

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday 26 March 2025**

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

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

### *Notices*

#### **PRESENTATION**

*[During the giving of notices of motions]*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Shellharbour will come to order. The member for Kiama will come to order. I would appreciate the member for Kiama leaving the Chamber, rather than me having to direct him to do so. The conduct of the member for Shellharbour is also completely out of order.

### *Bills*

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2025**

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

**Debate resumed from 25 March 2025.**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (10:18):** I acknowledge the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, who is in the Chamber, for introducing the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Bill 2025. On behalf of the Government, he has led reforms to streamline planning by removing the duplication that once plagued the system, improving decision-making to provide certainty for all, and listening to the changing desires of local communities. This important bill contains significant amendments that I believe will strengthen and streamline our planning system at a time when we need it to work at its full potential.

Other members have mentioned the housing challenge facing the State, and all of us represent communities affected by that in some way. The Government is focused on finding practical solutions, not just talking about the problem or making announcement after announcement to generate media headlines. We are doing the really hard work, and sometimes unpopular decisions are required to make a difference and fix things like the housing challenge.

The Government's objectives are clear. We want to build more housing choices across our communities. We want to build more homes that are well designed, of good quality and closer to where people's jobs are. We want to make sure these homes are well located near public infrastructure, closer to open space and nearer to people's immediate family support. Most importantly, we want to build more homes in areas where people choose to live.

The bill proposes important reforms to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, known as the EP&A Act, that will cut unnecessary red tape and speed up approvals for major residential housing projects. Right now, section 4.36 (3) of the EP&A Act requires the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to seek advice from the Independent Planning Commission before declaring specified developments on specified land to be State significant development [SSD] under that provision. The process was introduced to ensure that proper consideration was given to the State or regional planning significance of projects before those projects were declared SSD under section 4.36 (3) of the Act.

While the Independent Planning Commission provided this advice to the Minister on occasion, the establishment of the Housing Delivery Authority in November last year provides an opportunity for this advisory role to be undertaken by a dedicated body set up to accelerate the delivery of major housing projects. Under the Environmental Planning and Assessment (Housing Delivery Authority) Order 2024, one of the key functions of the authority is to provide advice, reports and recommendations to the Minister about the declaration of specific residential development on specific land as SSD. This bill streamlines the process for declaring specified residential development on specified land to be SSD by removing the requirement for the Minister to seek advice from the Independent Planning Commission if the development proposed to be SSD includes residential

accommodation. This reform eliminates unnecessary duplication in the decision-making process, making it faster and more efficient to declare development that includes residential accommodation to be SSD.

Importantly, this change does not remove the requirement for the Minister to obtain and make publicly available advice from the Independent Planning Commission about the State or regional significance of a development that does not include residential accommodation. It simply allows for a more streamlined approach to housing approvals while maintaining a robust framework for assessing the significance of these developments. The bill also provides that the authority is exempt from the requirements of sections 25 and 26 (3) of schedule 2 to the EP&A Act, which deal with the public conduct of meetings and the conduct of business outside of meetings. This is appropriate as the authority will primarily perform an advisory role. The public hearing style forums typically used for planning functions, such as determining development applications [DAs] or hearing evidence, will be less relevant. These changes will help ensure its work can be conducted as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

Notably, the bill will also change the minimum exhibition period for SSD housing projects. There appears to be some misunderstanding among stakeholders about the intent of this change. It is generally agreed that we need to pursue all reasonable measures to reduce assessment time frames, particularly for new housing projects. Currently, the EP&A Act requires a 28-day minimum public exhibition period for SSD applications. The bill will reduce the minimum public exhibition period for SSD housing projects to 14 days. This aligns with the minimum public exhibition period for residential development applications used by most councils. However, I stress that these are minimum requirements. The department retains the flexibility to extend exhibition periods for complex or high-impact projects when necessary to ensure an appropriate level of community consultation. In the context of this debate, I note that the Minister and department consider extensions to exhibitions routinely and on a case-by-case basis. This consideration will continue. These reforms to exhibitions strike the right balance. They streamline processes to accelerate the delivery of housing while maintaining public transparency.

However, I note the concerns of the member for Sydney in his contribution. After constructive discussions with the Minister, his office and the department, the member has indicated that an acceptable compromise has been negotiated. We will address this during the consideration in detail stage. It will involve the amendment of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Community Participation Plan to specify a shorter period of public exhibition for certain SSD housing applications, provided the period is at least 14 days. The Minister will address the foreshadowed amendment in his reply speech. It is a good compromise that ensures fair community consultation while speeding up the delivery of housing so our constituents have a place to call home in the communities they choose.

Finally, I focus on an amendment that addresses how concept development approvals interact with subsequent DAs. Not only is it critical to achieving the Government's housing goals but it will also update and modernise planning processes for concept development applications. At its core, a concept development application provides an overarching framework for a development site. While approval of a concept development application sets out the land use vision and broadscale controls for a site, it does not permit immediate works. Any subsequent development application must align with the concept, as required by section 4.24 (2) of the EP&A Act. This ensures consistency between the initial plan and its implementation.

However, as our communities grow and evolve, so too do planning controls. Updates to these controls are often designed to improve outcomes, such as increasing the supply of homes, providing incentives for affordable housing or enhancing community infrastructure. Under the current system, any deviation from an approved concept plan may require proponents to restart the process, requiring the submission of a new concept development application. This causes delays, creates uncertainty and increases costs—all barriers that ultimately slow down housing supply delivery.

The case of *Castle Hill Panorama Pty Ltd v The Hills Shire Council* [2023] NSWLEC 24 highlights the practical implications of these requirements. In that case, the Land and Environment Court considered a development application for residential development that departed from the approved concept development consent. The Land and Environment Court accepted that section 4.17 (1) (b) and 4.17 (5) allowed a consent authority to approve a development application that was inconsistent with a concept development consent if it did so by imposing a condition of consent requiring the modification or surrender of the concept development consent. [Extension of time]

The decision allowed the project to proceed in line with new priorities while ensuring that the original concept approval was amended to maintain consistency between the applications. The bill amends the EP&A Act to confirm the process adopted by the Land and Environment Court in the Castle Hill case by providing that a consent authority can impose a condition on a subsequent development application requiring the modification or surrender of an approved concept consent. In practice, this will enable reasonable flexibility in the determination of subsequent development applications for sites subject to concept approvals.

As the Government continues to address the housing supply challenge, New South Wales needs a fast, flexible and streamlined planning system. This bill will help do this. It represents another step forward—along with the many other measures announced and progressed since the Government's election in March 2023—in modernising our planning system to meet the urgent housing needs of our State. I commend the Minister and his department for the hard work everyone has put into the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (10:29):** I speak in debate on the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Bill 2025. Like all members, I understand the crisis in housing affordability and supply, but I will explain why I will not support the bill. My electorate of Wollondilly covers the council areas of Wollondilly and Wingecarribee. We already have housing approved, and subdivisions are ready to have lighting and roads built but there is no appropriate infrastructure. I am not talking about high schools, transport or hospitals. None of those things are there, but there are no sewers. In this day and age, in newly approved and ready-to-go developments, sewers are still being trucked in each day and the people who have purchased the land continue to wait as their housing contracts time out. They then have to negotiate new contracts with higher prices.

I am concerned on many levels about the need for new housing developments. The process and expense of getting development applications through is difficult, even after a planning proposal is approved. There is also the drip feed of required reports on everything from heritage to environment, which have often already been submitted with planning proposals. Funnily enough, areas like Cumberland Plains do not cover developers' land but mums' and dads' land. The delay costs money not only for developers but also for builders and people who are just trying to build a home. Some areas in my electorate are covered by State environmental planning policies which is stopping secondary dwellings being built because of the new airport. Some are 30 kilometres away from runways and others are on over 10 hectares, where people were told they could build only one house. That house could have 10 bedrooms, but they were not allowed to build more than one two-bedroom home. That is not funny in a housing crisis. Even though planes are about to start flying from the new airport residents still do not know their flight paths.

At a higher level, the bill is not about good planning. The only reason we are seeing development in the area is because developers see a financial opportunity. This housing development may be in the middle of nowhere. When families finally live there, they may not be able to afford to stay as there may be no transport to jobs or it half their income may go to paying tolls to get to work. I have seen governments promise infrastructure that looks wonderful on brochures and prospectuses, but it never comes. Approval time frames for development applications are being cut short for areas where the risk of flooding or bushfire would normally be considered in full, but only the stakeholders who live there really understand those problems. The Government feeds us the line of cheaper housing for essential workers, but worries about the future are being overlooked because a developer is ready to go.

New inhabitants of affordable housing deserve the areas to have all the appropriate infrastructure, not to be second class. The proof for me will be in the pudding. Previous governments of both persuasions have done this, and residents are still waiting. We have affordable housing that people cannot afford to live in. The other concern I have is the slow, staged release of portions of developments. While developers may argue it is all about cost, I believe it is about maintaining a short supply. Anyone who has done high school economics knows that if supply is kept short, increasing demand pushes up the price. I have questionable development applications for my electorate that are yet to be approved. I have other approved applications where no building can happen because there are no essential services, such as sewerage. In other developments, people have to travel for hours and pay tolls to get to work or high school or, heaven forbid if they get sick, wait for an ambulance to take them on a long trip to get to medical services. Thousands of houses also have no police station.

While I appreciate the tack the Government is taking with the bill of delivering shorter consultation time and speeding up processes, why is it not talking about infrastructure and getting Sydney Water to deliver the necessary services so that these homes can be built and lived in? Why is money also not being put into the areas where these developments are located instead of into other regional projects? I would like to see developers forced to release all their stages so that there is a bigger supply in the market at one time, stopping them from keeping prices as high as they are. There is a lot of action that can be taken, but I am concerned about the amendments that are being put forward in the bill. I want housing in my area but with infrastructure. It is not just about increasing housing supply. It is also about building homes that have services and jobs where people can afford to live and be happy. At this point I cannot see the bill delivering those things for my community.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (10:35):** In reply: I thank the members who contributed to debate on the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Bill 2025. Specifically, I acknowledge the member for Mount Druitt; the member for Manly; the member for Sydney; the member for Wakehurst; the member for Coogee; the member for Campbelltown; the member for Heathcote; the member for Cabramatta; the member for Kellyville; the member for Liverpool; the member for Balmain; the

member for Pittwater; the member for Wollondilly; and member for Blacktown and Parliamentary Secretary for Planning and Public Spaces, who included some important elements and clarifications in his contribution. I also acknowledge the cooperation that the shadow Minister for Planning and Public Spaces from the other place and his office have shown in briefings when discussing the important elements of the bill; the member for Manly for leading for the Opposition on the bill; and crossbench members for the collaborative discussions they have had with the Government, particularly the member for Sydney and his adviser Tammie Nardone, and the member for Wakehurst and his adviser Isobel Cullen, who negotiated in good faith to make sure the bill delivers important reforms to the planning system in New South Wales that will help deliver housing outcomes.

The housing challenge demands action. The State's planning system requires modernisation but, above all, for everyone involved it requires certainty. The bill introduces crucial amendments to streamline the planning system, provide certainty to industry and communities, and to make sure that the Government's approach to development assessment is pragmatic, efficient and effective. At its core, the bill responds to three key legal decisions that have created unnecessary uncertainty in the planning assessment process. The Buyozo case decision has made it difficult for consent authorities to modify development consents when the proposed change does not involve a physical amendment to the original development. The impact of this decision is that applicants are required to make a physical amendment to a project whenever they require a modification be made. The bill clarifies that consent authorities can modify conditions without requiring additional, substantive changes to the development itself, removing an unnecessary barrier to housing delivery.

