Boys' High School's recipient of the 2024 Ryde Profile in Courage Award. This esteemed recognition celebrates Lachlan'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, Lachlan has exemplified integrity, leadership, and compassion. Navigating the complexities of youth while remaining steadfast in one's convictions is no small feat. Lachlan'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 Lachlan 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, Lachlan, on this well-deserved recognition. Always be courageous.

**RYDE PROFILE IN COURAGE AWARD: LOLOHEA VUNAKECE - WEST RYDE PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—Mr Speaker, I ask the House to join me in congratulating Lolohea Vunakece, who is West Ryde Public School's recipient of the 2024 Ryde Profile in Courage Award. This esteemed recognition celebrates Lolohea'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, Lolohea has exemplified integrity, leadership, and compassion. Navigating the complexities of youth while remaining steadfast in one's convictions is no small feat. Lolohea'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 Lolohea 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, Lolohea, on this well-deserved recognition. Always be courageous.

**CHRIS SOLOMON**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Mr Chris Solomon, a remarkable individual from the Cudal community, for his outstanding contributions and unwavering dedication to the district. Since moving to Cudal with his wife in 2010, Chris has been an invaluable member of the community. Chris and his wife were highly regarded teachers in Sydney, and since relocating, Chris has continued to make an impact. For the past nine years, Chris has served as President of the Cudal Agricultural and Pastoral Society. In this role, he plays an essential part in ensuring the success of the Cudal Show and the ongoing care and improvement of the showgrounds. In addition to his work with the Society, Chris is also a valued member of the Bowan Park Rural Fire Service and the Australian National Field Days. His tireless dedication to these organisations speaks to his commitment to the community's wellbeing. His neighbours speak of his selflessness, noting Chris is always lending a hand. His strong work ethic and desire to contribute make him an asset to our region. I commend Chris for his exemplary service and thank him for all that he does to enrich the Cudal community.

**ZAC PAYSENO**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I am pleased to announce that Zac Payseno from McPhersons Parts & Service has been named the 2024 Agricultural Equipment Holdings Apprentice of the Year. As a second year apprentice at the Parkes branch, Zac has continuously demonstrated a strong commitment to his

work. His eagerness to learn and his outstanding work ethic have made him an invaluable member of the team. Over the past year, Zac has taken on extra responsibilities, including header checks and repairs, showcasing his initiative and dedication to his craft. Zac's efforts have not gone unnoticed by his TAFE mentors, who have praised his attention to detail, passion for agricultural mechanics and commitment to safety and quality in all aspects of his work. Zac's ability to take on challenges with a positive attitude and can-do spirit has made him a standout apprentice within the McPhersons team. His achievements serve as a testament to his hard work and determination, and it is clear that Zac is on the path to a successful career in agricultural mechanics. I would like to congratulate Zac on this recognition and look forward to seeing his continued growth and success in the years ahead.

#### **MICHAEL GREENWOOD**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the incredible dedication of Michael Greenwood, a pillar of the Parkes community, who was recently recognised for his long service to the Parkes Australia Day Committee. Forty years ago, the committee was formed with just four people, and Michael has been there from the beginning. His involvement dates back to 1984 when he joined as secretary of the committee, following his work with the Parkes Bicentennial Committee. Michael continued to serve as secretary for an impressive 26 years. After his time as secretary, Michael remained an active member of the committee for an additional 12 years, contributing his time and expertise to ensure the success of Parkes' Australia Day celebrations year after year. Michael's long-standing commitment to the committee and his dedication to the Parkes community are truly commendable. His tireless work over the past four decades has helped shape the Australia Day celebrations we know today, and we are grateful for his years of service. I congratulate Michael on this recognition and thank him for his outstanding contributions to Parkes.

#### **COUNCILLOR DJUKIC NAVIGATES TO WORLD SERIES WIN**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Councillor Narelle Djukic of Temora Shire Council has been busy navigating her way around the circuit at the recently held Union Internationale Motonautique [UIM] Jetboat World Series. Representing Australia, and of course the township of Temora, with seven years of experience as a jetboat navigator, she is no stranger to the world title scene, having competed at the prestigious event across the ditch in New Zealand. This year, Narelle served as the navigator for driver and current world champion, Phonsy Mullan where they triumphed in the Superboat Class. Their victory came after a thrilling and close-fought race, with less than 0.6 seconds separating first and second place. The Australian duo continued their winning streak, finishing with a time of 43.262 seconds. This success follows their earlier triumph in Wānaka, New Zealand, where they were also crowned champions. Narelle's dedication to the sport and her exceptional skills as a navigator have made her a key player in the competitive world of jetboating. Together with Mullan, they have once again proven their dominance in the sport and have set their sights on further successes in the ongoing world series.

#### **MIKLA LEWIS OAM – A GOLDEN AWARD**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I wish to congratulate and recognise Mikla Lewis OAM who has been honoured and recognised with the 2024 Golden Wattle Day Award, celebrating her 40 years of conservation work, and particularly in celebrating wattle. Known for her tireless work in promoting Australian environmental causes, Mikla has made a lasting impact in her field. The Golden Wattle Day Award, is awarded annually by the Wattle Day Association to any individual who stands out in the community either by action or excellence, and this certainly sums up Mikla Throughout her career, Mikla has been a passionate advocate for native flora conservation, focusing on the preservation of Australian landscapes and the education of future generations. She has led numerous environmental initiatives, supported local workshops, surveys, and field days, and been a huge asset for Weddin Shires Landcare Team. Mikla's work has not only enhanced environmental awareness for wattles but also strengthened community connections with the environment and conservation. Receiving the Order of Australia Medal [OAM] was a previous testament to her contributions, and the Golden Wattle Day Award now further celebrates Mikla's ongoing legacy.

#### **YOUTH OF THE YEAR**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—West Wyalong High School students Walt Bishop, Riley Evans, Jayda Evans, Lily Judd, Lana Maitland, and Emily Rogers recently participated in the West Wyalong Lions Youth of the Year contest, a prestigious event that aims to recognise and develop leadership qualities in young people. The students, with the unwavering support of their family, friends, and the West Wyalong High School community, demonstrated their impressive public speaking skills at the West Wyalong Bowling Club. They showed maturity and insight into their perspectives on the issues that are of great concern to our young people today. While all the speeches were delivered with confidence, Riley Evans earned the top honours for her speech on the societal pressures placed on teenagers. Her speech resonated with the audience, sparking a thoughtful discussion on the topic. Riley spoke of how, in a world where expectations are often high, the stakes are even higher. She highlighted the resilience of our youth in the face of these pressures, which are affecting their

emotional well-being and overall mental health. I commend all the students who participated, and I wish Riely all the very best as she now competes against other regional winners.

#### **BEACH BREW FORSTER**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge Steve Nibbs and Terrianne Moore of Beach Brew, Forster, for hosting a long table Christmas lunch that brought joy to many in our community. On Christmas Day 2024, Steve and Terrianne organised a festive feast on Wharf Street for around 100 people, including those experiencing homelessness, emergency service workers, individuals living alone, and families from the Ronald McDonald Family Retreat Forster. The couple prepared a traditional Christmas meal, served by local volunteers, at a beautifully decorated 40-metre-long table. Gifts were also donated by local businesses were distributed to attendees. Steve and Terrianne's efforts raised \$3000, which will support the Men's Shed and Great Lakes Women's Shelter. I thank everyone who volunteered their time or contributed to this event, making Christmas a special day for those who might otherwise have spent it alone. The Myall Lakes is fortunate to have such caring and compassionate locals.

#### **EDEN ROGERS**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise the achievements of Eden Rogers from Manning Valley Anglican College, who has certainly earned a moment of celebration following the release of her 2024 HSC results. Eden was placed 6th in NSW for History Extension. In addition, Eden was named to the Distinguished Achievers list, an honour for those who attain the highest band in multiple subjects. She also achieved an impressive ATAR of 98.55, proving her hard work and academic ability. Eden's success is not just a personal accomplishment, but a proud moment for her school. Her achievement sets a new record at Manning Valley Anglican College. I congratulate Eden Rogers on her achievements and wish her all the best as she takes the next steps in her educational journey.

#### **FORSTER AQUATIC SWIM CLUB**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievements of the Forster Aquatic Swim Club members who recently competed in the NSW Country Regional Championships held at the Manning Aquatic Leisure Centre in Taree. Despite torrential rain and challenging conditions, the club's swimmers displayed outstanding performances. 11 year old Toby Westaway earned gold in the 50m and 100m freestyle and backstroke events. 13 year old Hamish Carmichael secured gold in the 50m freestyle and 200m medley, while 16 year old Eva Keen took home gold in the 200m medley. Additional medals were won by Ryan Brown, Yasmin Cassidy, Dane Clayton, Eva, and Kaitlin Perry, who all earned well-deserved recognition in their respective events. This event, saw 206 swimmers compete in over 1200 events across three venues in NSW. I commend these athletes for their hard work and perseverance, and for proudly representing Forster at such a significant level. Congratulations to these talented swimmers and their coaches on their impressive performances.

#### **UALM AWARDS NIGHT**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I was honoured to join the United Australian Lebanese Movement [UALM] in celebrating the significant achievements of the Lebanese-Australian Diaspora on 22 January at the Holroyd Centre, Merrylands. The UALM supports Lebanese-Australian academics, journalists, and public figures, celebrates culture through a plethora of artforms & media and promotes a strong partnership between Australia & Lebanon. Lebanese-Australian high-achievers Dr. Wally Ahmar was recognised for his relentless contributions to medicine in fostering community services & Miss Lara Nakhle for her remarkable contributions to the arts through her dedication to music while overcoming significant barriers. As per the community-focused organisations' tradition, the UALM donated \$5,000 to Aspect; an organisation that supports & empowers people on the autism spectrum by delivering evidence-based & personalised solutions to individuals & their families. Thank you to the UALM & all organising partners for the opportunity to celebrate the many invaluable contributions of Lebanese-Australians. Your unwavering commitment to serving the community is truly inspiring!

#### **KAREN NEW YEAR CELEBRATION**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I was honoured to join the Karen community in celebrating the Karen New Year 2764 at the Roselea Community Centre. This vibrant event is a testament to the enduring culture, traditions, and unity of the Karen people, both here in Australia and around the world. The bamboo dance, done dance, and delicious food are wonderful examples of the rich cultural heritage, and the Karen community so proudly preserves them and shares with others. These celebrations bring us together, fostering understanding and solidarity across diverse communities. The Karen New Year is an opportunity to reflect on the values of togetherness, strength, and pride in cultural identity. It brings people of all backgrounds together to celebrate the enduring spirit of the Karen community and its significant contributions to our society. Thank you to the organisers

and the Karen community for sharing this special day with us. I wish everyone a joyous and prosperous Karen New Year!

#### **2025 PONGAL FESTIVAL – AUSTRALIAN TAMIL CONGRESS**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I was delighted to acknowledge and celebrate the vibrant Tamil community here in Sydney for their dedication to preserving and promoting cultural heritage. The 2025 Pongal Festival at Holroyd Gardens, Merrylands is a testament to the rich traditions and enduring values of gratitude, unity, and respect for nature that are integral to Tamil culture. Pongal is not just a celebration of the harvest but also a reminder of the essential contributions of our farmers and the importance of nurturing our environment. It is heartwarming to see the Tamil community sharing these values with all of us and fostering inclusivity and cultural exchange in our diverse city. Thank you to the Australian Tamil Congress, the Tamil Community in Sydney, and all organizing partners for creating this opportunity to come together and celebrate. Your commitment to preserving Tamil heritage is truly inspiring. Happy Pongal to everyone!

#### **RUTH EMMETT**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I acknowledge the community mindedness of Cronulla's Ruth Emmett who recently reached an extraordinary milestone of making 450 blood donations. Ruth's rare AB positive blood type makes her 666 millilitres donation every fortnight especially valuable, as her plasma can be given to anyone. Her consistent efforts have made a tangible impact as her simple acts of making donations have helped save up to 1,350 lives. As Ruth put it, "It doesn't hurt – I just put my feet up and have a rest." Lifeblood said Ruth's commitment to make 450 donations is an amazing effort and that you can see the ripple effect of one person's selfless dedication. Beyond her blood donations, Ruth is actively involved in the community in other ways. In 2023 she raised \$18,000 to buy a trishaw so older people in the community can go for a ride to have a break from their homes and take a breath of fresh outdoor air. She has also helped raise awareness of support available for people who have loved ones with dementia. Ruth's story reflects the best of our local community spirit.

#### **KURNELL PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS' WAR ON WATER WASTE**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate students of Kurnell Public School for their efforts to promote water conservation within their school community. After raising concerns about water wastage on the playground, students developed a simple yet effective plan to address the problem. Their initiative began with a check of taps, bubblers, and toilets across the school, identifying leaking bubblers as a key area for improvement. From there, they presented their solution of a modern water refill station that would encourage the use of reusable bottles and reduce water waste. Through their hard work, the students raised \$250 during a mufti-donation day, with activities such as water-themed science experiments and fun guessing games about water measurements. Their efforts extended beyond the school, as they engaged the school P&C and businesses, including Kurnell Reccas and constructor of the new Kamay wharves McConnell Dowell, to secure extra funding for the new water refill station. This project is a wonderful example of young leaders working together to make a positive difference in their community. Well done to the students at Kurnell Public for their commitment to looking after our environment.