The Filetron case decision has created uncertainty, making it unclear whether submissions received after the exhibition period should be counted when determining the consent authority for a State significant development. The bill makes it so that only submissions received within the official exhibition period are considered in determining the consent authority, providing greater clarity and minimising further legal challenges. However, I make it very clear and emphasise to the House that this does not stop consent authorities from considering late submissions during the assessment process or extending the exhibition time frame. It simply clears up uncertainties while still providing the opportunity for effective community engagement. The Castle Hill case decision confirmed that consent authorities could approve a subsequent development application that departs from the original concept, provided that they impose conditions to modify or surrender the concept approval. The bill reinforces that decision so that applicants can seek reasonable changes without lengthy procedural roadblocks.

The bill will make necessary amendments to streamline the planning system to support the delivery of housing and other projects. I note the amendments foreshadowed by the member for Sydney, which I signal the Government will accept. As amended, the bill will allow the flexibility to shorten assessment time frames for the determination of certain residential State significant development applications by updating the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's community participation plans to reduce the minimum public exhibition periods for those applications. I stress that any changes to community participation plans will require consultation for 28 days.

Updating the community participation plans will allow certain residential accommodation State significant development applications to be in alignment with local development applications assessed by councils. This strikes a fair balance and delivers consistency between community consultation and the timely delivery of housing. It will also remove duplication of advisory functions for residential development projects and implement less formal meeting arrangements for the newly created Housing Delivery Authority. The Housing Delivery Authority was established by the Government in November last year to accelerate the delivery of critical housing projects, and it is doing a good job. However, current legislation requires that I receive advice from the Independent Planning Commission before certain residential developments can be declared State significant development. This duplication causes unnecessary delays. The bill removes the requirement for Independent Planning Commission advice for residential State significant development projects, allowing the Housing Delivery Authority to take on an expanded advisory role to me as the Minister.

In his contribution the member for Sydney raised some concerns regarding contributions to affordable housing. I reassure the member that the Government is committed to the delivery of affordable housing and has introduced the first and largest scale of the requirement to include affordable housing in the State's history through the Transport Oriented Development Program. Under section 4.15 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, the consent authority is required to consider environmental planning instruments and proposed instruments in determining development applications. This means that the existing proposed affordable housing contribution requirements in local environment plans must be considered by me as the Minister, or my delegate, when determining a State significant development application.

This practice is already built into the State significant development assessment and determination process during the assessment of State significant developments. The department considers planning controls contained within council local environmental plans and development control plans, as well as affordable housing

contributions, and aims to reflect those standards as much as possible in the determination. One objective of the Housing Delivery Authority is to drive quality and affordable housing, and one assessment in considering the expressions of interest submitted to the authority is whether the proposal is looking to make a positive commitment towards affordable housing. Affordable housing is a key component of the housing puzzle for this Government, and I can assure the member for Sydney that the department will assess State significant development applications in line with the affordable housing contributions contained within local environmental plans.

Finally, and crucially, the bill will modernise the affordable housing contribution requirements. The member for Manly invited me to make some comment on that in my reply in response to concerns expressed by the Urban Taskforce about the way the affordable housing contributions are currently justified—the Urban Taskforce believing they should remain in place. What are described as current safeguards of the process are actually handbrakes on the delivery of any affordable housing and on the ability of councils to implement affordable housing contribution schemes and charge affordable housing contributions for developments. Under the current system, in order to charge an affordable housing contribution rate on a development a council must be able to prove that the development will reduce the availability of affordable housing in an area and create the need for more affordable housing in an area.

The onus on councils is too high and often unachievable, and the Government's provisions are sensible. Fewer than 10 councils across New South Wales currently have an affordable housing contribution scheme in place, and in those that do the scheme is often limited to only a handful of sites that have had recent rezonings. The Government has set a new benchmark with its housing reforms so far, and that benchmark is the first use in the State's history of a requirement for affordable housing across an entire area. In the Government's view, all councils should be implementing affordable housing contribution schemes. The Government wants to see them not only do that but also do it in a way that will help to deliver affordable housing.

By removing the legacy references to the "Six Cities Region" and by removing the Six Cities model from the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, this Government is demonstrating its commitment to improving strategic planning across the State. I note the member for Wakehurst has foreshadowed an amendment requiring the making of regional strategic plans that must be reviewed by the planning secretary every five years after the plan is made by the Minister. The Government will accept the amendment of the member for Wakehurst to the bill. The member for Wakehurst has also foreshadowed a further amendment in relation to new section 3.8 (5), which the Government cannot accept. I acknowledge the member's understanding of that position.

The bill will make important changes that will guarantee the continuity of the strategic planning framework for years to come. Uncertainty in the planning system has impacted on the delivery of new homes and the simple modification of a development consent and held back progress at a time when we clearly need an efficient, effective and streamlined planning system. The bill intends to endorse pragmatic and functional approaches to development assessment and determination. The bill does not in any way change the existing and established community consultation processes. I reiterate that it does not in any way change those processes. The Government recognised that the community has an important role in the planning process and consultation opportunities where the community can comment on proposals, and those are maintained.

I thank my departmental officials Kieran Haydon, James Hayward, Jen Bailey, Steve Saville, Vanessa Portelli, Aoife Wynter, Meagan Kanaley, Dan Cutler, Tom Loomes, Douglas Walther, David Gainsford and Monica Gibson for their collective work on the bill's preparation, the briefings they have provided and their advice during negotiations and discussions with Opposition and crossbench members. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Michael Regan and Mr Alex Greenwich.**

#### **Consideration in Detail**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** By leave: I will deal with the bill in groups of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 3 be agreed to.

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (10:46):** I move my amendment No. 1 on sheet c2025-051B:

No. 1      **Making of regional strategic plans**

Page 4, Schedule 1[16], lines 36–38. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

- (3)      The Planning Secretary must review a regional strategic plan every 5 years after the plan is made by the Minister.

Amendment No. 1 requires regional plans to be reviewed every five years. This will help to ensure that strategic regional planning remains relevant, proactive and evidence based, and not left to become outdated and ineffective. I note that I tried to push the Government to amend the wording to "review and update". I still think it is important that those words are in there; however, I accept where we have landed. It is still a substantial improvement to the bill. A five-year review cycle keeps our planning system aligned with population growth, infrastructure needs and economic shifts, providing some certainty for councils, industry and communities. Importantly, regional plans trigger local environmental plan updates, shaping local decision-making.

A guaranteed five-year review enables councils to engage with the planning department to prepare, allocate resources and align their local policies effectively. Without this, councils may be in limbo, unsure when updates will come, which makes it harder to plan for growth. A regularly updated regional plan sets clear expectations, ensuring growth happens in the right places, with the right infrastructure, at the right time—something that has not happened on the northern beaches for a long time. The amendment helps to ensure that planning is based on the most current data. Tying regional planning reviews to the census cycle means decisions are informed by the latest population, housing and economic trends, not by outdated assumptions. This gives State and local governments, infrastructure agencies and the private sector confidence that they are planning for the Sydney of the future, not the Sydney of five, 10 or 15 years ago. With this amendment, I seek to increase certainty, coordination and good governance for regional strategic planning in Sydney and across the State. I thank the Government for supporting the amendment.

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (10:48):** The Opposition supports the amendment as moved by the member for Wakehurst.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (10:48):** As I indicated in my speech in reply, the Government will support the amendment to review regional strategic plans every five years. The Government considers this amendment is appropriate and will support it.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The question is that amendment No. 1 on sheet c2025-051B of the member for Wakehurst be agreed to.

**Amendment agreed to.**

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (10:48):** By leave: I move my amendments Nos 1 to 4 on sheet c2025-048F in globo:

**No. 1 Making of district strategic plans and regional strategic plan for Greater Sydney**

Page 5, Schedule 1[18], line 3. Omit "Section 3.6". Insert instead "Sections 3.6 and 3.6A".

**No. 2 Making of district strategic plans and regional strategic plan for Greater Sydney**

Page 5, Schedule 1[18], line 4. Omit "sections 3.6 and 3.6A". Insert instead "the sections".

**No. 3 Regional strategic plan for Greater Sydney**

Page 5, Schedule 1[18]. Insert after line 11—

**3.6A Making of regional strategic plans for Greater Sydney**

(1) The Planning Secretary must submit a draft regional strategic plan for Greater Sydney to the Minister—

(a) as soon as practicable after this section commences, and

(b) every 5 years after submitting the draft regional strategic plan specified in paragraph (a).

(2) Within 12 months of receiving a draft regional strategic plan for Greater Sydney, the Minister must make the plan in the form in which it is submitted or with the modifications the Minister considers appropriate.

(3) In this section—

*Greater Sydney* means all of the designated Sydney local government areas.

**No. 4 Implementation of strategic plans**

Page 5, Schedule 1[24], lines 28–32. Omit all words on the lines.

The unintended consequences of the Government's proposal in new schedule 1 [16] to omit subsections (3) to (6) is that there will no longer be an explicit legislative requirement for there to be a strategic plan for Greater Sydney.

Amendment No. 3 on sheet c2025-048F does three things: First, it ensures that there will always be a regional strategic plan in place for Greater Sydney. Second, it requires the plan to be reviewed every five years. Third, it requires the Minister to make the plan within 12 months of receiving a draft. The Government has assured me that there will be a plan for Greater Sydney. While I trust this Minister to deliver on that commitment, my amendment

seeks to futureproof it regardless of who is in office. We may not always be fortunate enough to have a planning Minister as committed to strategic planning as the member for Wollongong, but that amendment ensures that Greater Sydney will have a regional plan in place long after we have all moved on from this place.

As Australia's largest economic centre and capital city, Sydney should have a clear, long-term strategy to guide sustainable growth. The pressures on competing land uses are immense, and the absence of a regional plan would lead to fragmented decision-making, lost opportunities for housing and jobs and increased congestion. It would make the city less liveable and less competitive. Greater Sydney generates 25 per cent of Australia's GDP and is home to two-thirds of the New South Wales population. A strong, well-planned Sydney benefits not only the city itself but also regional communities across the State. Before the establishment of the Greater Cities Commission, the Act explicitly referenced Greater Sydney. Amendment No. 3 seeks to restore it.

The final point of this amendment is that it requires the Minister to actually make the plan. Under the current Act, and even with this amending bill, the secretary is required to review the plan every five years after it is made, but there is no explicit obligation for the Minister to actually make the plan once the draft is submitted. None of us want to see a situation where a plan for Greater Sydney is gathering dust on the Minister's desk while critical decisions about the city's future are uncoordinated. This amendment closes that gap and ensures that Sydney always has a clear strategic direction. Strategic planning should not be left to political convenience. It should be embedded in legislation to ensure that Sydney remains a globally competitive, liveable and sustainable city, both now and in the future.

Amendment No. 4 on sheet c2025-048F seeks to uphold the integrity of strategic planning in Greater Sydney by ensuring that planning proposals give effect to the regional plan. Section 3.8 (4) (b) of the Act currently requires planning proposals to align with and give effect to a strategic plan. The purpose of having a regional plan is to provide a clear vision for where and how future growth should occur, ensuring that development is coordinated, sustainable and resilient. The Government's proposal to remove that requirement undermines the very purpose of having a regional plan. Without that safeguard, planning decisions could be made in isolation and could potentially disregard long-term strategic priorities in favour of ad hoc rezoning. One critical example from *A Metropolis of Three Cities* that must not be circumvented is objective 37, "Exposure to natural and urban hazards is reduced." Strategy 37.1 of the plan is:

Avoid locating new urban development in areas exposed to natural and urban hazards and consider options to limit the intensification of development in existing urban areas most exposed to hazards.