#### **CRONULLA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB – SHARK ISLAND SWIM**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—It was great to be part of a near-record turnout for Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club's [SLSC] 35th Shark Island Swim event earlier this month. Ideal conditions saw a near record 1037 entrants take to the water across the event that includes the 2.3km swim around Shark Island and 1km fun swim at Cronulla Beach. Wanda SLSC members Nicholas Middleton and Charlotte Bowmer won the men's and women's races in the Shark Island Swim, while teenagers Nate Robinson and Kiani Johnson came home first in the 1km fun swim races. A special mention of local Barry Tyte who's the only person to have competed in all Shark Island Swims since the event started in 1988. I acknowledge the more than 100 volunteers for their hard work to make the event a success, in particular the organising committee of Kieran Day (Convenor), Scott Williams, Robert Short, Rodney Dunn, Greg Allum AM, Tristan Howison, Marcus Kennedy, and Greg Oldfield as well as Dr Analyse Crane and Dr Sally Sheffield who provided medical support. Congratulations to the Cronulla club on another fantastic community event that helps support its vital work on and off the beach.

#### **SYDNEY TRAMWAY MUSEUM**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—The Sydney Tramway Museum in Loftus is a volunteer run museum dedicated to restoring and maintaining Sydney's electric rail history. The Sydney Tramway Museum will be celebrating 75 years of preservation and 60 years of operational trams on the 23rd of February 2025. A huge milestone for Australia's oldest tramway museum and the largest in the southern hemisphere. The Museum preserves Australia's unique public transport history, allowing members of the public to understand the important role trams played in the lives of Australians for over 80 years until 1961. Guests can view their fleet in the display

hall and take a ride on a vintage tram to the Royal National Park. On behalf of the Heathcote Electorate, I thank the Sydney Tramway Museum and the volunteers for their commitment to Australia's history. I also congratulate the Museum on reaching such a significant milestone.

#### **MARK WALTON – POLICE FORCE NSW**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—Mark Walton, a Woronora Heights local and Assistant Commissioner to the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command in the NSW Police Force is retiring after 40 years of service. Mr. Walton began serving the NSW Police Force in 1984 as a general duties officer in Kogarah and investigations in Rockdale, before becoming the Commander of the Redfern and Eastern Suburbs local area commands. In 2015, he was named as St George Commander, and in 2019 was named Assistant Commissioner to the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command in the NSW Police Force. His work has been essential in the prevention of critical threats to domestic safety while advocating for greater awareness and mitigation of the impact's youth radicalization online. Mr. Walton was involved in key counter-terrorism probes as well as the NSW Joint Counter Terrorism Team that has contributed significantly to public safety and welfare. On behalf of the community, I thank Mr. Walton for his invaluable public service and wish him a restful retirement.

#### **WEST PENNANT HILLS CHERRYBROOK ROTARY**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I record the voluntary service of West Pennant Hill Cherrybrook Rotary Club. I attended a recent meeting of the Club where the President outlined the club's history and some of the clubs' projects. The club was chartered in 1987 and now has 42 members and 19 honorary members. The club runs a Christmas Tree of Joy at Cherrybrook and Westleigh Shopping villages. The project collected around 1,200 gifts with an estimated value \$50,000.00. The club supports programs including DV Transitional Housing run by Kenthurst Rotary Club; Helping Hearts Survive Dural which provides meals to those in need; Rescued and Reused at Aradia which provides home wares and clothes to needy people around Sydney; and Grace's Place run by Homicide Victims Support Group. Further, the club supports Rotary Programs including Rotary Youth Programs; Youth Exchange Sending students to other countries and receiving students from other countries; RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Awards); RYPEN (Rotary Youth Program of Enrichment), and Science Experience to help Year 9/10 students choose a future career in science. I thank the President of the WPH Cherrybrook Rotary Club, Colin Sharpe and the entire Committee for commitment to improving our community through service.

#### **AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS – COOMA REGION**

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education)**—I'd like to acknowledge Cooma residents who recently won Australia Day awards. Citizen of the Year, Patrick (Paddy) Kerrigan. For more than 70 years, Paddy has called the Snowy Mountains home. Paddy has been honoured for his contributions to tourism and preservation of Snowy Hydro's history, especially in Adaminaby. Jackie Povey was presented the Environmental Award for her 30 year effort raising more than \$300,000 and saving local wildlife as part of LAOKO. Community involvement awards went to Peter Brennan, Bill Smits, and Jim Johnston for their commitment to veterinary services, work on the Berry Cottages, and Remembrance Drive respectively. Thank you to the Monaro Committee for Cancer Research (mcCr) for all they work they've done over the years, receiving the community event award for their Hot City disco (which raised close to \$300,000) is well-deserved. None of these events would happen without the time dedicated by community members. Which is why Chris Reeks from the Cooma Lions Club is so deserving of the Community Involvement award for his 10 years of work ensuring these days of celebration can occur.

#### **BRAESIDE HOSPITAL VISIT 2024**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 21 December 2024, I had the privilege of spending a Saturday before Christmas with the wonderful volunteers to give presents to the patients and staff at Braeside Hospital, a facility providing palliative and supportive care services to patients with progressive, life-limiting illnesses, helping them live as well as possible. It was a memorable Christmas celebration coordinated with Hammond Care. The warmth and care, accompanied by joyous music and carols, were incredibly uplifting for the patients and their families. This reminded me of how simple gestures of genuine care and music can bring immeasurable strength, happiness, and hope to people in the face of illness. I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the nurses and staff for their dedication and hard work. A special thank you goes to Ms Sinilia Radivojevic and the incredible team of volunteers for organising this wonderful celebration. I would like to express my gratitude to musicians Victor and John for their beautiful performance. On this special occasion I also had the opportunity to wish John a very happy birthday and wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a joyous holiday season.

### 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIETNAMESE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S FORUM

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 15 December 2024, I had the honour of attending the 35th Anniversary of the Vietnamese Australian Women's Forum (VAW Forum) to celebrate this outstanding publication and community that has empowered and united Vietnamese Australian women for decades. For 35 years, VAW Forum has been instrumental in preserving Vietnamese cultural traditions, sharing inspiring success stories, and fostering a strong sense of community. The dedication of the editorial board, founders, and contributors has ensured that this forum remains a platform for empowerment, cultural and spiritual preservation, and integration. As 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of Vietnamese refugee settlement in Australia, VAW Forum is preparing a 50th Anniversary Commemorative Journal to honour the strength, resilience, and achievements of the Vietnamese refugee women—from their early settlement to their enduring contributions in enriching our multicultural society. I look forward to its release. Hearing from past, present, and future leaders was truly inspiring as they shared their vision and experiences. I thank Ms Kim Ngoc Dang for the kind invitation and extend my deepest appreciation to all who have contributed to the forum's success. May it continue to thrive for generations to come.

### CABRAMATTA VIETNAMESE BUDDHIST COMMUNITY MEETING WITH THE PREMIER OF NSW

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 5 December 2024, I had the privilege and honour of organising the Cabramatta Vietnamese Buddhist Community meeting with the Hon Chris Minns, Premier of NSW. With over 70% of the local Vietnamese population in my Electorate of Cabramatta identifying as Buddhist, this meeting was a wonderful opportunity to allow our local Vietnamese Buddhist community to showcase Buddhism's vital role in fostering a peaceful and harmonious society - one that I am proud to represent. It also provided the Premier with a unique insight into the spiritual and cultural traditions of our local Vietnamese Buddhist community. On this special occasion, I recognise and acknowledge the invaluable contributions this community has made to my Cabramatta electorate and look forward to continued collaboration. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to all participating temples and their representatives for their invaluable support of this initiative. My deepest appreciation to Phap Bao Pagoda for hosting, the Most Venerable Thich Bao Lac, Senior Venerable Thich Pho Huan, and Venerable Bhikkhuni Thich Nu Giac Anh for their guidance, and all volunteers for their dedication and hard work in making this event a great success.

### MORUYA MEDICARE MENTAL HEALTH CENTRE

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega)**—I congratulate the Eurobodalla community on the opening of the Moruya Medicare Mental Health Centre. The Eurobodalla community now has access to free, walk-in mental health care and support at the new Moruya Medicare Mental Health Centre. Medicare mental health centres are a safe and welcoming space to talk to someone if you, or someone you care about, are in distress, or need help finding the right mental health support to meet your needs. Moruya Medicare Mental Health Centre provides a welcoming entry point for adults (and their support people) experiencing distress, crisis, or mental health challenges to access a range of support services. Operated by Grand Pacific Health, the walk-in adult clinic works alongside a range of mental health services, including The Family Place, Directions Health Service, Katungul, and Headspace Batemans Bay, to provide whole-of-community support. Moruya Medicare Mental Health Centre offers support from psychologists, social workers, mental health nurses, and peer workers. This service is free and no appointment or referral is needed. I acknowledge the tireless work of the Member for Gilmore, Fiona Phillips MP, on achieving this much needed service for our community.

### GWANDALAN PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERS 2025

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Nate Dial, Abigail Newton, Leylani Crotty, Harper Robinson, Harry Buhagiar and Luca Manca on being named the 2025 school leaders at Gwandalan Public School. These students have demonstrated a strong work ethic and a commitment to their school community. They represent Gwandalan Public School with exceptional pride and integrity. Throughout their time at school, each of these students have 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 pride, and in doing so, develop valuable skills that will benefit them beyond schooling. I congratulate Nate, Abigail, Leylani, Harper, Harry and Luca on this well-deserved achievement. I also wish them all the best with their final year of primary school.

### ST FRANCIS XAVIER'S PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERS 2025

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Airlie Sullivan, Nate Carter, Ivy-Rose Harmer, Grace Hawe, Piper

Kearins, Penny Summerville, Leena Al-Attar and Beau Brash on being named the 2025 school leaders at St Francis Xavier's Primary School. These students have demonstrated a strong work ethic and a commitment to their school community. They represent St Francis Xavier's Primary School with exceptional pride and integrity. Throughout their time at school, each of these students have 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 pride, and in doing so, develop valuable skills that will benefit them beyond schooling. I congratulate Airlie, Nate, Ivy-Rose, Grace, Piper, Penny, Leena and Beau on this well-deserved achievement. I also wish them all the best with their final year of primary school.

#### **IILYSH RETALLICK - CULCAIRN'S AUSTRALIAN IDOL 2025 STAR**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Iilysh Retallick from Culcairn NSW, who has recently captured national attention as a contestant on Australia Idol 2025. Iilysh is known for her passion for rock music, and wowed the judges with a powerful audition, performing Alanis Morissette's "You Oughta Know". When asked by the judges where she was from, the judges were surprised to hear the name of her small town of around 1,400 people. Judge Kyle Sandilands humorously saying "Cold Can? As you put in the esky?" Beyond her musical journey, Iilysh is also recognised for her community involvement, having recently received the School Citizenship Award at the Greater Hume Australia Day ceremony. Well done, Iilysh, for your commitment to both your art and your community. What an amazing achievement!

#### **COROWA SUNSHINE WALK**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the outstanding achievement of Team Corowa who has won the 2024 Sunshine Walk Cup. The Corowa community showed incredible spirit and commitment by participating with a record of 72 dedicated walkers, who tackled 5km and 10km paths along the river. Their efforts resulted in a remarkable fundraising total of over \$9,002 going towards Albury Wodonga Regional Cancer Centre. This year's Sunshine Walk was a tremendous success, with 66 teams and approximately 900 participants across the region raising an impressive total of \$140,000. Now in its sixth year, the event continues to be a powerful display of community support and solidarity in the fight against cancer. Team Corowa's performance stands out, as they have a long history of strong community involvement. In 2023, the Corowa & District community proudly won the Town Cup by raising just over \$8,000. Congratulations to Team Corowa and thank you to everyone who contributed to this remarkable achievement. Your fundraising efforts are making a difference helping with education and training, the well-being centre and the purchase of new equipment.

#### **20TH ANNUAL CLEARSAFE GREAT OCEAN POOL CRAWL**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—The Great Ocean Pool Crawl is an Illawarra institution, and in March 2025 it will celebrate its 20th year. The event brings together ocean lovers and swimmers of all levels to enjoy five of the Illawarra's many unique ocean pools – from Towradgi in the south to Coalcliff in the north – while raising donations for the important work done by Cancer Council NSW to reduce the impact of cancer on individuals and the community. This year, the event is set to reach a milestone of \$1 million in donations contributed to Cancer Council NSW, which is a mark of the genuine change that it has brought about in the lives of people affected by cancer. I would like to congratulate the organisers and participants on this milestone, and I give my heartfelt thanks to everyone involved for their contribution. Your efforts are an example of the good work that can be done when we come together as a community, and a testament to the incomparable appeal and beauty of the Illawarra region's natural environment.