Without that strategy, we risk further developments like the Lizard Rock-Patyegarang planning proposal in my electorate of Wakehurst. Removal of strategic oversight could contribute to housing being approved in areas at high risk of bushfire, putting lives and communities in danger. We cannot allow a situation where a Minister can ignore a regional plan by using regulations to push through developments that, for example, leave future residents with uninsurable and unsafe homes located in bushfire traps. Beyond the issue of natural hazards, this amendment is critical to preventing broader negative consequences of planning proposals for development in the wrong place. Those include infrastructure misalignment and weakened community trust in the planning system. It could also lead to a loss of certainty for councils and industry.

If regional plans lose their weight, councils and developers alike will be left without clear guidance on where growth should occur. That will create uncertainty in the housing market and undermine long-term planning objectives. A regional plan is not just a document; it is a commitment to strategic and well-planned growth. Removing the requirement for planning proposals to align with regional plans sends a message that planning decisions can be made in isolation, without regard for Sydney's long-term future. It is disappointing that the Government is not supporting this amendment. I urge all members of this House to consider the long-term consequences of removing that safeguard.

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (10:53):** The Opposition supports the amendments moved by the member for Wakehurst.

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater) (10:53):** I support these amendments. I reiterate the point made by the member for Wakehurst that in order for Sydney to be a great city, it needs to have strategic planning. That strategic planning should flow through to all levels of planning decisions, including planning proposals and rezonings. The amendments seek to elevate strategic planning for the planning system, whereas the bill before the House diminishes that strategic element.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (10:54):** I thank the member for Wakehurst for moving the amendments on sheet c2025-048F, which relate to district strategic plans. As I indicated in my speech in reply and to the member last week, the Government is not in a position to support the amendments. While I understand the concerns of the member for Wakehurst about local matters in his electorate, the primary intention of the bill is to remove legacy references to the Six Cities Region and to commit

to improving strategic planning across New South Wales. The Government does not support introducing a separate review time frame for a regional strategic plan for Greater Sydney.

The amendments also seek to define the local government areas included in Greater Sydney for inclusion in a regional plan. The Government requires flexibility to identify locations that will be included in regional strategic plans to best respond to changing economic, social and environmental conditions. The Government remains committed to the strategic planning framework as amended by the bill but will not support that amendment for the reasons I have just outlined. Similarly, the Government cannot accept amendment No. 4 in its current form, and I acknowledge the member's understanding of the Government position.

The proposed amendment seeks to remove the ability for regulations to prescribe the circumstances in which a planning proposal authority does not need to give effect to a strategic plan when preparing a planning proposal. The purpose of the proposed regulation-making power is to build flexibility into the strategic planning framework established under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. This power is necessary for the Government to address strategic planning issues should they arise. The Government remains committed to the strategic planning framework but cannot support the amendments for the reasons I have just outlined.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that amendments Nos 1 to 4 on sheet c2025-048F of the member for Wakehurst be agreed to.

**Amendments negated.**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (10:56):** By leave: I move my amendments Nos 1 to 4 on sheet c2025-047F in globo:

**No. 1 Planning Secretary must notify local council of SSD declaration**

Page 6, Schedule 1[28]. Insert after line 17—

- (3C) If the Minister makes a declaration under subsection (3), the Planning Secretary must, as soon as practicable, notify the council for the area in which the specified land is located that the declaration has been made.

**No. 2 Exhibition period for State significant development**

Page 7, Schedule 1[40], lines 23–34. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

- (1) Minimum public exhibition period for an application for development consent for State significant development—
  - (a) 28 days, or
  - (b) for a relevant SSD application—
    - (i) 28 days, or
    - (ii) if a relevant community participation plan prepared by the Planning Secretary specifies a period of public exhibition for the application—the period specified in the plan.
- (2) For subclause (1)(b)(ii), the period specified in the plan must be at least 14 days.
- (3) In this clause—
 

**relevant SSD application** means—

  - (a) an application for development consent for development declared to be State significant development under section 4.36(3) and that includes residential accommodation, or
  - (b) an application for development consent for State significant development that includes development specified in *State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021*, Schedule 1, section 26, 26A, 27 or 28 or Schedule 2, section 19.

**No. 3 Meetings of planning bodies**

Page 8, Schedule 1[43]. Insert after line 8—

- (7) However, a planning body prescribed under subclause (6) must, within 14 days after a meeting at which the body considers proposed development that includes residential accommodation, make the minutes of the meeting, including a record of all decisions made and written reasons for the decisions, publicly available.

**No. 4 Meetings of planning bodies**

Page 8, Schedule 1[44]. Insert after line 12—

- (6) However, a planning body prescribed under subclause (5) must, within 14 days after making a resolution relating to proposed development that includes residential accommodation, make the resolution and written reasons for the resolution publicly available.



I outlined these amendments in my contribution to the second reading debate, and the Government responded to them in the Minister's speech in reply. The amendments relate to the notification period for councils for State significant development declarations. They address community participation plans and standards for the exhibition period to address the concern of reducing it to 14 days. They also aim to increase the transparency of Housing Delivery Authority meetings. I commend the amendments to the House.

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (10:57):** I thank the member for Sydney for bringing these amendments forward. The Opposition supports the amendments as moved.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (10:57):** I thank the member for Sydney for moving these amendments. As I indicated in my speech in reply, the Government supports the amendments, which largely reflect the current practice of the Housing Delivery Authority. We are not seeking to diminish transparency in the planning system in any way, shape or form. The Government supports the amendments.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that amendments Nos 1 to 4 on sheet c2025-047F of the member for Sydney be agreed to.

**Amendments agreed to.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 3 as amended be agreed to.

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

### **Third Reading**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Visitors*

### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome everybody who has joined us today in the Speaker's gallery and the Cooper gallery upstairs. I hope that they enjoy the experience of question time in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. That is generally the reaction we get—people love to come here, so much so that we will think about selling tickets. I specifically acknowledge and extend a warm welcome to members of the Save Walka Community Alliance, Michele Keith, Mal Manwaring, Jan Davis and David Atkinson, guests of the member for Maitland. I also welcome to the gallery Zara Dempsey, guest of the member for Charlestown, who is undertaking work placement in the member's office. I welcome Ciara Denton, guest of the member for Balmain. I acknowledge students from Hurlstone Agricultural High School, guests of the member for Macquarie Fields. I also acknowledge Jack Matott, guest of the member for Vacluse.

I welcome student leaders and two staff members from Toongabbie Public School, guests of the member for Winston Hills. I welcome school leaders from Toronto High School, including Principal Mark McConville, guests of the member for Lake Macquarie, and I draw the attention of the Minister for Education and Early Learning to those guests. A delegation of the Community Justice Centres has also joined us today as guests of the member for Kiama. I welcome members of the Australian Air League, Doyalson Girls Squadron, who are joining us today as guests of the member for Wyong. Finally, I welcome to the gallery legal studies students and teachers from Hurlstone Agricultural High School and Casimir Catholic College, from the Summer Hill electorate. Welcome to everybody. I think everybody got a gong. If anyone missed out on being called out, I am sorry.

### *Announcements*

### **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPHS**

**The SPEAKER:** Member photographs were taken yesterday and will be taken again today. Today will be photographs of the class of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament. If those members could be in the Chamber at 1.30 p.m., it would be appreciated.

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

**The SPEAKER (11:05):** On 20 February and 19 March 2025 I informed the House that, upon the receipt from the Cabinet Office and the Premier's Department of the vehicle logbooks and documents relating to my use of the official vehicles provided to me in my official duty as the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, I would

offer members the opportunity to review the documents. I inform the House that I received the return yesterday, on 25 March 2025. My office will email members shortly advising them of the arrangements for inspection. I might even have a look myself—I do not know what I have been up to.

#### **DEATH OF NICKOLA LALICH, FORMER MEMBER FOR CABRAMATTA**

**The SPEAKER (11:07):** I advise members of the death overnight of Nickola Lalich, the former member for Cabramatta. I extend to his family the deep sympathy of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained. I am sure that many members have fond memories of serving in this place with Nick Lalich. Early this morning I personally reflected on my memories from the time I heard Nick's inaugural speech in this House.

*Members and officers of the House stood as a mark of respect.*

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (11:08):** At 12.30 a.m. today, Nick Lalich, a member of this House from 2008 to 2023, passed away at the Northern Beaches Hospital. Nick became a very good friend of mine, but he was one of the most popular members of this House during the time he served, viewed by most members with endearment and affection. He became a member of the Fairfield council in 1987 and was elected mayor in 1993. He continued to serve as Mayor of Fairfield until 2012, having been elected with 62 per cent of the vote. Whilst he was mayor, he was asked to contest the seat of Cabramatta in this House, where he continued his public service and to serve with distinction.

Anybody who visited Cabramatta with Nick Lalich was amazed by his popularity and public profile. People would run out of their shops to shake his hand, such was his recognition and the affection in which he was held by his own community. Most members of this House, including me, could only dream about it. Nick suffered from throat cancer in 2018 but still fought, and was successful in, the 2019 election. However, the ravages of radiation deteriorated his throat, his vocal cords and his tongue, and his ability to speak deteriorated. Many of us who were sitting in a full House to hear his valedictory speech in November 2022 left the Chamber with a tear in their eye.

When Nick thought he was not going to survive throat cancer, I reminded him of where he had come from and his successors. It is a background that he never spoke of and very few people knew about. His parents fled the Nazis from Serbia and ended up travelling through Italy to a refugee camp in Egypt, where Nick was born in 1945 just outside Cairo. His family lived in makeshift tents. All his elder siblings passed away from disease in that refugee camp, and Nick and his surviving siblings struggled under those conditions until his parents migrated to Australia in 1948 under Chifley's immigration policy. They arrived in Melbourne, where his father obtained a job with a water authority. They eventually moved to Bonnyrigg, where Nick's parents purchased an 11-acre farm. But it was not enough to sustain the family, so his father worked for the Postmaster-General's Department as a cleaner.

As soon as Nick could leave school, he became an apprentice electrical fitter. He described to me having to travel from Bonnyrigg to his place of employment in the city. It took him two hours to get to work and back. His family really struggled to make ends meet. Nick joined the Labor Party in 1971. He was mentored by his then Federal member, Gough Whitlam, and was ultimately elected to the council. Then, in 1993, he began his service to the people in his area. When Nick thought he was not going to survive, I reminded him of where he had come from and that, whatever success we achieve, we all want even better for our children. I reminded Nick that his son was a partner in one of the country's most prestigious law firms and that his daughter was the chief executive officer of Lawcover. Nobody could have achieved in their lifetime either more than he for himself or what he was able to achieve for his children.

Nick would always say to me when I talked to him about matters, "You'd know more than me because, you know, you're one of those barristers who knows the law." I would say to Nick, "You've forgotten more than I will ever learn." He was a very wise man. He never had an easy time of it. I remind the House of his nemesis, Dai Le, whom he defeated on a number of occasions either as the Liberal Party candidate or as an Independent. Nick certainly had her measure. He was immensely successful. He was also somebody who, as we will remember, was always fastidious about his appearance. Even when I visited Nick in hospital, his pyjamas looked like they had been starched and ironed, and he had not a hair out of place.

When I say that Nick was well regarded by his community, it was not just respected members of the community but also the less desirable members. At one stage I appeared in a criminal trial for the person charged with the murder of John Newman. During that trial some accomplices gave evidence. Their evidence was that they were contracted to kill John Newman and they had set themselves up in a Cabramatta car park outside a Labor Party fundraiser. They were armed and ready to shoot Newman, but he walked out with Nick Lalich and there was no way in the world they were going to risk hurting Nick. I wish the enemies I have had were as considerate of me as obviously they were in Cabramatta.

When I heard of Nick's passing, I realised that his lived experience is what made him one of the most successful community leaders in one of the most multicultural places in Australia. I reflected on his inaugural speech after he was elected in 2008. Nick said it all when he said:

Australia is truly a country of hope and opportunity. It has afforded a refugee the chance through commitment, resilience and ambition to have the honour of representing his community ... I could never have fathomed in my wildest dreams the prospect of becoming mayor of a city and a member of Parliament.

As members know, Nick and I became quite close during my service in this House and I kept in contact with him, seeing him, I wish, more regularly than I did. He is certainly a major loss to me, to all members of this House, to the Labor Party, to his community and to all who had the honour and privilege of meeting him during his lifetime. Vale, Nickola Lalich.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:17):** In Nick Lalich's inaugural speech in 2008, he declared that, as a migrant boy born in a refugee camp in Egypt:

I could never have fathomed in my wildest dreams the prospect of becoming mayor of a city and a member of Parliament. It has happened many times in this wonderful country and I believe mine is just one of the millions of great Australian stories worth placing on the record.

Nick was born in May 1945 in El Shatt, Egypt. His parents were Serbian refugees who fled the German invasion of Yugoslavia during World War II. After escaping through Italy, they were placed in a refugee camp in Cairo, where Nick was born. Tragically, three of his siblings died from measles during that period. The Lalich family migrated to Australia, arriving at the Port of Melbourne aboard the *Busta Victory*. *They were settled initially in the Bonegilla migrant camp for about eight months. Nick's father fulfilled a two-year obligation of working for the Commonwealth Government, which led the family to Regents Park.*

Eventually they purchased 11 acres of land in Bonnyrigg, establishing a farm where they cultivated vegetables and raised poultry. Nick's story is similar to that of many migrants who came to Australia from the ruins of postwar Europe in search of a better life for their families. It is emblematic of the inherent egalitarianism in Australia that Nick could, in due course, rise to represent his community in Parliament. In his inaugural speech, Nick relayed that:

My father was very proud that his grandchildren had obtained a level in life that would never have been available to them had they not come to this wonderful country. My grandchildren, Nicholas, Claudia and Liam, whom we spoil terribly, will hopefully never know the poverty my family endured.

Nick's early education took place at Austral Public School, St Johns Park Public School and Granville Public School, followed by Liverpool Boys High School. Following in his older brother's footsteps, he completed an apprenticeship and worked as an electrician. He married a New Zealander at the Wayside Chapel in Kings Cross, officiated by Reverend Ted Noffs. Nick was elected as an alderman on Fairfield City Council and served as mayor from 1993 to 1994. His leadership continued with subsequent mayoral terms from 2002 to 2003 and, following a popular election, from 2004 to 2012. In 2008 Nick was elected as the State member for Cabramatta, succeeding Reba Meagher. Notably, he managed the dual roles of Mayor of Fairfield and State member for Cabramatta for four years.

When I arrived in Parliament in 2011, I was on the receiving end of Nick's wry sense of humour almost straightaway. He asked where my office was. As history repeats itself, I am back in that office now. I said it was on the tenth floor, and he said, "That's where all the oncurs go." Nick served as Deputy Opposition Whip from October 2012 to May 2016 and then as Opposition Whip to July 2019. He was of course a very loyal servant of the Australian Labor Party, and a continuous member since 1971. In this Chamber he was a very loyal servant of his constituents in Cabramatta and the people of New South Wales generally. Those of us who were present for his valedictory speech in 2022 will remember how he was suffering then and the poignancy of that valedictory. On behalf of the New South Wales Opposition, may I extend our deepest sympathy to his partner, Del; his son, Paul; his daughter, Kerrie; and his three grandchildren, Nicholas or "Nicky", Claudia and Liam. Rest in peace, Nick.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition for their reflections on the life of Nick Lalich.

*Members*

#### REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

**Mr RON HOENIG:** On behalf of Mr Chris Minns: I advise the House that the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Youth Justice will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Small Business, Minister for Recovery, and Minister for the North Coast.

*Question Time***FEDERAL BUDGET**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:22):** My question is directed to the Premier. Yesterday's Federal budget allocated New South Wales only \$2.8 billion out of the total \$17.1 billion road and rail budget. That is less than 17 per cent, despite New South Wales having 31 per cent of Australia's population. Will the Premier call out Anthony Albanese for failing to give New South Wales its fair share of the road and rail budget?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:23):** I was on radio this morning talking about how Federal governments of both persuasions need to give New South Wales more. We are on record as saying that, and we have been very clear. The political circumstance does not matter. We have 32 per cent of the nation's population. We get about 27 per cent of the GST carve-up, for example, which we use for basic infrastructure and service delivery. We need more of it. The Victorian Government just got more. The dark arts of the commission that determines the split in GST contributions are incredibly opaque. I do not think it takes into consideration the circumstances of each economy and the risks of not investing in a State like New South Wales, which has the most complex and diverse economy.

A resource export led economy like Australia should have as many irons in the fire as possible. It is fine for other States to lead with natural resources exports. That is a good part of the Australian economy. But, as a fail-safe against commodity prices dropping, investment in New South Wales is the way to go. The Federal Government is labouring under an agreement signed by the Turnbull and Morrison governments to obtain a larger share of the GST split with Western Australia. I have said many times in this House—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Mark Speakman:** It goes to direct relevance under Standing Order 129. The question was not about the GST; the question was about Anthony Albanese selling out New South Wales on road and rail—

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition. The Premier was immediately directly relevant, and he is now expanding on those remarks. There is no point of order.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** That was an agreement that was entered into by the previous Federal Government. I have not heard a word from members opposite about that GST distribution split. I make the point, which I do not think is unreasonable, that—

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** You negotiated the GST. You lost infrastructure spending. You lost—

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Honestly, that was the most vacuous contribution possible. Western Australia is one of the wealthiest governments in the world because of what it extracts out of the ground and exports to other countries. As a result, I think the GST split or contribution needs to be recalibrated as a hedge against changes to global trade, investment and demand for Western Australian commodities. That is the long way of saying that we need more from the Commonwealth Government. I am happy to say so. The good news is that this Commonwealth Government—and we would love to see the Federal Liberal Party match it—has contributed to Fifteenth Avenue, Bandon Road, Mamre Road, Garfield Road and Richmond Road.

As I said in the Chamber yesterday, the Liberal Party put more houses and communities in Western Sydney without putting in more roads. For the first time in many years, the Federal Government has stood up to give money directly to the New South Wales Government to build that infrastructure. We would like to see members opposite put some pressure on Peter Dutton to back and match that investment.

**VISITOR ECONOMY**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (11:26):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on the latest visitor economy figures and the impact on New South Wales?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:27):** I am happy to report to the House that New South Wales has recorded its highest-ever visitor expenditure, with \$53 billion spent across the State. That is an increase of 3.6 per cent.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** According to new data from Tourism Research Australia—

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** —the result marks a milestone for New South Wales, with post-pandemic tourism reaching a record level of \$41.2 billion in domestic spending, with about \$16 billion for Sydney alone. I can report other good news to the House. Members may remember that Condé Nast magazine, in a readers' choice vote, awarded Sydney the best city in the world ahead of New York, Tokyo, Singapore, Las Vegas, Wollongong and Stockholm. The write-up for the awards said:

If you've experienced a snippet of life Down Under, you've probably fallen hard for the unique, indoor-outdoor way of life the Aussies embrace so well.

People should come to New South Wales and spend their money here. They do not need to go to London to save civilisation, nor jump on a plane to head to one of Jordan Peterson's conferences. They can bring their cash to New South Wales. It is good news for different parts of the State. As the member for Blue Mountains pointed out, there were 37.5 million domestic overnight visitors, which was an increase of 2 per cent. In an increase of more than 10 per cent, there were 3.8 million international visitors, who spent \$12 billion. Those are massive numbers.

The North Coast recorded the largest increase with 11 per cent, \$6.3 million. That would be particularly welcome for communities in the Northern Rivers, who were concerned about the impact of natural disasters in 2022 and the potential for devastation as a result of Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

It is good to see those numbers high and increasing, and they are expected to get even larger in the years ahead. The Snowy Mountains and the Blue Mountains recorded the strongest year-on-year growth for regional occupancy rates, 10 per cent and 8 per cent respectively. The member for Blue Mountains is doing something right. They are incredible numbers. The good news is we can expect those numbers to climb even higher with the opening of Western Sydney international airport. A massive number of people will have access directly into Western Sydney after they land at the brand new airport. That will be fantastic to see. We are raising our gaze when it comes to what is possible for tourism in the State. [*Extension of time*]

We have a more ambitious goal for the State. We hope to see the visitor economy generate \$91 billion worth of spending by 2035. That would be a 40 per cent increase on the previous goal set for 2030. Those are incredible numbers, but we believe we are well on the way to meet the ambitious targets because of the infrastructure that has been put in place, because of the new airport and because of Australia opening up as a desirable place for international travellers to come to. Most importantly, members may remember that there was a real concern in the midst of the COVID-19 emergency that international flights would suffer a disconnection and the disconnection would see a decline in international tourism coming to New South Wales and Sydney.

Flights would be disrupted, international travel patterns would be disrupted and people who had in their mind's eye that they would travel to Australia in the next 12 to 18 months would decide to go closer to home or to other regions around the world. The statistics show that the tourism sector in this State has bounced back, and not just bounced back to COVID-19 levels but higher than that. We want to see them get even stronger. Tourism is a key plank of the New South Wales economy. I think it is the fifth-biggest part of our economy. It is a massive employer of people, particularly young people, in the New South Wales economy, and we want to see it go from strength to strength.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Dubbo. The member for Monaro will come to order.

**MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, MINISTER FOR REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES, AND  
MINISTER FOR WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (11:32):** My question is directed to the Premier. When questioned about the behaviour of Minister Moriarty yesterday, the Premier said, "We will take action immediately and ensure that under all circumstances public servants are treated with respect." What action has the Premier taken since he said that?

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:32):** What allegation are you making?

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Do you want me to read the question again?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** No. You said, "What action are we taking?" What allegation are you making?

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** I am quoting your words. My question is: What action have you taken?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** That was in response to a question from a journalist, and it was hypothetical. "What action would you take in relation to respect for public servants?"

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I presume that if the member is going to ask a question in this House, he should perhaps make an allegation against a member of Parliament. Am I wrong? What does he want me to investigate? Am I going crazy here or something? For those who are not following the internecine entrails of the Dubbo PCYC, this is in relation to the pet project of the member for Dubbo and 2018 money for the Dubbo PCYC. It is a pet project of his; he is obviously focused on it. I remind members that he asked me a question about it not long ago. I do not know if members remember it. This is germane to the question that was asked. Following that, I report that there was an article in *The Daily Telegraph* that said tensions between the Coalition parties had spilt into question time on Thursday—

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

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

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** It was a fairly specific question around the behaviour of Minister Moriarty.