#### **MR PAUL TARLINTON**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I thank and commend the President of St Clair & District Men's Shed Mr Paul Tarlinton for his tremendous work and effort in achieving the goals of the Men's Shed of advancing the health and wellbeing of men. The Men's Shed provides a safe and friendly environment where men can work on a range of personal, shed and community projects. In doing so, they often support local community and charitable organisations. The Men's shed is welcoming of men of all cultures to share their skills, learn new skills, make new friends, chat and socialise over coffee. Mr Paul Tarlinton is always going above and beyond to ensure the wellbeing of the men and wider community. He has been instrumental in arranging a program whereby participants from the Men's Shed conduct weekly exercise sessions that are run by professional trainer Kristy Bissett. I extend my thanks to everyone from the St Clair & District Men's Shed for supporting each other and the community, and I thank Kristy Bissett for her great work in conducting the weekly exercise sessions.

### CAROL ISKANDAR AND LUCY SPISIAK

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate and commend locals of my Badgerys Creek electorate Carol Iskandar and Lucy Spisiak on being announced as MySydney Scholars as part of The University of Sydney's 2024 MySydney Scholarship Program. The program awards MySydney Scholarships of \$8,500 per annum for the duration of the recipient's undergraduate degree, tailored support to transition well from high school to university and access to mentoring programs. All MySydney Scholars are also afforded the opportunity to apply for a Vice Chancellor's Global Mobility Award, which is valued up to \$5,000 for eligible exchange programs. This awarding of the scholarship is a result of Carol's and Lucy's academic excellence and their outstanding work in the community. I congratulate Carol and Lucy on their great achievements and wish them continued success.

### NATIONAL DRIVER FATIGUE WEEK

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—The 21st of February 2025 to 27th February 2025 marks National Driver Fatigue Week, a week in which we aim to promote driver fatigue intervention strategies to motorists and prevent fatalities on our roads. It has long been accepted that the only solution for fatigue is sleep and that a sleep debt will eventually need to be paid. I remind all motorists, including heavy vehicle operators, of the importance of a power nap as a viable intervention strategy to overcome fatigue while driving, as it improves concentration and situation awareness. Fatigue leads to microsleeps with fatal consequences. I encourage all motorists to visit [powernap.org.au](http://powernap.org.au) for important information and I thank the Power Nap organisation for their important work in supporting National Driver Fatigue Week.

### WIRIPAANG PUBLIC SCHOOL HONEY

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Wiripaang Public is one of the many wonderful schools in the Charlestown electorate, and they have teamed up with Project Humble to help students engage with nature through hands-on learning. As part of Project Humble's "The Big Buzz" initiative, students are engaged in honeybee conservation, addressing local challenges such as the Varroa mite threat, and more global issues through a year-long educational journey. Participants gain practical experience by constructing and managing beehives, fostering environmental stewardship, while the program empowers schools with hive ownership, as students make key decisions remotely—all the while supported by expert beekeepers. I am pleased to report fantastic feedback from staff at Wiripaang, and that the honey produced by the school's hive is on sale for \$3 a jar from the office. Stocks are limited, though according to Project Humble's statistics, Wiripaang's queen—delightfully named Bee-Anchor—is the third most productive across the program, producing 86 loads of honey in 2024. I can confirm to the House that it's absolutely delicious. My congratulations to principal Julie Low, her staff, the students and of course Queen Bee-Anchor, and my thanks to Project Humble for this program.

### DR. TESSA LORD

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—A review of scientific literature published in Nature Review Urology has sought to shed light on the causes of a decline in male fertility over the past fifty years. The study explored how certain activities such as high-altitude hiking and sleep apnoea impact male fertility. The lead researcher was Dr. Tessa Lord, a senior lecturer at the University of Newcastle, a member of the Hunter Medical Research Institute's Infertility and Reproduction Research Program and a resident of the Charlestown electorate. A reproductive biologist specialising in spermatogenesis and spermatogonial stem cell biology, Dr Lord earned her Bachelor of Biotechnology at the University of Newcastle, went on to do honours, and achieve a PhD. After postdoctoral training at Washington State University, Dr Lord established her research program at the University of Newcastle in 2019. The research goals of Dr Lord and her team aims to improve fertility outcomes today and also help safeguard the reproductive health of generations to come. I congratulate Dr Lord on her work so far and wish her and her team all the best in their future research endeavours.

### NEWCASTLE TOY LIBRARY

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—This weekend, Newcastle Toy Library are celebrating the incredible milestone of 50 years of service! The Newcastle Toy Library has grown from a specialist library dedicated to children with disabilities, to a thriving service available to all children from 0 to 8 years, with over 300 members. Based under New Lambton Library, the Newcastle Toy Library is a not for profit, volunteer run organisation where parents, grandparents and community members help out each Saturday morning when they are open. For a low-cost annual membership fee, the Newcastle Toy Library has over 1500 active toys, STEM toys, sensory toys, construction toys, imaginative toys, and beginnings toys that children can borrow for a party, for education, or just to play with at home. This is a fantastic service for our community, offering our local children

the opportunity to learn responsibility and independence through borrowing, and families the ability to rotate through a variety of toys, affordably. Congratulations to Newcastle Toy Library and thank you to all who have been involved in the vital role of assisting families from all backgrounds with affordable access to quality toys, games and puzzles over the last 50 years!

#### CRANE NAMES

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—It's a privilege to acknowledge the creativity and enthusiasm shown by the young students who participated in naming the cranes for the Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport project. This initiative has not only engaged our local schools but has also brought a sense of fun and imagination to such a monumental infrastructure project. Congratulations to the students who came up with the creative and unique names from Veronica's 'Metro Max', Cali's 'Saint Liftus', Austin's 'Kangaroo Crane', Aubrey's 'The Train Crane' and Nicholas' 'Sky Atlas'. Your ideas remind us of the power of fresh perspectives and community involvement in shaping our future. All of these names will now be proudly displayed on these vital pieces of equipment. A big thank you to the Parklife Metro team for encouraging this connection with our young minds and for inspiring the next generation to take pride in their local area. This collaboration highlights the importance of integrating education and innovation into our community projects. Well, done to all involved—you've truly aimed for the sky!

#### NEPEAN HOCKEY ASSOCIATION SUCCESS AT STATE INDOOR TOURNAMENT

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—It's my privilege to recognise the outstanding achievements of the Nepean Hockey Association at the recent State Indoor Tournaments. The exceptional performance by the U16 Girls, who brought home gold, the incredible efforts of the U14 Girls, Open Men and Open Women, have made our community immensely proud. A special congratulations to Summer Knowles for being named Player of the Tournament and selected for the NSW Blues. To the coaches, managers, and volunteers, thank you for your commitment to nurturing the potential of these athletes. This success is not just about medals—it reflects teamwork, perseverance, and community spirit. These qualities define the Nepean Hockey Association and inspire us all. To everyone involved, from players to families, congratulations on this remarkable achievement. We look forward to supporting and celebrating your continued success.

#### COBY CARRUTHERS AT THE AMOTA

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—I am pleased to announce the outstanding achievement of one of our local stars, Coby Carruthers, at the prestigious Australian Master of the Amateurs tournament. Competing against top amateur golfers from 20 countries, Coby showcased his incredible skill and determination, finishing in the top five with an impressive score of 281. Coby's performance reflects not only his talent but also his hard work and commitment to excellence. He has proven himself on one of the sport's biggest amateur stages, competing alongside future professionals and making our community immensely proud. Coby, your success is an inspiration to young athletes across our region, showing them what's possible with dedication and perseverance. We can't wait to see you continue to excel and represent our community on even bigger stages in the future. Congratulations on this phenomenal achievement.

#### TAYLOR KEANEY

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Taylor Keaney, from Oak Flats High School, who won the 'Conceptual Strength' prize for her incredible etched artwork 'A Study of The Brain' at the EAWFAA Exhibition at the Project Contemporary Artspace in Wollongong in November 2024. This prestigious exhibition, which showcases the exceptional work of Year 10 and Year 11 students from 17 secondary schools across the Illawarra, was on display at Project Contemporary Artspace in Wollongong. Taylor's work stood out for its depth of concept and the skilful technique behind it. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Taylor on this wonderful achievement.

#### JAKE DANNON

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Jake Dannon, from Warilla High School, who completed the nine-day Educational Pathways Head Start Program in Manufacturing and Utilities, delivered by Zeal Futures at AVCON. Students toured Bluescope Steel, explored VR welding at TAFE, and connected with apprentices at local fabrication shops, gaining hands-on industry experience and insights into exciting career paths. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Jake on this wonderful achievement.

### TYLER SUTHERLAND

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Tyler Sutherland, from Lake Illawarra High School, who received an award at the Illawarra Schools Excellence Vocational Education and Training Awards 2024. Tyler received the award for SBAT Logistics and Warehousing. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Tyler on this wonderful achievement.

### ELLEN MAJELLA DAVIES

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It is a privilege to acknowledge the outstanding contributions of those recognised in this year's Australia Day Honours. Seven exceptional locals from the Central Coast were awarded AMs and OAMs, and three dedicated individuals received medals for their service in fire, ambulance, and emergency services. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Ellen Majella of Green Point, who has been awarded the Ambulance Service Medal—a well-deserved recognition of her extraordinary dedication and service. Superintendent Ellen Majella Davies joined NSW Ambulance in 1987 and has since provided emergency care to thousands of patients while leading large-scale health projects and supporting her colleagues during some of our nation's most challenging times. From the 2019-20 NSW bushfires to the G20 Summit and the COVID-19 vaccination rollout, her leadership, expertise, and commitment to public health have made a lasting impact. Her ability to lead in times of crisis, implement crucial programs, and still respond as an advanced life support paramedic is truly inspiring. Ellen Majella, your service exemplifies the very best of our community. Congratulations once again to Ellen Majella and all of our Australia Day Honours recipients. Your dedication strengthens our community and inspires us all.

### MATTHEW FORMSTON

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It is a privilege to celebrate the remarkable achievements of one of our own, Matthew Formston of Wamberal, who has been appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his significant contributions to people with disability and para sports. When it comes to listing Matthew's accomplishments, it's hard to know where to start. He is a world champion surfer, a champion cyclist, a Paralympian, an executive, a motivational speaker, and a mentor. He serves on several boards, coaches' businesses, and individuals, and teaches blind children how to surf—all while being legally blind himself. Losing 95 percent of his vision at the age of five did not hold him back—it fuelled his determination to push boundaries. From breaking a Guinness World Record for surfing a 55ft wave in Portugal to becoming the first para surfer to win an able-bodied award at the Surfing Australia Awards, his achievements are groundbreaking. But beyond the accolades, Matthew takes the greatest pride in his work with children, helping them embrace the freedom of the ocean. Matthew, your resilience, passion, and dedication inspire us all. Congratulations on this well-deserved honour.

### DAVISTOWN PUTT PUTT REGATTA AND WOODEN BOAST FESTIVAL

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I am delighted to congratulate the organising committee of the Davistown Putt Putt Regatta & Wooden Boat Festival, along with all the local business sponsors, for delivering another fantastic community and fundraising event over the weekend of October 12-13, 2024. Now in its 24th year, this much-loved festival was blessed with perfect blue skies and calm waters, a welcome change after weather challenges in recent years. The event beautifully showcased the Central Coast's rich boating culture and heritage, with stunning heritage ferries and putt putts making their way from Gosford Sailing Club to the Woy Woy Channel and back via Paddy's Channel. The crowd cheered on as Galloping Maggot claimed victory in the diesel class and Taffy took the petrol class title. An estimated 15,000 visitors enjoyed a spectacular display of classic cars, market stalls, vintage farm machinery, and marine exhibits. Most importantly, the festival raised an incredible \$12,921 for Kids with Cancer, with the Regatta Charity Dinner on October 11 contributing \$8,000 to support young patients at John Hunter Children's Hospital. A special thank you to the dedicated event committee and everyone involved for making this event such a resounding success.

### NEWTOWN ELECTORATE FAN DRIVE

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown Electorate, I would like to acknowledge the good people of Newtown, including local Greens members, who contributed to our local Fan Drive over the summer. With soaring temperatures, so many renters and public housing residents in our community were struggling with the heat – and so we stepped in to give away fans to locals in the inner city and inner west. Thanks to the generosity of the people who donated fans or contributed gift vouchers, we were able to give away about 100 free fans to locals in our community and beyond to help folks beat the heat. One community member shared their appreciation saying "you have no idea how much I needed it...thank you so much it is a beautiful gesture". We are so pleased our local Fan Drive inspired a similar initiative by our Greens colleague in the Queensland

Parliament, Member for Maiwar, Michael Berkman MP, as well as local Fan Drive in Blacktown supported by Senator Mehreen Faruqi and the Blacktown Greens.