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

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** I am wondering what action the Premier has taken since he said yesterday that he would take action immediately.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not uphold the point of order. The member for Dubbo will resume his seat.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** If the member for Dubbo is asking me to launch an investigation, that should be his question. It relates to the PCYC. The article says:

The tensions spilt into Question Time on Thursday, with our moles claiming some Nats were of the belief that some Libs were ... wait for it ... leaking to Labor!

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order: It is taken under Standing Order 129, direct relevance.

**The SPEAKER:** Government members will cease assisting the Speaker. I can deal with the point of order.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** The question relates to what action the Premier has taken since he made that quote yesterday.

**The SPEAKER:** The nature of the question is such that the Premier will be given some latitude in his answer. The member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat.

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

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

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** There is no mention of the Dubbo sports hub in the question.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Dubbo will either resume his seat or remove himself from the Chamber. The Premier will continue his answer.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The article continues:

The assumption was made after Premier Chris Minns apparently gave too quick an answer to a question Nationals leader Dugald Saunders had asked.

I am happy to reveal to the House who leaked the question. This is a Perry Mason moment.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I am happy to inform the House who leaked the question to me. It was the member for Dubbo. He rang me up earlier in the week and he said, "I'm going to ask you about this next week." Honest to God!

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will resume his seat. The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Wahoonga rises on a point of order.

[Interruption]

Government members will come to order.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I am done.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier has concluded his answer.

### MOBILE PHONES IN SCHOOLS

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (11:36):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Deputy Premier please update the House on the community's reaction to the Minns Labor Government's ban on mobile phones in schools?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:36):** I thank the member for The Entrance for the question. One of the things that we are most proud about as a government, and that we have received overwhelming feedback on when we visit schools and speak to principals and teachers, and even young people, is the ban on having mobile phones in classrooms and in the playground at all schools. In opposition, we very clearly heard from parents and teachers who were at their wit's end and calling on the Government to do something about mobile phones in schools. Some schools had banned mobile phones. Some schools had not. Schools really wanted the Government to tell them that they have to do it so that they were protected by that being the policy of the Government. At the time, we were very surprised that the previous Government opposed that. Looking back, it seems a bit bizarre that the Minister and the previous Government said that we should not ban mobile phones in schools.

Parents, teachers, principals and everyone involved with young people in society were begging the Government to act, and since that time real data shows us that principals report more concentration in the classroom and a return to noisy playgrounds. Some things do not change and stand the test of time. I have seen on many occasions kids playing handball before school or at recess or at lunch. They do not sit down on the asphalt at school in the breaks or beforehand behind their phones. The mobile phone ban in schools is important not just because it helps our teachers impart the magic of what happens in the classroom to children who are at school to learn but also because of the impact that mobile phones and social media are having on our young people, which every parent across New South Wales is really concerned about.

Many members in this place are parents of children in that target age group, including me. It is really scary for them right now. I am not sure if any members of the House have watched the Netflix show called *Adolescence*. It is frightening. [*Extension of time*]

It draws particular attention to the dangerous stuff that is targeted to young boys, particularly—the so-called incel culture and the Andrew Tate and Jordan Petersons of the world. For some of those vulnerable young boys, mobile phones can open a door into a pit of bullying and stuff that they should not be able to see. They are often not able to regulate the emotions they might feel as a result of seeing and experiencing those things. This Government has taken on the moral obligation of ensuring that when our children are at school—whether they are in kindergarten or in years 11 or 12—they are learning, which is more of a priority now that more wonderful teachers are in our classrooms, and using the opportunity to learn other skills like socialising, emotional regulation and playing in the playground. The mobile phone ban allows that to happen more often. Chess clubs are starting up again at schools. I have lost count of the number of schools I have been to that have robotics clubs.

**Mrs Sally Quinnell:** Music clubs.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Music clubs. Those things are happening because kids are not glued to their phones and have the space to pursue other interests at school. I am proud that the New South Wales Government has banned mobile phones in schools. Time and again the Premier and I have been to high schools where even the students have said that they are thankful for the ban. I thought that we would be very unpopular with the teenagers of New South Wales but it turns out it was the right thing to do. I am really proud of what we did for this generation and the generations to come.

### TUCKEAN SWAMP RESTORATION

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (11:41):** My question is directed to the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, representing the Minister for Agriculture. The recent fish kills in the Richmond River have again revealed the dire state of the health of the river. The Tuckean Swamp restoration project will be a game changer across the board. Will the Minister commit to finalising and funding the Tuckean Swamp restoration plan this year?

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (11:42):** I thank the member for Ballina for her question and for her advocacy for the Tuckean Swamp project, which I know she has been talking to Minister Moriarty about. The impacts of Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred on our waterways continue, with reports of increased fish deaths and stressed fish as poor water quality discharges from north coast floodplains. Flooding across the north coast catchments following the ex-cyclone presents high risks of significant fish deaths due to poor water quality, resulting in large-scale hypoxic water quality events as a result of decaying organic matter in the waterways. I assure the member and the community that the Government is taking the event very seriously and is continuing to monitor the fish deaths and water quality.

I am advised that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development - Fisheries mass fish kill sub plan has been enacted. Fisheries and the Emergency Management Unit are supporting the Environment Protection Authority-led response, with local councils to manage clean-up actions in key locations. Flood closures have been established at the mouths of the Richmond, Clarence, Bellinger, Nambucca and Macleay rivers to protect fish aggregations and Fisheries will continue to monitor the situation closely over the coming days through water sampling and testing. Advice from this morning is that it appears that the fish kill event has peaked in the Macleay, Clarence and Richmond rivers. But, unfortunately, dead fish will continue to be seen over coming days as the black water continues to move downstream and is flushed with each tidal cycle. However, with more rain forecast across the region over the coming week, the situation will continue to be monitored closely, and Fisheries scientists and officers are on the ground and will continue monitoring.

In reference to Tuckean Swamp, I acknowledge that the member and the community has been advocating work to address that longstanding issue. Minister Moriarty is aware of the ongoing projects and funding requests and she will consider them as part of the budget process. As the member would know, it is a complicated issue due to the mix of public and private ownership, but a range of agencies and groups are involved in attempting to restore the wetlands. The Tuckean Steering Committee is a collaborative group of stakeholders, including government agencies, local councils, partner organisations, landholders, traditional owners and expert consultants, which develops wetland remediation options and advances the long-term restoration. OzFish, a key stakeholder in the group, was awarded \$160,000 from the Flagship Habitat Rehabilitation Grants program to commission a hydrological assessment. I have had the pleasure of working with OzFish on a number of occasions when I was involved in Murray-Darling Basin water work. It is a very good organisation with a strong record of improving fish habitat around New South Wales. [*Extension of time*]

OzFish has a terrific record in things like undertaking re-snagging and habitat restoration in inland waterways to make sure that the fish populations are healthy. In addition to that project, a number of projects to inform the draft Tuckean implementation plan have been funded by the New South Wales Government's Marine Estate Management Strategy, including reports on modelling scenarios in the *Tuckean Swamp Project Options Study*, a cost-benefit analysis, an ecological values assessment and fish monitoring using eDNA techniques. Lastly, I note the NSW Estuary Asset Protection Program, led by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and co-funded by the Australian and New South Wales governments under Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, was established to support the repair, restoration and regeneration of priority riparian and estuarine areas significantly affected by the February 2022 flooding. It is an issue that cannot be fixed overnight but, on behalf of the Minister, I reassure the member that the New South Wales Government is committed to working collaboratively with relevant stakeholders to restore the area.

## HEALTH WORKFORCE

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (11:46):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister update the House on the Government's investment into our health workforce and its commitment to deliver safe staffing levels?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:46):** I thank the member for Wallsend for her question. It was a pleasure to join her and her Hunter colleagues at the John Hunter Hospital last week, one of the busiest and biggest hospitals in the nation. The pressure on that hospital is significant and the expansion works that are now well and truly underway will make a big difference. Importantly, when this Government came into office in 2023—this is by no means a criticism of the former Government—there was a significant focus on what I would call buildings and hard infrastructure from previous governments of all persuasions. Health facilities like John Hunter Hospital are very important but it became evident very quickly that the Government needed to move that focus on to the men and women who deliver those services in our hospitals and health services every single day.

Members would remember that the Nurses and Midwives' Association had campaigned for over a decade on moving to a ratio-based staffing model in New South Wales hospitals, but that model was neither considered nor implemented by the previous Government. When we came to government, we found that we had to start from a really low base before we could reach the staffing levels required for many of the hospitals. I understand that would be a challenge for most Ministers and it will be a challenge for the Minister after me, so we needed to use this parliamentary term to reform the way public hospitals are staffed. Having announced in opposition that we would move toward a ratio-based safe staffing system—one in three in emergency departments—we now have 21 sites moving towards that target.

Over 320 additional nurses have been recruited to meet that commitment, which is now being matched at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. One of the country's most significant and most respected hospitals right in the heart of this city now has one to three in its emergency department, as does John Hunter Hospital and a range of other hospitals.



We are moving through levels five and six—the very big emergency departments—towards the middle of this year. We will then go on to level three and four hospitals. That will take an investment of well over \$1 billion. It will see well over 2,000 additional nurses put into the system and, most importantly, it will allow us to focus on delivering better and safer care for patients in our communities. [*Extension of time*]

This is an important reform. It is the single largest reform to the way our hospitals are staffed ever undertaken by a government in New South Wales, and that takes time. We are ahead of every other jurisdiction in the country that has embarked on a ratio-based system of rostering, but by no means are we done. We still have a long way to go. We have not completed levels five and six yet, and I would like to see it move even faster. An implementation team from the Nurses and Midwives' Association in partnership with NSW Health is walking through emergency departments to determine spaces and staff profiles, and then going out to recruitment. That takes time. It is a big reform, and we all want to see it happen as quickly as possible.

That is not all that the Government is doing about staffing. We have created a pipeline of future health workers by investing in tertiary study subsidies. We are doubling the incentive for rural health workers to up to \$20,000 for those going into regional, rural and remote New South Wales. We essentially secured the employment of many GPs who were looking at leaving because of payroll tax implications that have been around since 2018. That investment of close to \$200 million has saved many GPs from hitting the wall. More importantly, it incentivises the GPs providing bulk billing to each of our communities. There is a long way to go. However, we will continue to make staffing the first, second and third priority, because when we get that right, we can deliver the very best patient care across New South Wales.

### MOORE PARK GOLF COURSE

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (11:51):** My question is directed to the Premier. Woollahra, Randwick, and Waverley councils, including the majority of Labor councillors, have resolved to oppose the Government's plan to halve the Moore Park public golf course. Will the Government respect the position of its local government colleagues and instead join them and the Opposition in supporting the Moore Park Golf Collective's proposal to deliver an additional 15 hectares of open space?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:52):** I have looked at that proposal from the coalition of people who want to keep the golf course. It involves an enormous amount of money. It requires a new car park underneath the hill—

**Mr Paul Scully:** Demolishing a childcare centre.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** —demolishing the childcare centre, and taking over some public land that is not part of the Moore Park Golf Course. I am surprised the Opposition has unilaterally signed up to that position. It is hard to get a position out of the Opposition, but sometimes we can glean one through questions. I make this point: The New South Wales Government is responsible for its policy decisions. Of course, we respect the positions of councillors and mayors, but we have to make decisions that we think are in the best interests of the State. That does not mean passing over responsibility to councillors and local councils, even if they are from the same political party.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** You're doing it for Clover.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** You cannot have it both ways. You say that we are doing it for one council, but we are not doing it for another council.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** This is an important point. Currently 690,000 people live within a five-kilometre radius of Moore Park. By 2041, that number will rise to 800,000. That is the most densely populated part of Australia. Consider what the Government is trying to do for Green Square, where 33,000 people currently live. As those who have visited Green Square know, people there live mostly in apartments and units. By 2040, that population will rise to 80,000. In my spare time, I have been going through the Eastern Suburbs Football Association's report—I try to read these things. The report clearly states that land in the eastern suburbs is both expensive and in very short supply. The situation with fields will become more difficult as the population grows.