#### **LEARNING LINKS VISIT**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to attend the Learning Links Peakhurst Site for a tour. The work they are doing for local families is absolutely fantastic. Currently, Learning Links are developing more programs that focus on providing tailored support to children, especially those who might struggle to learn in certain environments. They want to make sure that every single child, no matter their circumstances, gets a fair go. Early learning centres play a crucial role in shaping young minds and giving children the best possible start in life. Our local area truly is home to some of the best in New South Wales and this is something I am so proud of. I would like to specifically thank Clive Cuthell, Belinda Afonso, Jill Reich, John McCormack, Di Peacock-Smith, Rachel Brodie-Browne and Nicolle Rogers, all of whom are from learning links. Your advocacy for children of all ages in our local area is so important. Through your work, you ensure that children in our local area can thrive. I look forward to working closely alongside Learning Links well into the future.

#### **MACARTHUR COMMUNITY KITCHEN**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)**—I have often said, and will continue to say, that my community in Campbelltown, and the broader Macarthur region is one of the most generous and supportive that you will ever find. This was once again made clear when I attended the launch of the Macarthur Community Kitchen. This is a joint initiative between Rainbow Crossing Inc, Macarthur Women's Coffee Club, SOHAS Charity, Shining Star Foundation, Wests Leagues Club and many other community groups and volunteers. This initiative is about providing nutritious meals to those in need in our community. Community organisations such as Rainbow Crossing Inc. are doing such important work to support those doing it tough and I thank them for this great initiative.

#### **BEERSHEBA DAY 2024**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)**—I was privileged to attend the 2024 Beersheba Day ceremony at Club Menangle. This is an important annual event that commemorates the last charge of the valiant Australian Lighthorse at The Battle of Beersheba in 1917—a significant chapter in Australian military history, closely tied to Menangle. The Battle of Beersheba was a pivot upon which turned the fortunes of Allied efforts against the Ottoman and German Empires in the Middle Eastern Theatre of the war. It demonstrated the success of Manoeuvre Warfare in the region, and the power of mounted troops to rapidly redefine the outcome of a battle. I was joined by my parliamentary colleagues Sally Quinell MP, Member for Camden and Judy Hannan MP. Member for Wollondilly as well as local mayors Mayor of Campbelltown City Council, Cr Darcy Lound and Mayor of Wollondilly Shire Council, Cr Matt Gould. Damien Thomlinson, a former Australian Commando, Paralympian, and inspiring survivor, was the guest speaker. His story is absolutely incredible and it was an honour to get the chance to chat with him. Thank you to Club Menangle for your ongoing commitment to this important event, and chapter in our local history.

#### **PAUL WAKELING 40 YEARS**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)**—This year marks 40 years since Paul and Margaret Wakeling set up roots, and their business in Campbelltown. Now a Campbelltown institution, the Paul Wakeling Motor Group started out as 5 employees in a small shed on Blaxland Road, before slowly becoming the business we know today, employing almost 400 people. At their initial opening, none other than the legend Peter Brock was there to cut the ribbon, truly cementing the status of Paul Wakeling in our community. The story of their establishment and growth is pure Campbelltown, constantly resilient in the face of setbacks, strong family ties and plenty of hard work. Paul, Margaret and the whole Wakeling family have continued to give back, particularly through their community work with groups like the Kids of Macarthur Foundation, Mater Dei School, St Gregory's College, St Thomas Moore and so many other Campbelltown organisations. The Wheels for Life event, in partnership with Campbelltown Hospital, which began in 1999 has since become a major fundraiser for our hospital, helping to provide essential equipment and support to our healthcare staff. Thank you to Paul and Margaret for choosing Campbelltown all those years ago and here's to another 40.

#### **AYAM BAKAR 7 SAUDARA**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to congratulate a fantastic local business for 10 years of service to our community - Ayam Bakar 7 Saudara in Peshurst! Run by Ridwan and Susan, the restaurant is named after the 7 siblings in their family, serving up street-food-inspired Indonesian cuisine. It has become one of the most popular places in all of New South Wales to eat Ayam Bakar – a type of Indonesian Grilled Chicken. The food is truly superb. I have been fortunate enough to take my family on many occasions and we have always

enjoyed a fantastic meal together. You can absolutely tell that it is cooked with love. Small businesses truly are the heartbeat of the St George Community and the backbone of our local economy. With many businesses already doing it tough in the current cost-of-living crisis, I encourage you to get out and check out a fantastic local business like Ayam Bakar 7 Saudara. Once again, I would like to congratulate Ridwan and Susan for 10 fantastic years of service to the local community, cooking delicious and nutritious food for us all to enjoy.

#### **ST GEORGE BASKETBALL - PRESENTATION AND FUNDRAISER DAY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to attend St George Basketball's presentation and fundraiser day at Hurstville Aquatic Leisure Centre. It was fantastic to meet the next generation of sporting stars in our local area. I had the opportunity of presenting a number of trophies, certificates and singlets to representative players, ranging all the way from under 12 boys and girls to seniors. Grassroots sport truly is one of the cornerstones of our community. Not only does it encourage kids to get out and participate in physical activity, but it is also a great way to make lifelong friendships. It was a privilege to catch up with Ray Barbi, the club's president, as well as their fantastic executive team. Of course, grassroots sport is nothing without its team of dedicated volunteers and I sincerely appreciate all of your work in this space. I look forward to working closely alongside the St George Basketball team well into the future. They are an organisation of exceptional calibre and I am proud of the work that they do.

#### **DEEPWATER JOCKEY CLUB INC**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the Deepwater Jockey Club on celebrating 160 years of racing. Deepwater is a small town on the edge of the Northern Tablelands electorate, which comes alive every January for the annual cup race day, with people coming from across NSW and Queensland. I was one of these people, attending this year's very successful and enjoyable day. I congratulate to the many past and present members and volunteers, who have ensured the cup has remained on the very same grounds since 1865. Thank you to all involved for their hard work and selflessly giving of their time, especially to the current committee: President John Newsome, Vice President Henry Burrige, Hon Treasurer, Secretary and Public Officer Yvette McDowall. Special mention to Patrons Don Macansh (1954) and Charles Curr (1970), for their significant support to the organisation, passing on their valuable expertise and the traditions of the club to others. I commend all involved in the great success and longevity of the club and the cup meeting. Thank you for the tremendous contribution the club has had to both Deepwater community and the Australian horse racing industry.

#### **ARMIDALE HOUSED RAM SHOW AND SALE**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the Armidale Housed Ram Show and Sale, on achieving their 80 year anniversary. This event brings buyers and vendors together from across Australia and is held over two days at the Armidale Exhibition Centre. The show comprises a range of classes, along with a Junior Merino Sheep and Fleece judging competition. The multi-vendor ram sale is one of a kind in NSW and includes fifty horned and polled rams offered, providing a selection of wool types from ultrafine, superfine, through to fine grade wools. I congratulate both past and present organisers for coordinating this event. This year seeing a collaboration of the Northern Merino Ram Breeders Inc in conjunction with agents, with the sale hosted by Nutrien Ag Solutions and AWN, and interfaced with Auction Plus. Special thanks to committee members, agency staff, along with the many sponsors, with such tremendous support assisting its success. I commend all involved for their hard work and commitment to the continuation and longevity of this event. Thank you also for your enduring contribution to our Australian sheep and wool industries.

#### **CELEBRATING THE MOREE GIFT BARREL**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Moree's Gift Barrel on their forty plus years of service to the Moree community, with this not-for-profit organisation being operated solely by volunteers. The store offers home made treasures and treats, drawing on the many skills, talents and expertise of community members. I congratulate all involved in the Gift Barrel both past and present, on this wonderful milestone. Special thanks to the current President Rob Turnbull, Secretary Maureen Baker, Treasurer Ros Van Dongen, Publicity Officer Jacqui Still and the many members and volunteers, for their hard work and dedication to the Gift Barrel. Community organisations such as this in regional towns, cannot function without the wonderful support and commitment volunteers give. I commend all involved in the success and longevity of the Gift Barrel, who have given their time and effort to ensure this wonderful enterprise continues for the enjoyment of the whole community.

#### **FILMMAKER FROM CLOVELLY**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—The Coogee Electorate would like to acknowledge Director, Kate Vinen from Clovelly, in choosing Malabar Ocean Pool for her next short film. Film Director from Clovelly, Kate

Vinen, makes a short film that begins and ends with scenes that were shot at the beautiful Ocean pool in Malabar, as Ms Vinen takes viewers on a journey based on her personal experiences as a survivor of uterine cancer. Kate says that the ocean provides a solace and relaxing experience. She said that the Malabar Ocean pool became a place of healing for her, and that it helps her wash away the societal narratives that tie a woman's value to motherhood. Kate Vinen is a great film director and we wish her the best of luck with her new film.

#### **CARING KIDS CHRISTMAS APPEAL**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—The Coogee Electorate would like to acknowledge all the community members that donated to the Caring Kids Christmas Appeal 2024. These community members went out of their way to help and donate to the Caring Kids appeal for Christmas of 2024. Caring Kids is a local charity that looks after young carers and ensures every child has access to the fun and carefree moments that we associate with childhood by providing access to toys. Caring Kids understands that the role of young carers is tough, and ensures they get a chance to be kids too. Because of the generosity of our community, local children caring for family members living with a serious illness or disability were able to enjoy a magical Christmas.

#### **RANDWICK PRIDE**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—The Coogee Electorate would like to acknowledge Randwick City Council and congratulate them on another successful Randwick Pride event. This annual celebration at the iconic Coogee Beach Rainbow promotes equality and inclusivity and shows support for the LGBTQIA+ people in our community. The event consisted of a range of entertainment, including live music and drag performances. There was a beautiful Welcome to Country ceremony from Aunty Lola Ryan, and a touching performance by the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Choir. This event brought our community together in a beautiful way and was a fabulous start to the Mardi Gras season. Congratulations once again Randwick City Council on a wonderful event, which we are already looking forward to next year.

#### **CLARENCE COMMUNITY PRE-SCHOOL OPENS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I recently drove the Summerland Way to Grafton to officially open the Clarence Community Pre-School, a beautifully renovated premises on the corner of Turf and Hoof streets with outdoor playground, food preparation area, laundry and staff room. Clarence Valley Childhood Services Association Incorporated has long campaigned for a permanent pre-school to replace temporary locations and I congratulate its CEO Cristie Harris and volunteer Committee on their perseverance. I was representing NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning Prue Car as the NSW Government awarded funding of \$431,755 through the Start Strong Capital Works grant program towards the build. CCSA Inc made a co-contribution of about \$100,000. Joining us were State Member for Clarence Richie Williamson, Clarence Community Pre-School Director Megan Douch, NSW Education's Executive Director Projects and Local Operations Joe Parsons, children and their parents and caregivers. Clarence Community Pre-School, which has 48 enrolments, has service approval to welcome 20 children a day from 3 years and up. The pre-schoolers present delivered an excellent Acknowledgement of Country and enjoyed tucking into cake after our ribbon cutting. A shout-out to students from nearby St Mary's Primary School who came with their teachers to celebrate.

#### **KYOGLE READERS AND WRITERS INCORPORATED**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I wish to commend the great work of Kyogle Readers and Writers [KRaW] Incorporated, a community-based, not-for-profit organisation that promotes the written and spoken word, in all its expressions and forms within its rural setting. Co-convenors Sue Page and Kevin Markwell and their committee aim to enhance, diversify and build upon the cultural life of the Kyogle district; actively seek to partner with First Nations people; and support all levels of writers, across all genres and styles. KRaW has established a solid reputation for delivering high quality literary events such as two Kyogle Writers festivals (2021 and 2022), Literary Allsorts (2023) and Kyogle Readers and Writers Festival (2024) as well as a series of stand-alone events involving conversations with outstanding authors. KRaW has funded three writers in residence across the four years of their existence. KRaW aims to offer opportunities for primary and secondary school students. An innovative creative writing program has been run in conjunction with each the festivals that has involved primary schools throughout the Kyogle LGA. In addition, a secondary schools event, The Power of Words, last year attracted over 300 students from six secondary schools from within 50 kilometres from Kyogle.

#### **NEW BOARD FOR FRIENDS OF LISMORE REGIONAL GALLERY**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I wish to warmly congratulate my friend Susan Conroy who will lead a new-look Board of Friends of Lismore Regional Gallery into 2025. The new board includes Susan as President, Deepak Khuller (Secretary), Ross Davies (Treasurer) and general members Nathan Jenkins and Barbara Somerville. There are three more positions to be filled; Vice President and two more general members. In the Friends' latest newsletter, Susan thanked outgoing members Ron Dowell, Chris Lego, Swerve and Carmel

Warnock for their contributions. I would like to add my thanks as well. Commenting on last year's official reopening, the new President applauded Director Ashleigh Ralph and her team for all the hard work that goes into renovating a flood-affected building, bedding in new staff, moving offices, hosting exhibitions and artist talks in a pop-up gallery space, applying for and acquitting huge grants, while developing new exhibition and public programs. She also acknowledged local, state and federal funding that has enabled the gallery to reopen, and in a nice gesture, thanked me for my advocacy for the arts and wider Lismore community since the floods. I wish Friends of the Lismore Regional Gallery success for the year ahead.

#### NEW INTERNS

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—I'd like to welcome to the Northern Rivers 39 new medical interns who have joined the Northern NSW Local Health District. Many of these junior doctors are based at the new Tweed Valley Hospital and are required to complete a supervised year of practice to become independent practitioners. They will work across different specialties during their internship, including surgery, medicine and emergency medicine. Following this, the junior doctors then receive two-year contracts to rotate between metropolitan, regional, rural and remote hospitals to ensure broad experience. Thank you to the interns for choosing healthcare as your profession and for joining the Northern NSW Local Health District workforce.

#### CABARITA BEACH POTTSVILLE BEACH LIONS CLUB TVH DONATIONS

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—The wonderful members of the Cabarita Beach Pottsville Beach Lions Club have generously donated \$7500 to the Tweed Valley Hospital for three state-of-the-art monitors and stands. These monitors will enable continuous monitoring of blood oxygen levels for post-operative patients, providing vital information about oxygen saturation to ensure patients' safety during recovery. Thank you to the Cabarita Beach Pottsville Beach Lions Club for making this donation possible and for your unwavering commitment to improving health care in the Tweed.

#### KINGSCLIFF PICKLEBALL

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—Kingscliff Pickleball Club has a new home at Kingscliff High School, allowing the Club's 30-plus members to continue playing this quickly growing sport close to home. The school has opened its hall to players to utilise the existing three indoor badminton courts which are perfectly suited for pickleball. Pickleball is a popular sport in the Tweed and I'm pleased the Kingscliff Club has found a new, all-weather venue, after noise concerns prevented play at the Kingscliff tennis courts. Thank you to Kingscliff High School and Kingscliff Pickleball Club for your efforts in securing this new location in Kingscliff.

#### MAITLAND SENIOR AND LITTLE ATHLETICS CLUB

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I congratulate the athletes of Maitland Senior & Little Athletics Club for their outstanding achievements at the 2025 NSW Country Championships, held at their home track, the Maitland Regional Athletics Centre. Competing against 85 clubs, Maitland finished an impressive fourth in the overall club points tally—a testament to the dedication, hard work, and talent of the 62 athletes who proudly represented their community. Despite battling strong winds, heavy rain, and humidity, these athletes delivered incredible performances, securing 17 gold, 15 silver, and 17 bronze medals across a range of events. Special recognition goes to Zachary West for his triple gold in the U-14 800m, 1500m, and 3000m, and Jaylah Widders, who claimed gold in the 10 years girls 200m alongside silver in the 100m and 400m. Maitland's relay teams also shone, with the U-12 girls, U-12 boys, and U-16 boys all securing gold medals. This event showcased the exceptional talent within our region, and I commend these athletes, their coaches, families, and volunteers for their dedication to athletics. Maitland's sporting future is incredibly bright!

#### DARREN FARRELLY

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Darren Farrelly, was a much-loved member of the Maitland community, known for his larrikin spirit and generous heart. Darren left an enduring impact not only on those who knew him personally but also through the business he built—Farrelly Construction Services [FCS]. At the age of 15 Darren began his career as a boilermaker, securing an apprenticeship at BHP Newcastle. Years later, he would become a mentor to many in the industry, known for his ability to lead, support, and uplift those around him. His passion for his work was only matched by his deep care for people, always championing the underdog and forging strong relationships through trust and integrity. Though Darren lost his battle with melanoma in 2023, his vision continues to thrive. FCS recently moved into a brand-new, purpose-built facility in Rutherford—a dream Darren had been working towards before his passing. His life partner Sheree Dalton, his daughters Sydnee and Paige, and his family and colleagues are ensuring that his legacy endures, with FCS continuing to provide opportunities and stability to workers across NSW and Queensland. Darren's impact will never be forgotten. His generosity, resilience, and vision will inspire many for years to come.

### 163RD MAITLAND SHOW, 2025

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—It was a pleasure to attend and see first-hand the outstanding success of the 163rd Maitland Show, held at the Maitland Showground this month. The theme of this year's event was "Love Our Show," and the Maitland community responded with over 25,000 people, affirming their affection for this annual event by attending. This year's show was a vibrant blend of thrilling rodeo entertainment, engaging agricultural competitions, and creative displays in art, photography, handicraft, cooking, livestock, floral, and more. The rodeo saw a massive increase in entrants, which was seen across the varied events. I commend all the entrants who entered the many competitions. You made the diverse spectacle which was enjoyed by everyone. I commend the tireless efforts of President Margaret Enright and her team of volunteers, staff, and organisers, whose hard work ensured every detail was executed flawlessly—a sentiment echoed by Showground Manager Brett Gleeson, who called it the best show he's witnessed in his five years. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to this triumph. Congratulations Maitland on the community pride that made the 163rd Maitland Show a resounding success.

### TARONGA ZOO FAREWELLS ICONIC RESIDENTS

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Next month will mark a bitter-sweet milestone for Mosman's Taronga Zoo, as it bids farewell to two of its beloved residents, Tang Mo and Pak Boon. The pair mark the last two elephants at Taronga, which has housed elephants for over 100 years. Starting this Saturday, Taronga will be holding farewell "ele-brations", complete with elephant crafts, zookeeper talks, Thai food, and a farewell message wall. Tang Mo and Pak Boon will be relocating to their new home in South Australia's Monarto Safari Park. After spending over 20 years at Taronga, these two have become cherished members of the zoo family and will be missed by staff and visitors alike. Their relocation will strengthen conservation efforts by expanding the Monarto herd, one of the largest in the Southern Hemisphere. Taronga Zoo's international success is thanks to a huge team of fantastic individuals, and I acknowledge everyone behind this thoughtful transition. I especially commend Exotics Manager, Mandy Everett and the dedicated zookeepers behind the elephants' transition. As Taronga prepares to say goodbye, I thank Tang Mo and Pak Boon for the joy they've brought to my community and wish them all the best in their new home.

### BLUE-RINGED OCTOPUSES IN BALMORAL

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker Balmoral is loved by locals for its calm, warm waters and stunning sunsets, but this Summer it has been hit by waves of bluebottles and now an influx of blue-ringed octopuses, one of the world's most venomous creatures. Mosman local Jaun Paul Kalman, also known as JP, was recently bitten by a blue-ringed octopus while wading in waist-deep water at Balmoral. JP was rushed to Royal North Shore Hospital after his body went into paralysis. He was placed into an induced coma for 20 hours, and after being discharged, he suffered another paralysis attack, requiring a second round of treatment from the hospital. Thankfully, JP is now recovering well and enjoying life with renewed vigour, thanks to the tireless efforts of the dedicated medical staff at Royal North Shore Hospital. I want to recognise the exceptional team at the hospital for saving JP's life, and I also want to thank JP for bravely and openly sharing his experience, raising awareness in our community about these extremely dangerous marine animals.

### BEAUTY POINT TALENTS

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I want to acknowledge the outstanding talent on display at Beauty Point Public School across disciplines such as dance, music, and drama. At the close of Term 4 last year, Beauty Point hosted its annual Talent Show, which showcased the creativity and hard work of students from all year groups and across multiple disciplines. Special recognition is due to the Stage 3 leaders, who brought the school together through activities like singing Christmas carols and facilitating games during breaks. I warmly congratulate the winners and runners-up of the 2024 Talent Show, K-2 winner Livvy and runner-up Dash, and 3-6 winner Miranda and runner-up Victoria. The talent at Beauty Point Public School does not just extend to their talent show, it is also on display out of school hours. I want to commend year 1 student Hillary for her remarkable achievements in the Get the Beat dance competition. Hillary competed in the Under 6 age group, where she earned first and second place in her categories – an exceptional accomplishment. Congratulations Hillary. I acknowledge the fantastic sense of community at Beauty Point, and recognise the hard work put in by parents, teachers and staff in nurturing these young talents.

### ST JOHN AMBULANCE – BLACKTOWN DIVISION

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was an honour to attend the St John Ambulance (NSW) Blacktown City Cadet Division Ceremony on 2nd February 2025. The Blacktown City Cadet Division is empowering young people in our community. Equipping them with skills and confidence to save lives, St John is helping foster resilient, community-minded leaders. Our Cadets and Juniors spend hours volunteering and learning

skills, to ensure the safety and enjoyment of our families at community events. During the Ceremony, I was impressed to hear that Cadets had dedicated over 170 hours to community service. I commend all our Cadets and Juniors on their service and dedication. In particular, I congratulate Punyasloka Adavala, Cadet of the Year Isobel Williams, Junior of the Year, and Ethan King, Preliminary Cadet of the Year. I also recognise the fantastic achievements of Natalie Nguyen, Abbey Edwards, Pragati Nara, and Zoe Bradbury who received the Duty Award, Encouragement Award, Leadership Award, and Most Improved Award respectively. Thank you to Superintendent Kyla Young MStJ, 2IC Lorna Jenkins MStJ, Joshua Andrijich, Operations and Logistics Officer, and the Blacktown City Division for supporting our Juniors and Cadets. Thank you again to our Cadets and Juniors for their commitment.

#### **MARTHA JABOUR, OAM**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to Martha Jabour OAM, who was named NSW Local Hero at the 2025 Australian of the Year Awards. Martha established the Homicide Victims Support Group [HVSG] in 1993 to care for families and friends of homicide victims. Today, the HVSG provides life-changing counselling, support and referrals to 4,200 members. In 2013, Martha developed a vision for a world-first trauma recovery facility. With her vast experience in grief, trauma, strategic planning and crisis management, Martha designed a centre tailored to meet the needs of families in its care. Her vision inspired many, and as a result, Grace's Place opened in 2023. A loyal friend for decades, and a tremendous community advocate for even longer, Martha gives more than her all. She is a force and a pillar of strength. Martha tackles situations that would leave others lost for words. She not only finds the words, but offers meaningful support during life's most shattering challenges. With genuine understanding and a listen-first approach, Martha leads representative solutions. I have no doubt that Martha's empathy and fierce determination will inspire further improvements for victims in NSW. Congratulations Martha and thank you for your selfless determination and care for our community.

#### **ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH - ARMENIAN COMMUNITY LAW SERVICE**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Monday 10th February, our local Armenian community hosted judicial officers and legal practitioners to celebrate the commencement of the 2025 Law Term, at the Armenian Apostolic Church of the Holy Resurrection, Chatswood. The Armenian Community Law Service is a traditional prayer service which marks the beginning of the legal year. This inaugural service follows historic law term commencement services hosted by other religious institutions throughout New South Wales, including the annual Red Mass, which has been held at St Mary's Cathedral since 1931, and the Jewish Community Law Service, which has been held at The Great Synagogue since 1956. This service is the Armenian community's tribute to those who ensure that we are governed by law, fairness and justice. More than 150 guests witnessed the procession of Judges, Barristers and other legal professionals, led by the Hon. Andrew Bell, Chief Justice of New South Wales. My heartfelt thanks go out to His Eminence Archbishop Haigazoun Najarian, Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Australia and New Zealand, Michael Kolokossian, Executive Director, Armenian National Committee of Australia, and to all our dedicated Armenian-Australians community for a moving service and wonderful hospitality.

#### **KEN THORNETT 2024**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—The Parramatta Eels hosted the Ken Thornett Medal Awards Evening at CommBank Stadium on Tuesday 10 September 2024, in the heart of the Parramatta Electorate and I was thrilled to attend. The Ken Thornett Medal is awarded to the Parramatta Eels NRL Player of the Year, honouring the memory of Ken Thornett, legendary Parramatta Eels fullback. It was a wonderful night, celebrating the achievements of the mighty Parramatta Eels acknowledging standout players and supporters. Congratulations to Reagan Campbell-Gillard, who won this prestigious medal for his dedication and effort in every game whilst proudly wearing the Parramatta Eels colours. Whilst his time with the Eels might now be over, he will be fondly remembered in Parramatta Eels history. I would also like to congratulate Clinton Gutherson, Shaun Lane, Blaise Talagi, Brock Parker, Dan Keir, Saxon Pryke, Teancum Brown, and Don Musson for their awards. Thank you to Parramatta Eels CEO Jim Sarantinos, Chairman Sean McElduff, the Board, staff and of course, the Parramatta Eels players for the joy you bring Eels supporters. This was a fitting celebration of every member of the team. I wish the Parramatta Eels all the best for a strong 2025 season and beyond.

#### **MEDAL OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA - OAM – MRS KATHLEEN GUERIN**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—The Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] is one of the highest honours awarded to individuals who have made significant contributions to their community and country. It is part of the Australian Honours System, established to recognise outstanding achievements across various fields, including community service, the arts and public service. The OAM acknowledges the dedication, hard work and positive impact of individuals who have made a difference in the lives of others. It is with great pride and admiration that we celebrate Mrs Kathleen Guerin, a Parramatta local, whose exceptional dedication and

contributions have earned her the prestigious Medal of the Order of Australia. Kathleen has long been a pillar of our community, exemplifying the values of service, leadership and commitment. Through her outstanding service to Catholic Secondary Education and her years as the Principal at Our Lady of Mercy College, she has empowered and inspired many. This recognition is a testament to the profound influence Kathleen has had in enabling a more compassionate, inclusive and thriving community. Congratulations, to Kathleen on receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia. Your remarkable achievements are an inspiration to us all.