The report goes on to state, "This shows that if there is not significant increase in the number of fields provided, the large gap between what is available and what is needed will grow." There are not enough playing fields at the moment for local sporting groups, but with the population projected to increase rapidly, that number will get even worse. I am all ears on where to put in more open space. I can reveal to the House that as part of the Government's plan for Moore Park, it will put in more sporting infrastructure, particularly football fields for local sporting organisations. That is vitally important for parents who want their kids to play soccer and football in local parks.

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** Don't you care about golf?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I do care about golf, but there are 90 golf courses in Sydney and there will still be nine holes at Moore Park. I make the point that Moore Park Golf Course—this is important— *[Time expired.]*

#### APARTMENT ROOFTOP SOLAR

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (11:55):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Emergency Services, representing the Minister for Energy. Will the Minister inform the House how the Minns Labor Government is working with the Federal Labor Government to make solar power more accessible and affordable for the many people who live in apartments?

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (11:56):** I thank the member for Parramatta, who knows the importance of solar and is particularly interested in the announcement about solar on apartment blocks. New South Wales families and businesses are leading the way in taking up solar and batteries. I acknowledge an old friend of mine in the public gallery, Mark McConville, the principal of Toronto High School. As a reforming principal, he has put solar panels on the school's science block. That is fantastic. I inform the students in the gallery that he gave me the tip that he is taking them out for lunch today. They should not let him get away without taking them out for lunch wherever they want to go—he is happy to pay for it himself.

**The SPEAKER:** That lets me off the hook.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** For the second year in a row, New South Wales has led the way in the installation of solar panels and batteries. In the past year alone, the people of New South Wales have put on the equivalent of one gigawatt of rooftop solar capacity. For the information of the member for Upper Hunter, that is one billion watts, which can fire up 750,000 homes with access to power. It could light up one million lights at any given time. It could ensure that Minister Hoenig's hair dryer runs for at least six months straight. The jump in household batteries goes—

**The SPEAKER:** I am in danger of losing control of the House. Members will come to order. The Minister will answer the question without reference to the Leader of the House.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** I did check with him, Mr Speaker. I admire anyone with that sort of hair. I wish I had hair like that. The gentleman has not aged a day since he has been in Parliament. On a serious note, that jump in take-up is because there is also an incentive. Last year I spoke about the New South Wales Government's incentives for batteries in particular. We know that we need lots of extra storage. It is a great opportunity for people to make sure that they can benefit from solar. However, one group seems to continuously miss out because they do not own the space themselves: people who live in apartment blocks. Apartments make up about 20 per cent of all homes in Sydney. People in apartments do not have the ability to access solar to generate power that could effectively bring down their power bills, and at the same time help to improve the environment. *[Extension of time]*

In addition, it can also be used for storage. Residents have not had the opportunities to benefit from it. Yesterday the Premier said that 30 per cent of people in New South Wales are renters. They do not have access to solar power. This is a really good program. The Federal Government and the State Government launched a program to support residents living in apartment and strata blocks by sharing the cost of installing solar panels and batteries, matching up to \$150,000 per block, making solar power much more accessible. The good thing is that this is one of the cheapest ways to deliver the power supplies that we need. Everybody should be able to benefit from this sensible, commonsense approach. The partnership between the State and Federal governments has made solar power accessible to people, including renters, which ultimately brings down their power bills, gives us more power and helps with short duration storage. In a roundabout way—or in a direct way—we are also working to save the environment.

That is very different to the approach of the Opposition. Whilst Labor is putting solar panels on people's roofs, Peter Dutton is going to put lead paint on them instead. The Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Nationals say we need to lift the ban on nuclear energy. The only problem is that the member for Upper Hunter and the member for Bathurst are both saying, "That is fine; just not in my backyard." On this side of the Chamber, members know what can happen when people work with colleagues to ensure that all communities are supported. Unfortunately, Opposition members do not.

#### MOORE PARK GOLF COURSE

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (12:01):** My question is directed to the Minister for Sport, Minister for Jobs and Tourism, and Minister for Lands and Property. Earlier this month in budget estimates, the

Minister said that the alternate proposal for Moore Park was "a good proposal". Does the Minister stand by that remark?

**The SPEAKER:** I call the Minister. It is great to have him back at the table answering a question.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, Minister for Sport, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (12:01):** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** An Opposition member asked the question. Opposition members will now listen respectfully, and no doubt intently, to the Minister's answer.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** It is good to see the member for Winston Hills has switched on to a sport issue, because he has been switched off for the past two years. Many good proposals are put across at a time, but a decision has been made by this Government to expand the open space for the community around the Moore Park site. People can come up with 100 different quality proposals, but that does not mean they will meet the objectives of the Government. It is as simple as that, and the Opposition needs to accept it.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** When did the member for Winston Hills last play golf at Moore Park? I thank him for his interest.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order and listen to the Minister's answer.

**Ms Eleni Petinos:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Miranda rises on a point of order. I imagine she wants me to call members to order. Is that what the member is seeking?

**Ms Eleni Petinos:** Mr Speaker, I would not dare. You are more than capable of managing the House.

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

**Ms Eleni Petinos:** My point of order goes to Standing Order 129, direct relevance. I was going to give the Minister an opportunity to find some more words, but the question was about the Minister's position on the Moore Park proposal and what he said in budget estimates, not the ability of the member for Winston Hills to play golf.

**The SPEAKER:** I understand the vibe of the member's point of order. The Minister was in order at the start of his answer, but he has strayed a little. The Minister will continue his answer.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** I do not think I could have been more relevant. I do not know why the shadow Minister for Sport is offended by other sporting facilities in the Moore Park precinct.

**Mr Mark Coure:** She just helped you.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** She can help me.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Oatley that he is on one call to order. If he does not cease interjecting, he will be called to order for the second time.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** I support what the Government is proposing, and I am happy to see a lot more sporting activity, open space and facilities for the community around that precinct.

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

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has resumed his seat. But I would have declined to grant him an additional two minutes.

## SILICOSIS

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (12:05):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety. Will the Minister update the House on what the Government is doing to protect workers against the scourge of silicosis?

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (12:05):** I thank the hardworking member for Granville for that important question. The member and I have attended a number of memorial services at the Wall of Memory at the Brickworks site in Holroyd Gardens to pay our respects, in particular, to workers who have died from dust diseases. The Minns Government was elected on a platform of protecting workers from silicosis, a deadly disease contracted from exposure to silica dust. Tunnelling is taking place right across Sydney to ensure that New South Wales remains a

modern, vibrant and globally competitive place to live, work and do business. Major tunnelling projects present heightened risks for silica-related lung disease. I note that *The Sydney Morning Herald* has published a series of stories highlighting that issue, as has Channel 7. It is a serious issue.

I take this opportunity to express my deep concern and empathy for any workers who may have been diagnosed with silicosis in tunnelling and elsewhere, and I reaffirm my commitment to protecting workers from that deadly disease. We know that the former Coalition Government neglected SafeWork, the regulator responsible for work health and safety, and I am pleased that this Parliament has passed Labor's bill to restore and repair SafeWork NSW as a standalone regulator.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** We made it a notifiable disease.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** You didn't do anything. You didn't prosecute. That was under you. Check the papers.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will not respond to interjections.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** The Minns Government inherited a neglected safety system, but it has since taken a methodical approach to address concerns around silica. In February the Government established a new expert taskforce to oversee and help address silica-related health risks for workers in tunnelling projects. The taskforce is made up of Government, medical, industry and union representatives who will provide expert guidance to prevent and manage silica- and other dust-related disease associated with tunnelling projects in New South Wales. Four broad areas of action have been identified to help focus and guide the work of the taskforce, including better use of data with more transparent access, improved health monitoring, best-practice work health and safety controls, and enhanced compliance.

I am pleased to advise the House that the taskforce is scheduled to meet in a few weeks time. Additional staff have already been surged into the silica taskforce team, which is undertaking compliance activities in all tunnels under construction in New South Wales. Eight inspectors from the team are undertaking regular visits. That proactive approach to protect workers against silicosis in tunnelling follows a raft of initiatives already implemented by the Government, working together with the Australian Workers' Union on those matters. *[Extension of time]*

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

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** On 1 January 2025 the Minns Government welcomed the ban on the importation of engineered stone products to protect the future health and safety of workers. The national import ban covers engineered stone benchtops, slabs and panels, with silica content of more than 1 per cent. That followed the world's first domestic ban on the use, supply and manufacture of engineered stone products in Australia, which started on 1 July last year.

The Minns Labor Government led the campaign for a nationwide ban. Our leader vowed he was prepared to act unilaterally ahead of an agreement being reached across the Commonwealth.

The New South Wales Government is funding a team of dedicated silica safety inspectors to ensure businesses comply with the strengthened laws. Since September, following a \$2½ million investment, a silica compliance team has conducted 140 inspections. It has handed out three fines totalling almost \$10,000 for noncompliance and issued more than 125 improvement notices and seven prohibition notices in the workplace. We also set up the silica worker register. The Law and Justice Committee is currently inquiring into dust diseases, and we will consider its recommendations when they are provided. I look forward to updating the Workers' Compensation (Dust Diseases) Act 1942. The former Government did not take work health and safety seriously. They treated the regulator as red tape and hid it under an entanglement of other regulators in a mega-department. It was not a standalone regulator. The regulator went softly softly under members' opposition. Now we are cleaning up their mess.

#### KEEP ON TRACK YOUTH DIVERSIONARY PROGRAM

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (12:10):** My question is directed to the Premier. Keep On Track is a successful youth diversionary program across regional New South Wales. The funding for the program in my region runs out at the end of next month, with his government choosing not to extend support. Will the Premier personally intervene and commit the \$1.5 million required to continue this life-changing program in the upcoming budget?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:11):** I am not aware of the program. I will look into it on behalf of the member for Tamworth.

## HOUSING SUPPLY

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (12:11):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister outline to the House what actions the Minns Labor Government has taken to speed up council assessment approvals to deliver more homes for the people of New South Wales?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (12:11):** I am happy to update the member for Camden on council assessment processes. I note Camden Council currently averages 72 days assessment time. That is well ahead of its statement of expectations, and better than others. Camden Council did not get a letter from me recently, but I will get to that in a minute. The Minns Labor Government has introduced the biggest planning reforms in decades to get housing and job-creating investments moving again in New South Wales. We want to make sure that young people, families, downsizers and essential workers all have access to good quality homes in vibrant communities.

For too long, New South Wales has simply not been building enough houses, and many key job-creating projects have taken too long to be approved. Many parts of government need to improve their performance to address this. That is why we introduced measures such as the Housing Taskforce, which is clearing the backlog of proposals and producing results. More than 2,000 agency concurrences and referrals have been cleared out of the way. Addressing the housing crisis is the responsibility of all levels of government. From the beginning we said that councils have to do their part in addressing the problem. Councils assess more than 80 per cent of development applications and play a crucial role in the planning system. That is why the Government took steps to make sure that councils are doing that as efficiently as possible.

Many members might expect me to highlight those councils that have not been lifting their weight. Instead, I will take a moment to recognise those councils that have heard the call from their communities and are getting on with the job of increasing housing supply. As of January in this financial year, Parramatta council approved 2,631 dwellings. The Hills Shire Council comes in second with 1,916 approvals. Blacktown City Council approved 1,589 dwellings, Liverpool City Council approved 1,253 and Burwood Council approved 1,073. Leading the list of councils outside Greater Sydney I am pleased to say is my own city of Wollongong, which the Premier recognised earlier as a great place to visit. Wollongong approved 837 dwellings.

Importantly, development assessments are faster than the system we inherited two years ago. When we came to government, the average assessment time was 117 days. That was far too slow. I am pleased to report to the House that in the first seven months since we started publishing council league tables of performance, average assessment times are down to 103 days. On average, that is under the target performance for the second year of the statement of expectations, with only the first seven months of those targets being in place. [*Extension of time*]

There is more improvement to be made, but things are heading in the right direction. This is proof that the league tables and statements of expectations, and the desire of those newly elected councillors to hold themselves to account, is speeding up approvals. There are still too many councils that are taking too long. When the expectations are not met, those councils can be sure that the Government will take action. Earlier this month, I wrote to six councils that were not performing to the standards the Government has set. Georges River, Sutherland shire, North Sydney, Willoughby, Wingecarribee shire and Queanbeyan-Palerang councils are on notice to improve their performance. They have to lift their game. Those councils have consistently not met expectations for average assessment times, nor are they meeting expectations in the proportion of assessments that are completed on time. Councils have been asked to explain how they will swiftly improve their performance. The Government stands ready to help if councils cannot do it themselves. For those that do not improve, the Minister for Local Government and I are in lockstep and will take action if needed.

I am heartened to see the work that some councils have done to improve their assessment times. This shows that all councils can do it. They can lift their game if they are asked to, and I hope that all of them will. Speeding up approval times is a key part of delivering more homes for the people of New South Wales. It is part of turning around the confused and confusing planning system we inherited two years ago and once again making sure that New South Wales is the State of "Yes"—yes to housing, yes to jobs, yes to construction, and yes to better and more vibrant communities.

## SHORT-TERM RENTAL ACCOMMODATION

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:16):** My question is not about golf. My question is directed to the Minister for Health, representing the Minister for Housing in the other place. Given that the quickest way to increase the supply of rental property is to return short-term lets back to housing, and it has been a year since the Government took submissions on the regulation of short-term rentals, what action is the Government taking to stop rental homes being turned into hotel rooms, including a Victorian-style levy, caps and better enforcement?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:17):** I thank the member for Sydney for his question. I think all of us would agree that he has long been a strong advocate for sensible housing reform. He works closely with the Minister in the other place, whom I represent. Last night I spent a couple of hours in his electorate with Dr Daniel Nour and his team at Street Side Medics. It was one of the most humbling experiences a person can have, and an important one. If any member of this place wants to spend time with Street Side Medics, I ask them to please let me know. Dr Nour deals with the most vulnerable people in that part of Sydney and probably in New South Wales. Most of them are homeless. Many have multiple health conditions and have struggled with addiction, both drug and alcohol or a combination of the two.

Housing is critical to them. The member for Sydney knows it, but meeting those people last night certainly brought home to me some of the issues they face, including their need for health care. Under the leadership of Minister Jackson, Minister Scully, Minister Chanthivong, and led by the Premier, our priority has been to invest record amounts of money into social housing to introduce the most significant planning reforms in a generation and make renting a home easier and fairer.

The Government issued a discussion paper to hear from the sector and users of short-term rentals. It is reviewing the operation of the short-term rental accommodation planning and regulatory framework, which has been led by Minister Jackson, whom I represent in this place, and supported by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure and NSW Treasury.

The lack of housing affordability and availability is the result of many ongoing and legacy factors that will not be completely solved by reforms to short-term rental accommodation. Even if we banned that type of accommodation outright, we would still face many of the current issues. Estimates suggest that more than 95,000 residential properties in New South Wales are either used as non-hosted short-term rental accommodation, are holiday homes not used as short-term rental accommodation or are left vacant throughout the year. That represents around 3 per cent of the stock of private residential properties, which is broadly equivalent to around two years of average residential dwelling completions in New South Wales. [*Extension of time*]

The Government is focused on the delivery of new social and affordable homes through its record-breaking \$6.6 billion Building Homes for NSW program. That is the largest ever investment in social housing by a State government in the history of New South Wales. The Government is also investing \$5.1 billion in 8,400 new social homes to replace 2,200 outdated dwellings—no doubt the member for Sydney, whose electorate has a very large amount of social housing, will receive funding for those types of facilities—\$810 million to upgrade 30,000 properties and \$527.6 million for homelessness services, as I spoke about earlier. That includes reforming crisis accommodation, supporting specialist homeless services to deliver critical services to clients and creating a new homelessness innovation fund to deliver innovative responses to the current housing crisis. Also, \$202.6 million will be used to fund a critical maintenance program for Aboriginal housing, which also relates to the member's electorate. In many electorates, particularly in rural and regional areas, that plays an important role in the housing mix. Finally, \$15 million will deliver the Homes NSW cadetships program.

Whether it is ending no-grounds evictions, making it easier to keep pets or ensuring renters have fee-free ways to pay rent, the reforms in the Government's rental reform schedule deliver practical improvements that will benefit millions of people across New South Wales. The Minister in the other place made it clear that she will continue to work closely with the member for Sydney. She values the member's input in this place, as I think we all do. He has been a strong and ardent supporter of additional housing in and around his community, and I thank him for his question.

## **WOMEN'S SAFETY AND NATURAL DISASTERS**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (12:22):** My question is addressed to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Will the Minister update the House on work to increase the safety of women and victim-survivors of domestic and family violence during natural disasters?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (12:22):** I thank the hardworking member for South Coast for her question and, as always, for her advocacy on issues relating to women's safety. In preparation for a natural disaster, women's safety cannot be an afterthought. Northern New South Wales towns have experienced many disasters in recent history. I know all of us in this place keep these communities in our thoughts and hope that they remain safe. Last year the University of Newcastle release a report entitled *Women's leadership and a community 'saving itself': Learning from disasters. Health and well-being impacts of the Northern Rivers Flood 2022*. I met with the authors of the report not long after it was released to understand the issues that they were raising and their findings and recommendations.

The report's primary focus was to raise the issue of leadership from local women in the floods in northern New South Wales, and there was certainly no lack of leadership from women at that time. It also documented reports of evacuation centres, which should be places of refuge, not adequately ensuring the safety of women and victim-survivors of domestic and family violence, including in relation to safety from physical and sexual violence. In 2022 those centres were among the largest and the longest operating centres in the State's history. Some operated for up to six weeks, managing up to 1,500 evacuees. The report outlined clearly the experiences of women and victim-survivors during the disaster and the extent to which the risk to their safety could be exacerbated by their prior trauma.

The Government has responded to the issues raised in the report with practical and pragmatic changes, including through the work of the Department of Communities and Justice and the Women's Safety Commissioner, Dr Hannah Tonkin, working with the disaster welfare team and the NSW Reconstruction Authority to ensure that disaster readiness and response are designed to deliver on the needs of women and children. There have also been improvements to recruitment, triaging and training in evacuation centres, such as the development of an evacuation centre manual to provide guidance on how to set up and run a centre that promotes safety and privacy. About 350 additional personnel have also been recruited and trained across the Department of Communities and Justice, the Department of Education and TAFE to allow centres to roster more people per shift. [*Extension of time*]

On top of that, the Government has run a program of exercises that simulates a real centre with real scenarios, including dangers to safety and privacy. To date, 15 of those exercises have been held with evacuation centre personnel. There has also been training to prioritise certain key groups who may be at increased risk, including victims-survivors of domestic and family violence. Those improvements mean that if a victim-survivor discloses concerns about domestic and family violence, they will be connected with a specialist service and placed into short-term emergency accommodation rather than the alternative, which is remaining in the evacuation centre.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** That's a really good idea.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** It is. I acknowledge the work that Minister Dib did previously and still does in his current portfolio. On top of that, police at evacuation centres are notified if evacuees are at risk or have apprehended domestic violence orders against them, and they work with the centre team to ensure the safety of victim-survivors in the centre. The Government will continue to listen to victim-survivors. If further changes need to be made to ensure the safety of women in the aftermath of natural disasters, we will certainly seek to make them.

Finally, I thank the New South Wales police and the staff and volunteers who were on the ground in the evacuation centres during the response to the recent Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred. I also recognise the impact of the ongoing recovery and the complex trauma that some of those people may have experienced going through multiple emergencies. I thank them for being there for the victims-survivors, particularly the women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence, whose safety is paramount.

#### *Petitions*

### **RESPONSES TO PETITIONS**

**The CLERK:** I announce that the following Minister has lodged a response to an ePetition signed by more than 20,000 persons:

#### **Nurses' and Midwives' Pay**

The Hon. Ryan Park—Nurses' and Midwives' Pay—lodged 19 February 2025 (Ms Jenny Leong)

#### *Bills*

### **CLAIM FARMING PRACTICES PROHIBITION BILL 2025**

#### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 18 March 2025.**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (12:29):** I indicate that the Opposition will support the Claim Farming Practices Prohibition Bill 2025. This bill will prohibit an unethical practice commonly known as claim farming, which a small number of legal practitioners and others engage in to aggressively solicit persons into making compensation claims in tort. Although the overwhelming majority of the legal profession behaves ethically and in the best interests of clients and the community, it is appropriate to legislate to prohibit claim farming. It is a rare but unacceptable practice, which should be prohibited. Claim farming exploits often vulnerable claimants by exposing them to high-pressure tactics and misleading promises to coerce them into lodging claims.

Claim farming involves a kind of secret commission or undisclosed fee to the claim farmer. This is sometimes paid by a lawyer at the end of a claim against the vulnerable claimant. Claim farming occurs where legal practices or other persons actively solicit claims. For example, they could contact the entire population of a prison and indicate to them that they may have suffered tortious damage for which they can recover damages. Victim-survivors of child abuse have been a particular target of this practice. They have a significant risk of re-traumatisation and financial loss through these aggressive practices.

There are a number of reports of the compensation available to victim-survivors through the National Redress Scheme. This is deposited into the solicitors' trust account as part of the claim farming practice to cover fees on a separate claim with the promise of a higher payout of damages that may or may not eventuate. Any civil redress money is exhausted in the payment of professional fees, leaving the claimant with nothing but revisited trauma. Claims that are pursued for the benefit of claim farmers and unscrupulous lawyers can result in a cost order against the vulnerable claimant if the case is ultimately unsuccessful. This puts the claimant in a much worse financial position than they would have been in before being contacted by the claim farmer.

Claim farmers also make extensive use of referral services. Adding insult to injury, the referral fee paid for the claim is often charged to the client as a disbursement, meaning the claimant is charged for the cost of the solicitor sourcing their business. Anecdotal reports indicate that claims can be sold to a law practice for anywhere between \$800 to \$10,000. This indicates the value of the new business to the claim farmer. Claim farming is also harmful to the administration of justice. In the rush to make claims, it is clear that a number of them are fraudulent. Seven people were arrested and charged over alleged fraudulent sexual abuse compensation claims last month. These were part of a claim farming scheme that targeted the NSW Department of Education and was allegedly worth more than \$1 billion.