#### **DEDICATION TO STEVEN TOUGHER - NSW AMBULANCE HQ**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—Steve Tougher, was a brave NSW Ambulance Paramedic who lost his life whilst on duty in Campbelltown on 14 April 2023. The Steven Tougher Education Room was dedicated to Steve's bravery at the opening of the NSW Ambulance Education Centre on 12 September 2024, at the NSW Ambulance State Operations Centre in Sydney Olympic Park. I was honoured to attend to meet Steve's beautiful family, Jeff, Jillian, Jess and Madison Tougher alongside the Minister for Health, NSW Ambulance Chief Executive Dr Dominic Morgan ASM, and Health Infrastructure Acting Executive Director Western Region Marcos Moscos. This state-of-the-art centre, where paramedic interns undergo training and qualified paramedics continue their professional development, utilises the best technology such as simulation rooms, wet labs, and an ambulance vehicle shell to ensure training reflects as closely as possible the realities of the job. Steve's selfless dedication to serve and commitment to the job is rightfully honoured and recognised with the Education Room at NSW Ambulance HQ, that I am proud to say is in the Parramatta Electorate. May Steve's memory graciously live on through the actions of the present and future paramedics that pass through his room.

#### **PEOPLES' EQUALITY AND DEMOCRATIC PARTY**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I would like to acknowledge Ebru Gunay and Mehmet Rustu Tiryaki, MPs from the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) – the third largest party in the Turkish parliament – who have been visiting Australia to strengthen our friendship with the Kurdish community. I was lucky to meet with them last week as part of their delegation to the NSW Parliament. Our distinguished guests shared their perspectives on Kurdish rights and other pressing issues in the region. It was so good to hear their views and learn more about what we can all do to help advance Kurdish rights here in Australia and around the world. The Greens have always shared the core values underpinning the Kurdish fight for liberation, especially those of social justice, equality, peace and democracy. We are proud to stand in solidarity with Kurds everywhere. Thank you to all who joined us for a productive discussion in the NSW Parliament, including members of the Australian Kurdish Federation, Councillor Ismet Tastan, Baran Sogut, and Co-Chairs Carolin Axtarn and Bruska Aeiveri.

#### **SKID ROW RADIO**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House the contribution of Skid Row Radio, an iconic community radio station based in Sydney's Inner West, which has been broadcasting for over 40 years. As one of Sydney's longest-running community radio stations, Skid Row Radio provides a platform for diverse voices, stories, and music often overlooked by mainstream media. The station is run by dedicated volunteers and serves as a hub for programming that foregrounds First Nations and multicultural perspectives. Over four decades of operation, Skid Row has supported emerging artists and championed local community initiatives. Its commitment to equity and creativity has made it an important part of the culture and 'voice' of the Inner West. I congratulate Skid Row Radio on its enduring success and thank all those involved for their tireless efforts in enriching Sydney's cultural landscape. I particularly thank the Chair of the station's Board Lima Pen, Secretary Lauren Booker, Treasurer Nicola Joseph and Directors Dorothy Tuagalu, Simeon Georgievski, Magdalene Konneh, Binowee Bayles, Paul Kelly, Graham Davis King. I thank also their many talented staff, broadcasters and volunteers.

#### **WHOS**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I recognise the important community work of We Help Ourselves [WHOS] in Lilyfield, an organisation that supports those struggling with substance dependence to transform their own lives. For over 50 years, WHOS has empowered vulnerable members of our community and provided them with autonomy and dignity in their care and recovery. Through placing value on the insights of those who have lived through the experience of addiction, WHOS has been able to empower people throughout our community and across the country. I was very honoured to be able to give support to this vital organisation, even in a small way, by helping them to secure new outdoor furniture through the Community Building Partnership grants program. I am delighted to have been able to visit their facilities to see this upgrade and I know that the tables are being put to good use. I thank Garth Popple, the Executive director of WHOS, for his invaluable contribution to our community and extend my thanks to all the wonderful staff, members and volunteers of We Help Ourselves who do such amazing work.

**OBERON COMMUNITY EVENT OF THE YEAR OBERON TIGERS CAN ASSIST ROUND**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—I Congratulate the Oberon Tigers achievement on being the recipients of the Oberon 2025 Community Event of the Year. Each year the Oberon Tigers Junior and Senior League combine to hold a Can Assist Round as a fundraising event in support of those in the community who are battling cancer. Now in its 14th year the event raised over \$65 thousand dollars in 2024 – an extraordinary achievement which broke all other previous fundraising events. This is particularly an outstanding achievement in a small regional community and the support and contribution to those in need is to be applauded. I am pleased to recognise the Oberon Tigers and their outstanding endeavours on behalf of their community and the recognition they have been given in staging the Oberon Community Event of the Year.

**OBERON SPORTS TEAM OF THE YEAR OBERON UNITED SOCCER CLUB SENIOR WOMEN'S TEAM**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—I Congratulate the Oberon United Soccer Club Senior Women's Team on the acknowledgement given them as the Oberon Sports Team of the Year – 2025. Winners of the Women's 3rd Division Competition in 2024 this group of women came together and remained undefeated all season. Through their commitment and dedication to their sport over many years the group is built on a framework of teamwork and friendship - a combination which has contributed to their ultimate success. Their active and ongoing participation is a reflection of the highest level of contribution to their sport and these ladies are an inspiration to all members of the soccer club and to the community. Congratulations to the Oberon United Soccer Clubs Senior Women's Team as the 2025 Oberon Sports Team of the Year.

**OBERON MEN'S SHED VOLUNTEER GROUP OF THE YEAR**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—I Congratulate the Members of the Oberon Men's Shed on being awarded the Volunteer Group of the Year Award at the Oberon Australia Day Ceremony. Established in 2009 the organisation has grown and been embraced as a vital hub for men in the Oberon Community. Hosting a consistent membership of up to 30 men ranging in ages from 18 – 88 and embracing peoples from diverse backgrounds such as professionals, retirees and aged care residents. The Shed affords social interaction, creative pursuits and support networks with a hands-on approach to projects including repair jobs, furniture and tool sales and fundraising raffles. Members thrive due to the integral role the Shed plays in addressing men's health and well being through friendship and activities and it is a safe place for all men living in Oberon and the surrounding areas. I commend the activities and role of the Oberon Men's Shed and their dedication in make their community a better place to live in. Congratulations to the Oberon Men's Shed – the Volunteer Group of the Year.

**GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—I want to thank Georges River Life Care, an organisation making a real impact across our community. Supporting people in need, Georges River Life Care operates across several areas, including my community of East Hills and the wider Canterbury-Bankstown Local Government Area. Dedicated to creating pathways towards safety and financial security, the organisation empowers individuals and families to achieve stability and independence. Through guidance and support, they help people build better futures and reach their full potential. Under the leadership of CEO Karen Power, Georges River Life Care provide essential services to families and individuals facing hardship, including community relief, and support for families and those affected by domestic violence. Their work is crucial in ensuring that people receive the help they need when they need it most. I also want to acknowledge the good work of Sabrina le Gras, volunteers Hazel Tong, Clare Tapp and countless others. Thank you to everyone at Georges River Life Care for the difference you make in our community.

**VALE JOY LEWIS**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—I was saddened to hear of the recent passing of Joy Lewis, a much-loved member of Marrickville Heritage Society. Joy grew up in Marrickville, and attended Marrickville West Public School. She became one of the top students at the Metropolitan College and a newspaper article in 1940 described her as 'Sydney's fastest typist' and the only woman in Australia holding a diploma of speech therapy. Joy's proficiency as a typist was recognised in the Commonwealth Court Reporting Branch where she was held in high regard by colleagues and judges. Joy was passionate about music, took lessons at the conservatorium, and was the organist for many years at Marrickville Church of Christ. As an accomplished pianist, she accompanied former Metropolitan College student Joan Sutherland in recitals, long before she Joan became a household name. Also a theatre lover, Joy immersed herself in dramatic art studies and joined Norman McVicker's Pocket Playhouse in Sydenham where she acted, as well as working tirelessly behind the scenes. Joy was a member of Marrickville Heritage Society for over 35 years. Joy passed away aged 105, after living a full and exciting life. Vale Joy Lewis.

### VALE JOHN BUTCHER

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—The recent passing of Mr John Butcher is a monumental loss for our community. Formerly a Catholic priest in Redfern, John supported indigenous rights campaigns and other community activism until he left the church in the seventies. Over the following decades of his life, he was dedicated to campaigning for peace, social justice, and the environment. I first met John through his work as President of the Cook's River Valley Association. John had a special affinity for the river, always championing its protection and rehabilitation. He also helped establish Marrickville Peace Park at Richardson's, a beautiful spot overlooking the river. Ongoing events such as Candles on the River and the Sorry Day Walk in Marrickville, are proof that while he's no longer with us, John's activism continues. My thoughts are with John's partner Julie, his son Ben, Ben's partner Sylvie, and his brother and sister Peter and Marie. Thank you, John, for your lifelong work that has inspired so many local activists to continue your work today.

### JUDITH BULLIVANT

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government)**—I rise to recognise Judith Bullivant, the dedicated Vice President of the Mascot Seniors Centre and an unwavering pillar of the local Mascot Seniors community. At 83 years young, Judith's energy and commitment remain as strong as ever. She is often times the first friendly face many see when they walk through the centre's doors, greeting participants with warmth and ensuring everyone feels welcome. Beyond her role in creating a vibrant social atmosphere, Judith also takes on the important responsibility of handling the centre's receipts, helping to keep the organisation running smoothly. Her dedication is a shining example of the invaluable role volunteers play in fostering a sense of belonging, connection, and support for seniors in Mascot. Her efforts ensure that the centre remains a thriving hub where seniors can stay active, engaged, and social. I sincerely thank Judith for her years of service and the difference she continues to make in so many lives.

### JANET BEETLES

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government)**—I rise to acknowledge Janet Beetles, the dedicated librarian of the Mascot Seniors Centre, whose work enriches the lives of local seniors in ways that often go unnoticed. A library is more than just a collection of books—it is a place of discovery, reflection, and connection. Thanks to Janet's keen interest and meticulous organisational skills, the centre's on-site library remains a valuable resource for members looking to stimulate their minds or explore new worlds through literature, expand their knowledge, or simply enjoy a quiet moment with a good book. Beyond her role in the library, Janet is also a regular Bingo caller at the centre, bringing energy and enthusiasm to an activity that so many players look forward to. Her warmth and generosity ensure that every session is lively and inclusive, reinforcing the sense of community that makes Mascot Seniors such a special place. Janet's passion and dedication make the centre a richer, more engaging place for all who visit. I thank her for her contributions to Mascot Seniors.

### LAURIE BROWN

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government)**—I rise to recognise Laurie Brown for her service as a dedicated committee member of the Mascot Seniors Centre. Community organisations like the Mascot Seniors Centre do not run themselves—they rely on the dedication, hard work, and generosity of volunteers like Laurie. Laurie takes on many responsibilities that keep the centre running smoothly. She is not only a Committee Member but also the primary organiser of the centre's shopping needs, ensuring that supplies are always on hand. She also calls Bingo on a regular basis, bringing fun and camaraderie to a much-loved activity among the members. Outside the centre, Laurie juggles visiting her husband in a Botany nursing home while always making time for family and friends. Her selflessness embodies the best of our community spirit. I extend my sincere thanks to Laurie for her contributions, her commitment to the wellbeing of our seniors, and her role in strengthening the fabric of our local community.

### EMMA DIETERS

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—I want to recognise the inspiring contribution made by Emma Dieters to the paraplegic surfing community in Pittwater. Emma is the founder of the Northern Beaches Para Surfer Boardriders club [NBPSB], which is dedicated to providing accessibility, equipment, and building a community for para surfers by empowering them through activities and competition. Emma lives with Brown-Séquard syndrome and experienced a surgical incident that meant what was supposed to be a short rehabilitation period has been ongoing for over four years. Emma's perseverance and passion led her back to the water and then through multiple surfing competitions – domestic and international – eventually being named as Female Para Surfer of the Year in 2023 at the Australian Surfing Awards. With the support of Northern Beaches Boardriders, Emma launched NBPSB in mid-2023 and helps other members of the community in similar

situations. Emma's standalone club which meets at Mona Vale Beach, has quickly grown into an incredibly valuable community-centred space for individuals on similar paths back to the water.

#### **QUEEN ESTER – NIKO STYR AND HILA ZABARI**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—Niko Styr and Hila Zabari, originally from the same community in Israel and now residents of Pittwater, opened the first Queen Ester café in Newport in 2021. From this tiny 15-square-metre space, they serve over 300 customers a day with delicious traditional Israeli food that is 100% fresh and made daily on the premises. Known for their strong sense of community, they consider customers as family, creating a warm, welcoming atmosphere. In 2023, they expanded by opening a second location in Mona Vale which exudes the same values. The Pittwater community deeply appreciates Niko and Hila for their hard work, dedication, and consistently outstanding food. Their commitment to quality and the vibrant energy they bring to each meal has made their cafés a beloved part of the area. They are the chief vibe creators of Robertson Road. Niko and Hila's passion for sharing their culture through food has filled both stomachs and hearts, making their cafés cherished gathering spots. France has their famous falafels in the Marais, Australia has the famous Queen Ester falafels. We are grateful for all they do and look forward to enjoying their wonderful creations for years to come.

#### **THE PITTWATER-NARRABEEN SUPPORT GROUP**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—I'd like to acknowledge the unwavering support of the family members and carers that make up the Pittwater-Narrabeen Parkinson's Support Group who support loved ones that live with Parkinson's. For at least 32 years a variety of loving, compassionate and empathetic relatives and carers have shown up to support seniors living with Parkinson's, as well as support each other. With 150 members on record, the contributions of this support group to its surrounding community are far-reaching. Friendly and compassionate, this group provides emotional support through formal meetings with guest speakers, informal morning teas and a monthly carer's coffee. The group's collective wisdom being one of its most valuable assets, it provides information to people and families who don't know where to go after diagnosis, as well as much needed solidarity and comfort in an uncertain future.

#### **LUNAR NEW YEAR AND CHERRYBROOK CHINESE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION**

**Mr JAMES WALLACE (Hornsby)**—Happy Lunar New Year to the wonderful Chinese community in my electorate. I recently joined members of the Cherrybrook Chinese Community Association to celebrate Chinese New Year. The Association was established in 1989 to bring together the all-ready significant Chinese community in the area. That community has continued to grow in the 35 years since then and plays a vibrant role in life in Cherrybrook. One of the most important programs that the Association runs is an English school for its members. Those classes play a valuable role helping some of its older members to master the language and, in doing so, to build their connection with Australia. Their highly competitive table tennis and badminton competitions are also much-loved! I want to particularly acknowledge President Kwok Ling Chau, Vice-President and Treasurer Jenny Chu, Vice-President Polly Chan, and Secretary James Fong, along with other members of the Management Committee Brenda Chan, Andrew Lee, Francis Yeung, Sam Lee, and Philip Tsang. As well as other past Presidents – Loke Cheong Wong, Yue-yan Chan, James Chang, Patrick Ho, Michael Teh, and Ken Yap. I'm looking forward to continue connecting with the members of this excellent association.

#### **VALE JEMMA JUCKES**

**Mr JAMES WALLACE (Hornsby)**—Jemma passed away late last year after fighting stage 4 non-small cell lung cancer with an EGFR exon20 mutation - an incredibly rare and aggressive form. To Jemma's family and friends, and her whole community, I share my sincerest condolences. But while Jemma's cancer ultimately took her life, it did not define her. Jemma was a treasured member of the Glenorie community within the Hornsby electorate. As the owner of the Glenorie Pizzeria for almost a decade, Jemma became well-known and well-loved. Her warmth and kindness knew no bounds. Jemma's family, Tiernan Leahy and the Glenorie Pizzeria led community efforts to raise funds to support Jemma's access to treatment. They also organised the "Do It for Jem" community runs in Glenorie that brought together hundreds each weekend to show their support for Jemma. Jemma left a legacy with her family, friends, and the Glenorie community. In her honour, her family are continuing to work closely with Rare Cancers Australia and the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse to support others who are facing their own ongoing battles with rare cancers.

#### **COMMUNITY BANK LINDFIELD GRANT RECIPIENTS**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—Community Bank Lindfield and Districts has recently announced the recipients of its 21st birthday grants program. Community Bank Lindfield and Districts, as Bendigo Bank together with Ku-ring-gai Financial Services Limited, has long been a supporter of the community. This year, they invested \$210,645 to support 18 community projects, all of which will make a significant difference to the organisations

receiving these grants within the Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby area. I congratulate Community Bank Lindfield's grant recipients Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Community Transport, St John's Ambulance Australia (NSW), the NORTH Foundation, Challenge North Shore Limited, Epilepsy Action Australia, Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment [FOKE], Hornsby Woodworking Men's Shed, Killara West Rugby Union Football Club, Ku-ring-gai Netball Association All Abilities Netball Program, KYDS Youth Development Service, Marine Rescue NSW, Men's Kitchen in Ku-ring-gai, Ripple Learning Ltd, Streetwork, The Dish of St John's, 1st Lindfield Scouts, Trish Multiple Sclerosis Research Foundation, and The Eryldene Trust. I recognise Sharon Franke, the Community Development Manager for all her ongoing work supporting our community. It gives me pride to recognise and acknowledge them in the Parliament of NSW.

#### **BUSINESS NORTHERN BEACHES**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—Business Northern Beaches, previously known as the Warringah Chamber of Commerce, was established as means for local businesses to connect with each other and to provide direct communications with all levels of government. I have been pleased to attend several events, and I look forward to attending many more in the future. Business networks play a vital role in supporting local economic development and, with its philosophy of "Know You, Trust You, Do Business With You". I commend them for their regular networking functions, events, forums and educational workshops that help bring people together. I recognise Business Northern Beaches President Samantha King and the executive team Jack McCann, Debra Fraser, Mark Sing and Patricia Villella. Thank you for all the work that you do.

#### **CHATSWOOD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—The Chatswood Chamber of Commerce has been a focal point for the successful growth of local businesses since its establishment 104 years ago in 1921. I have been pleased to attend several events, and I look forward to attending many more in the future. The Chamber's vision is to be the leading voice and driving force for business success in Sydney's north shore, with a strong purpose of uniting businesses and professionals, to advocate for government policies which support economic growth and to provide platforms for collaboration and business networking and resources and programs to help businesses succeed. I commend them for their regular networking functions, events, forums and educational workshops that help bring people together. I recognise President Warwick Andison and the committee Carol Chen, Panbo Ye, Myles Docker, Courtney Owings, Warren Stevens, Kelly Yeung, Peter Benjafield and Lara Iskenderian. Thank you for all your work.

#### **NORTHERN BEACHES WOMEN'S SHELTER ACHIEVES ASES ACCREDITATION**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—I rise to extend my heartfelt congratulations the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter which has officially attained Australian Service Excellence Standards [ASES] accreditation. Gaining ASES accreditation is a significant accomplishment which reinforces the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter's relentless drive to meet the needs of vulnerable women and children experiencing homelessness. This accreditation will ensure that the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter can continue to operate at the highest national standard, allowing it to grow independently, expand its reach and enhance its support systems. There is no doubt in my mind that this achievement is the direct result of the dedication and tireless efforts of the board, staff, and volunteers. Their work not only transforms lives but strengthens the entire Northern Beaches community. I am immensely proud to be the Patron of the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter and to support the life-altering work this remarkable organisation does for many in my community and across the State.

#### **NSW SURF LIFESAVERS NATIONAL MEDAL RECIPIENTS**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to acknowledge and congratulate a group of outstanding Surf Life Savers from my electorate of Manly who have been awarded the prestigious National Medal for their dedicated service to Surf Life Saving. First established in 1975 as a military recognition award, the National Medal is now one of Australia's most significant honours, recognising those in voluntary and government organisations who have demonstrated a long-term commitment to protecting lives and serving their communities. These recipients have devoted years of service to ensuring the safety of beachgoers, responding to emergencies, and upholding the proud tradition of Surf Life Saving on the Northern Beaches. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to: Allen Lakeman of Dee Why Surf Life Saving Club; Timothy Cuthbert, Michael Studden, and Robin Barham of Manly Surf Life Saving Club; Ian Johnston, Talia Field, Kevin Harris, Robert McNamara, and Garth Hickey of Queenscliff Surf Life Saving Club. Their dedication, skill, and selflessness embody the very best of our community, and I thank them for their service to the Manly area.

#### **CHRIS TURNBULL**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to recognise Chris Turnbull from Clontarf in my Electorate of Manly. Family man, adventurer, engineer and now Guinness World Record-breaker - to call Chris a

man of many talents would be an understatement. Last year, Chris made history after smashing the world record for the fastest run across Australia, covering 3,864 kilometres from Perth to Sydney in just 39 days, 8 hours, and 1 minute. Running from dawn to dusk and averaging more than two marathons per day, Chris surpassed the previous world record by four days, embracing family and friends as he crossed the finish line at Manly Beach. This epic achievement is a testament not only to his physical endurance but also to his exceptional mental resilience. His journey inspired many, with supporters and local running communities, including our very own Vipers Run Club following his progress and cheering him on. Chris' contributions to sport and our local community have been rightfully recognised, with Northern Beaches Council naming him the 2025 Sportsperson of the Year. In his achievements and in life, Chris embodies the true spirit of adventure and endurance, and I congratulate him on this outstanding accomplishment.

#### **GOLDEN OLDIES TRUCK CLUB**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to acknowledge the Golden Oldies Truck Club of Dubbo on their significant injection of funds into local community groups. On August 10 and 11, 2024, the Golden Oldies Tractor and Quilt Show took over the Dubbo Showground. From the tractor pull to the Grand Parade, along with the impressive display of trucks, buses, cars stationary engines and traction engines there was plenty to enjoy. The quilt show was also a crowd favourite, with visitors admiring the incredible talent and craftsmanship on display. The Club decided to donate to event proceeds to local charities and organisations, supporting their vital work within the community. On 2 February 2025 the committee hosted an afternoon tea, to present funds to the well deserving recipients, including, the Royal Flying Doctor Service, Can Assist, Orana Support Group, Dubbo Model Railway Club, Little Wings, Dubbo VRA, Dubbo District Concert Band and NALAG. I congratulate the Golden Oldies not only on their hard work and dedication in hosting such a successful event but also on their commitment to giving back to the local community.

#### **HARMAN FOUNDATION**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I wish to extend my gratitude to the Harman Foundation for hosting a fantastic event – the Style and Soul Summit on digital safety and scam awareness, which was held on 7 February at the Rebellion Room in Castle Hill. I thank co-founder Harinder Kaur OAM for her leadership in putting on this event, which was a testament to her holistic and proactive approach to addressing social issues. It was great to hear from a panel of experts, who gave time to educate us on the critical importance of Digital Safety and Scam Awareness. Alaka Sathapathy founder and CEO of Digiware, gave valuable insights from a digital marketing perspective; Manpreet Singh drew upon his expertise as the founder of AceBiz, an accounting firm focused on digital safety; while Frederick Tadiaman offered his perspective as CEO of Nueva, a next-generation cyber security provider to businesses of all sizes. The event was rounded off with a vibrant fashion show walk, drawing attention to the plight of those suffering from the effects of Domestic Violence, and a raffle to raise funds for the ongoing efforts of the foundations. My thanks again to all involved in making such a successful and engaging afternoon.

#### **HAWKESBURY REGIONAL MUSEUM**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the Hawkesbury Regional Museum. The team won an award in the 2024 IMAGinE Awards in the engagement category for their project of shared river stories. The community engagement project, titled Stories from the River Dyarubbin, includes 11 audio walks which share stories of the river. Narrated by Dharug guides, the stories are geared towards enhancing understanding and care for the river. The audio files include original music and are compiled by more than 80 contributors. The IMAGinE Awards are an initiative of Museums and Galleries of NSW, aiming to celebrate cultural resilience, creativity and dedication of various galleries and Aboriginal Cultural centres. Having a platform that enables this community engagement is so important, and I am thrilled to have Hawkesbury involved in the process. Congratulations to the Hawkesbury Regional Museum on their stellar efforts and achievements with this project. It is inspiring to hear that multiple contributors were able to collaborate and produce a project inclusive of important heritage and cultural aspects. It is also special to have the project so easily accessible to many community members in a meaningful way, despite using limited resources. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

#### **SCHEMBRAE'S AT KURRAJONG**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to acknowledge and congratulate Schembrae's at Kurrajong, a Mediterranean restaurant located in the heart of the Kurrajong Village. Schembrae's was awarded the 2024 Restaurant and Catering Award for Excellence for New South Wales in the category of European cuisine. Combining Mediterranean cuisine and local produce from the Hawkesbury food basin, Schembrae's offers an exquisite dining experience for the community. The restaurant strives to support the local community, offering a selection of locally crafted beers and wines. They also endeavour to cater for everyone,

offering a range of gluten free, dairy free and vegan meal options for patrons. Congratulations to Schembrae's at Kurrajong on receiving this award. Being selected among various entrants across the state is a special achievement and I applaud the efforts of this business in affording an authentic dining experience for residents of Hawkesbury. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

#### **2024 HSC CREATIVE ARTS SHOWCASE**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—A huge shout out to recent Hunter School of the Performing Arts graduates Bridget Ponman, Hannah Arkless and Jerra Macdonald for being selected to perform at the 2024 HSC Creative Arts Showcase later this month. Each year, a handful of graduates across NSW are recognised for their outstanding 2024 HSC creative arts works. Hannah has been invited to perform her major dance work at this year's Callback at the Seymour Centre, whilst Bridget and Jerra will showcase their music pieces at the Sydney Opera House for Encore. To be recognised within the top 166 2024 HSC creative art submissions is a huge achievement, and I wish these talented performers the best of luck for their upcoming performances!

#### **NEWCASTLE STUDENTS SELECTED FOR NSW 2025 ARTEXPRESS**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—A huge congratulations to recent HSC graduates Emily Lee, Ariel McMahon and Tahlia McIntosh for their selection for the prestigious 2025 ArtExpress Exhibition. Each year, ArtExpress showcases a selection of outstanding Visual Arts bodies of work from HSC students across NSW. Emily and Ariel from Merewether High School and Tahlia McIntosh from St Francis Xavier College were recognised in the top 229 bodies of work across NSW for their exceptional 2024 HSC Visual Art examination submissions. In addition to featuring at the Art Gallery of NSW, ArtExpress will exhibit across seven regional NSW galleries throughout the year. These three students are a shining example of Newcastle's thriving arts scene, and I can't wait to see their future creations!

#### **ENNIA JONES, 2025 NSW WOMAN OF THE YEAR FINALIST**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—I'd like to offer a huge congratulations to Ennia Jones, for being nominated as a finalist for the NSW Community Hero 2025 awards. A passionate advocate for water safety, Ennia founded A Splash of Colour Swimming Incorporated to address addresses mental, financial, and cultural barriers to swimming, for people from culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] communities. The not-for-profit swimming program aims to empower CALD communities across Newcastle with the skills and confidence to swim, reducing drowning risks and fostering a lifelong connection to swimming. Due to strong community demand, the program has expanded beyond Newcastle to other Hunter regions, including Lake Macquarie and Maitland. This transformative program has made a real impact to many in our community, and I commend Ennia's passion and commitment in ensuring all Novocastrians feel safer and more confident in the water.

#### **WYNDHAM COLLEGE SCHOOL LEADERS**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—Congratulations to the 2025 Wyndham College school captains! To be recognised and elected as a leader among your peers is an incredible achievement and you should all be immensely proud. In particular I congratulate School Captains Bryce Ayscough and Aiden Starr and Vice Captains Chelsea Hornjak and Ryan Mills. Under the leadership of your Principal Kristine MacPhail, I trust you'll make a great difference in the Wyndham College community. I look forward to hearing of your successes as the school year begins.

#### **2025 QUAKERS HILL HIGH SCHOOL LEADERS**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—Congratulations to the 2025 Quakers Hill High School captains! Being recognised and elected as a leader among your peers is a significant achievement, and you should all take immense pride in this honour. A special congratulations to School Captains Hayley Hawkes and Andrew Gonzales, as well as Vice Captains Stella Buttigieg and Isaac Mendez. With the guidance of your Principal, Jason White, I have no doubt you will make a lasting impact on the Quakers Hill High School community. Your school's dedication to creating a caring and supportive educational environment while shaping a bright and positive future sets the perfect foundation for your leadership. There is no better team to carry this important responsibility forward, and I am excited to see the impact you will make on your school community.

#### **WILLOUGHBY ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZEN OF THE YEAR – HEIDI KEY**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I acknowledge Heidi Key for being named Willoughby Environmental Citizen of the Year for 2025. This well-deserved recognition reflects her outstanding dedication to environmental conservation and community service. As secretary and membership coordinator of WEPA Heidi plays a vital role in advocating for and protecting our local environment. Her commitment extends beyond administration she has been a long-time bush carer and an integral part of various committees and advisory groups working tirelessly to

preserve and enhance our natural spaces. Her leadership and passion have made a lasting impact on the Willoughby community and I thank her for her ongoing contributions. Congratulations Heidi and keep up the great work.

#### **WILLOUGHBY YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR – REBECCA JU**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I recognise Rebecca Ju for being named Willoughby Young Citizen of the Year for 2025. This recognition is a testament to her outstanding dedication to volunteering and leadership in the community. Rebecca has made significant contributions to environmental and social causes and has also played a key role in developing a school recycling system that could introduce soft plastics fabrics e-waste compost and donation bins making a lasting impact on sustainability efforts. Her commitment to advocacy was further recognised when she was inducted into Amnesty International Australia's NSW Activism and Leadership Committee making her the youngest member ever. She is determined to inspire other young people to become involved in activism and take on leadership roles to address pressing social issues. Rebecca's passion to create change in her community and beyond are commendable. I congratulate her on this honour and look forward to seeing the continued impact of her work.

#### **MR DANIEL DREYFUS OAM**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I acknowledge Daniel Dreyfus OAM for his outstanding service to the Willoughby community through charitable organisations. As the founding director of the Australian Stockbrokers Foundation, Daniel has dedicated 27 years to running a charity that has raised and distributed over \$9.5 million to support various causes, with a strong focus on disadvantaged children. His leadership has made the foundation the largest donor to the Matthew Talbot Hostel over this period. The foundation operates with no paid staff, relying entirely on volunteers from the stockbroking industry, ensuring that 96% of funds raised go directly to those in need. The annual awards dinner, the largest gathering of stockbrokers each year, continues to generate vital support for important causes. Daniel's dedication and impact on the Willoughby community are truly commendable, and his Australia Day Honour is well deserved. I congratulate him on this outstanding achievement and thank him for his ongoing contributions.

#### **SYLVANIA PUBLIC SCHOOL PARLIAMENTARIANS**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the 2025 student leadership team of Sylvania 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 be professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in NSW Parliament to acknowledge the student Parliamentarians for 2025, namely Prime Minister Beatrice Albano, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Wellbeing Harry Peach, Minister for Arts and Environment Molly Miethke, Minister for Sport Daniel Apostolovski, Kookaburra House Captains Sofia Forero and Daniele Vitiello and Currawong House Captains Troy Kawiti and Carter Stickling. With the guidance of their incredible Principal, Jennifer Birch, 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 Sylvania Public school's motto of 'discover and endeavour'.

#### **TAREN POINT PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERS**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the 2025 student leadership team of Taren Point Public School on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud of. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape our community - enabling them to be professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in NSW Parliament to acknowledge Taren Point Public School's student leadership team for 2025, namely Captains Ahri Hayes and Nevaeh Lucadou-Wells and Vice Captains Aryana Emami-Pour and Ivy Nicol. With the guidance of their incredible Principal James Nobbs, 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 Taren Point Public School's motto of 'Pride of the Point'.

#### **MIRANDA PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the 2025 student leadership team of Miranda Public School on their appointment. Being 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 be professional leaders of the future. I acknowledge the student leaders for 2025, namely Captains Yamato Ku and Maho Yasuda, Vice Captains Sonny

Emery and Leila Alispahic, Prefects Leonard Light and Hunta Gallen and Sports Captains Matta Puna, Sara Jovanovic, Kaden Haeusler, Bella Gan, Dean Thompson, Ekaterina Simonova, Corey Wallace, Malik Robovic, Flynn Pollard, Melissa Wijesinghr, Eduardo Wanderley De Morais, Laurence Tesseyman, Mack Fetuunai, Alesia Karapetian, Karyka Nomoto and Sophie Jafar Salehi. With the guidance of Principal, Michael Duffy, 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 Miranda Public School's motto of "For the Good of All".

#### **MALCOLM JOHNSON**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I wish to acknowledge Malcolm Johnson, recipient of the 2025 Citizen of the Year Award at the Liverpool Australia Day celebrations. Malcolm has dedicated thousands of hours to the search for missing persons, demonstrating unwavering commitment and selflessness. His continuous pursuit of excellence is evident through his qualifications as a Lost Person Behaviour Instructor and a CASA-certified remote pilot. Malcolm's expertise is regularly utilised to support the community and assist not-for-profit organisations such as the Australian Civil Air Patrol. I commend Malcolm Johnson for his exceptional service and dedication, which has made a significant impact on the Liverpool community. His efforts embody the true spirit of volunteerism and community support. Congratulations, Malcolm, on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **ST GEORGE AND PRINCE THEODORE COMMUNITY HALL**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I recently had the pleasure of attending the opening of the St George and Prince Theodore Community Hall in Liverpool. As part of the new church built in the last few years, it was great to see so many familiar faces from the Coptic community in Liverpool celebrate such a wonderful community asset. This hall will serve as a vital hub for the Coptic community, fostering connection, faith, and cultural traditions for generations to come. I would like to congratulate His Grace Bishop Daniel and Father Anthony Morgan for their leadership of the Coptic Church community in Liverpool. Congratulations to everyone involved in bringing this community asset to life!

#### **LIZ JACKSON - LIBERATION LARDER**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise Liz Jackson for her outstanding service and leadership as President of Liberation Larder for the past 12 years. Under Liz's stewardship, Liberation Larder has continued its vital mission of rescuing food and providing meals to those in need in Byron Bay and beyond. Liz's dedication has been unwavering, ensuring that no one who sought help was turned away, despite being entirely self-funded and staffed entirely by volunteers. Throughout her tenure, Liz oversaw significant growth in the organisation, meeting the increasing demand for support, particularly from women with children and elderly women facing hardship. Her commitment to raising funds, coordinating volunteers, and securing food donations has helped sustain this essential service. Liz's contribution has left a lasting impact, and I thank her for giving her heart and soul to Liberation Larder. Her leadership has strengthened the spirit of generosity in our community, and we acknowledge her tireless work in the fight against food insecurity.

#### **MIKE GIDDING – BALLINA CROQUET CLUB**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—I rise to congratulate Mike Gidding of Ballina Croquet Club on his selection for the NSW State Team to compete in the prestigious Eire Cup in Adelaide this March. Mike's achievement is a testament to his skill, dedication and outstanding performance over the past year. Competing in Canberra at the CNSW AC 3 state event, Mike faced a highly competitive field, including a former Australian captain and several current state players. Despite the challenge of unfamiliar courts and a tough opening match, he persevered to reach the finals, securing his place in the NSW team. Ballina Croquet Club, established in 1936, has a proud history of competitive and social play and Mike's success adds to this legacy. His craft and ability are an inspiration to the local sporting community and I wish him and the NSW team the best as they defend their Eire Cup title.

#### **KRUE'S KRUIZE – TOCUMWAL**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today, I would like to recognise the incredible efforts of the organisers and participants of the fourth annual Can Assist Motley Krue Tocumwal Motorcycle Kruize. This fantastic event saw 40 riders and 15 patrons travel through Finley, Berrigan, Barooga, and back to Tocumwal, raising an impressive \$7,000 for Can Assist Tocumwal. These funds will go directly towards supporting local individuals undergoing cancer treatment, ensuring they receive vital assistance during difficult times. The success of the event is a testament to the generosity and community spirit of everyone involved. Special acknowledgment goes to Garry 'Garbo' Haberfield for his outstanding fundraising efforts, as well as Mark Prentice, who took home the award for best bike. The continued success of Krues Kruize demonstrates the power of local communities coming together for a worthy cause. Congratulations to all the

organisers, riders, and supporters who made this event such a success. Your efforts are truly making a difference in people's lives.

#### **HELENA HICKS - GRIFFITH**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today, I would like to commend Helena Hicks, long-time manager and volunteer of the Four Rivers Bookshop in Griffith. The bookshop was established in 1977 providing Christian books and resources to the people of the area and the many parishes throughout the Diocese. Ms Hicks tirelessly operated the shop along with all the volunteers since 1980, providing service to churches and parishes in the greater area. The phrase "Four Rivers" holds special significance in the Riverina Diocese and the electorate through the four major waters that flow through our region, including the Murray, Murrumbidgee, Lachlan and Darling. Ms Helena Hicks who tirelessly operated the shop, along with all the volunteers, helping to spread the good news of the gospel through the provision of Christian books and resources. These included extended services to school libraries, Sunday school and youth groups. I congratulate Ms Hicks on her long and dedicated service to the shop and the Diocese.

#### **BULLANGINYA DREAMING - BAROOGA**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today, I would like to recognise Bullanginya Dreaming in Barooga who won first place in the Storytelling category at the 2024 Blooloo Innovation Awards held online in Los Vegas. Bullanginya Dreaming is a Luna Light Journey, a cultural and entertainment experience produced by Laservision. This attraction combines history, art, and technology to provide an insight into the rich traditions of the Bangerang People and honour their deep-rooted connection to the land. Bullanginya Dreaming was up against industry giants like Disneyland and Merlin Entertainment, so this achievement is remarkable, and everyone involved should be incredibly proud. The installation is held on the banks of Bullanginya Lagoon, and consists of a stunning laser light show, blending cultural stories of the Bangerang people with the element focus of light, water, and fire. Congratulations to the team who collaborated to bring this extraordinary experience to life.

#### **HEATHER WILTON RETIRING FROM GREATER HUME COUNCIL**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge Heather Wilton who has retired from Greater Hume Council in 2024, after serving as a councillor from 2008 to 2021, and as mayor from 2010 to 2021. Continuing a family tradition of local government service, Heather served as mayor for a significant portion of her tenure, following in the footsteps of her grandfather, who was a councillor in the 1930's and 1940's, and her father, who served in the 1970's and 1980's. Heather's contributions to the growth and development of our region have been remarkable. This includes overseeing major upgrades to local infrastructure and community facilities, as well as road improvements such as the Kywong-Howlong Road and Coppabella Road. Heather also played a major role guiding the council through challenging times, including the devastating 2019/20 Black Summer bushfires and the global COVID-19 pandemic, prioritising the well-being of the community during these difficult times. Thank you Heather for your service at Greater Hume. Your leadership has set a strong foundation for the future of Greater Hume, and your contributions will be valued. May you enjoy retirement.

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