New South Wales police allege that claim farmers encouraged former young offenders, inmates and public school students to file fraudulent compensation claims for historic child abuse while in care. Although it had the best of intentions, I note that the government abolished the limitation period for child sexual offences to facilitate the ability of genuine victims of child abuse to bring forward claims. This is unfortunately being exploited by unscrupulous people for fraudulent purposes. Prospective claimants were coached on how to make fraudulent claims through various Sydney law firms. One-third of the inmates at Cooma Correctional Centre apparently submitted claims, all of which will now be investigated by police as a number of them are thought to be fraudulent.

The bill will prohibit a person from contacting another person to encourage them to make a relevant claim and from buying or selling a relevant claim referral. It will prevent lawyers who are convicted of these offences from charging legal costs for the claim and require them to refund any costs already received. This is appropriate, as solicitors will not be able to benefit financially from claim farming. They will also be liable for criminal penalties. The bill will not prevent claimants from making legitimate claims. It will protect them from aggressive and unethical practices.

The bill contains a number of protections and exemptions for normal and legitimate activities including the buying and selling of legal practices or the referral of clients to another law firm with more expertise in an area of work. The central element of the offences portion of the bill is that consideration must flow for a referral. This does not include the common situation where an acquaintance of a lawyer is asked at a barbecue to recommend a lawyer. No payment is made for this type of referral other than the gratitude of a friend. Only wrongful and harmful practices for undisclosed fees are covered by this bill. Claim farming harms our entire community. It incentivises litigation for commercial gain rather than justice. It erodes public confidence in our institutions and legal fraternity. It clogs up courts with speculative or exaggerated claims and exploits vulnerable members of society.

It can lead to inflated legal costs, increased insurance premiums and the misuse of court time and resources. This brings up the old adage, "Justice delayed is justice denied" because legitimate claimants are not receiving timely compensation for their losses. Individuals targeted by claim farmers may be misled into pursuing claims that are not in their best interests, without informed legal advice that they do not fully understand. This bill aims to protect claimants and discourage opportunistic and unethical behaviour. It ensures that our system is based on justice rather than exploitation. The Opposition support this bill.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (12:37):** Susan locked her childhood memories away. She folded them into a heavy wooden chest in her mind and never thought about them again. She never dared to unlock them. When she was driving home one day, Susan received a call from a lawyer. This lawyer was ready to pry open Susan's darkest memories to satisfy his personal greed. Susan was a victim of child sexual abuse suffered while she was in an institution in the 1970s. Decades later, she received a cold call from a lawyer asking detailed questions about this abuse. She had never told anyone and was gutted to think that someone knew. The lawyer told Susan that he had been given her name and phone number by a client who she had known when she was in care.



Susan was eventually convinced to make a compensation claim, but nothing prepared her for how re-traumatising this entire matter would be.

Susan's lawyer acted against her wishes and made unsolicited contact with her family members, trying to convince them to also make claims. The lawyers pushed Susan beyond her comfort. They sought financial gain for themselves. For Susan, they unearthed a trauma. She was left broken, wishing she had never picked up the phone. Susan fell victim to an unconscionable business model that profits from the pain and suffering of those who have already suffered far too much. That model is called claim farming.

I support the Claim Farming Practices Prohibition Bill 2025. I thank the Attorney General for developing the bill. I also thank all the key stakeholders for their submissions on the draft bill, including the Law Society of New South Wales, the New South Wales Bar Association, the New South Wales Children's Guardian, institutions, charities, care leavers, victim-survivors and many others. Those submissions helped to shape the legislation into effective, fit-for-purpose reforms. The bill creates new offences to prohibit the practice of claim farming in relation to personal injury claims under the Civil Liability Act 2002, or the CLA, as well as personal injury claims arising from intentional torts. Claim farming practices occur across many areas of the law, including motor vehicle insurance claims and personal injury matters. Those practices are predatory and exploitative, and negatively impact victim-survivors.

Claim farming refers to the practice of procuring information from a potential claimant and persuading them to make a claim. It often involves obtaining the personal information of victim-survivors through unethical conduct, misleading or deceptive practices, harassment or intimidation. That could include unsolicited contact with a victim-survivor in order to pressure that person to initiate a claim; contact by a claim farmer, as we call them, purporting to be a claims management service or survivor advocate service; charging a victim-survivor a fee to refer the claim to a lawyer; selling claims to a lawyer or other claim farming organisation, sometimes without the claimant's knowledge; and making promises about potential legal entitlements that may not be accurate or in the claimant's best interests.

Victims of claim farming have reported receiving cold calls from lawyers equipped with details of their family's injuries and personal information. Those calls were persistent, pushing them to make a claim. The calls resulted in victims feeling their privacy had been invaded and left victims exposed. Claim farming is especially evil when it involves victim-survivors of sexual abuse. Due to the type of trauma experienced, victim-survivors who have been subject to claim farming may have a delayed recognition of their exploitation. Claim farming is insidious behaviour, and the bill seeks to put an end to such conduct in New South Wales. In particular, the bill prohibits a person contacting another to encourage them to make a claim and prohibits a person from buying or selling a claim referral. The bill also amends the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 to penalise lawyers who engage in claim farming conduct.

I now turn to the specific provisions of the bill. Proposed section 5 makes it an offence to contact a potential claimant to solicit a claim where consideration, namely a fee or benefit, is given. That includes arranging for a third party to contact a potential claimant. In the bill, soliciting includes inducement, while "referral" in relation to a claim includes referrals from services provided to a claimant and disclosure of a claimant's personal details. Convictions for offences under proposed section 5 carry a maximum penalty of 500 penalty units, or \$55,000 as it stands today.

To ensure that practitioners genuinely intending to support claimants are not incorrectly captured in the offences, exceptions have been included. As such, proposed section 5 does not apply if a potential claimant is contacted by a notice given under section 175 of the CLA or a corresponding law; if a law practice contacts a potential claimant they have provided legal services to and reasonably believes the potential claimant will not object to the contact; or if a law practice contacts a potential claimant after receiving a request to do so by a community legal service or industrial organisation, and confirms they reasonably believe the potential claimant will not object to such contact.

Proposed section 6 introduces a further offence for buying or selling a referral of a claim. The section makes it an offence for a law firm to compensate another party for obtaining personal information of potential claimants and providing it to the firm. Exceptions to that offence also apply. The section does not apply where a law practice, acting for a claimant, refers a current matter to a person to provide a service, or where a law practice is sold to another law practice, and the claimant consents to the referral. The bill also proposes a general exception to the offences under sections 5 and 6, exempting public advertising for legal services.

Importantly, proposed schedule 2 imposes additional consequences for legal practitioners who engage in claim farming practices. The schedule amends section 165B of the uniform law to provide that claim farming is conduct capable of constituting unsatisfactory professional conduct or professional misconduct. A legal practitioner found guilty of unsatisfactory professional conduct or professional misconduct may face further

disciplinary action, the consequences of which may be as severe as the suspension or cancellation of the solicitor's practising certificate or the removal of the solicitor's name from the Supreme Court's roll. It is indeed a large price to pay. Finally, legal firms that engage in claim farming practices and are convicted under the new offences will be unable to recover any costs in relation to such claims.

Jurisdictions such as Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia have introduced similar legislation to prohibit claim farming. In a landmark decision on 7 February 2023, Magistrate Peter Saggars of the Brisbane Magistrates Court fined Accident Management Solutions \$1 million for 94 claim farming offences. The case marked the first claim-farming-related sentencing in Australia. The fine was significant and sent a strong message of deterrence to those engaging in similar practices. Closer to home, Strike Force Veritas was established by the NSW Police Force State Crime Command's Financial Crimes Squad in February 2024 to investigate fraudulent compensation claims for historical sexual abuse.

Just last month seven people were arrested across New South Wales—including, sadly, in the electorate of Prospect—in relation to an alleged sexual abuse claim farming scheme. New South Wales police officers estimated the scheme was worth over \$1 billion in fraudulent claims. The seven people charged in that investigation were set to make a potential profit of \$3.75 million from allegedly fraudulent sexual abuse compensation claims. Thankfully the alleged offenders were uncovered before those claims could be paid out. *[Extension of time]*

The impact of such fraudulent litigation claims on charities, churches and institutions, and the impact on victim-survivors and the delay of justice, is appalling. Vulnerable population groups bear greater exposure to risks of targeting by claim farmers, with farmers targeting people in lower socio-economic conditions, First Nations people, people in regional communities, care leavers and incarcerated victims. At Cooma Correctional Centre, claim farmers targeted inmates to exploit their stories. Over one-third of names reported claims of childhood abuse. Those inmates were bombarded with daily calls until claims were lodged.

Claim farmers have also targeted victims' support or advocacy groups on Facebook and in community groups. They contact members of the groups and offer help in lodging a claim at a cost-effective rate, all the while failing to disclose free support services are available under the National Redress Scheme. Others have posed as survivor advocacy groups and use that position to garner information and bombard group members into lodging a claim.

We must remember that many victims of claim farming today were victims of abuse as children. For many, the original heinous acts of abuse occurred under a mindset that "children should be seen and not heard". These victims were children, and children at that time were not prone to being believed. These children were doubted. They were called liars. They were told they were exaggerating and told not to speak out of turn. Now that we have shifted our judicial system into one that is victim-focused, one that believes its victims and one that recognises the awful reality of institutional abuse that occurred across Australia, claim farming is bringing a new layer of doubt for victim-survivors and institutions. The terrible effect of claim farming is that it forces our police and our practitioners to scratch their heads and question if a victim's story is a real or a fraudulent claim. That is how victim-survivors become retraumatised.

Claim farming jeopardises legitimate claims and that, in turn, harms genuine and vulnerable claimants. It has the potential to undermine the integrity and operation of the justice system in New South Wales. Legal practitioners know how dangerous its impact is and, as such, any practitioners engaging in claim farming practices should be held accountable and be disbarred. The bill balances protecting members of the community from unethical, predatory and exploitative claim farming practices while preserving legitimate pathways to access justice. It puts victims where they should be—at the forefront—and introduces decisive measures to deal with those seeking to exploit and profit from the suffering of others. Without this important reform, these predatory practices will continue in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (12:51):** I welcome the opportunity to participate in debate on the Claim Farming Practices Prohibition Bill 2025. At the outset, I state that all members of this House would acknowledge that the overwhelming majority of legal practitioners are good-living honest people who operate ethically and certainly comply with the fit and proper person standards of the Law Society of New South Wales. I particularly acknowledge those who practice in personal injury and workers compensation. For them, legal representation is not just a job but a profession they undertake to help people, as do teachers and nurses. I acknowledge it is a form of employment and income, but certainly the people I know in the legal profession, whose names I will not mention because they know who they are, have committed their lives to the enduring pursuit of helping people in some of their darkest hours.

The reality is that this legislation is required. While we have an overwhelming vast majority of good practitioners, there is always a minimal minority who may not be as professional and ethical as those of the vast majority. The legislation is before the House today because claim farming is the practice of obtaining information

about a potential claimant and then pressuring them to make a civil claim. Claim farming involves a range of problematic conduct that includes getting a person's contact details without their consent; making uninvited contact with the person and pressuring or harassing them to make a claim; presenting as a claims management service, a survivor advocate organisation, or similar; selling a person's claim to a lawyer or other claim farming organisation without the person's knowledge; making promises about potential legal entitlements, which may not be accurate or in the person's best interests.

I acknowledge that many lawyers, solicitors, barristers do not charge many of their workers compensation clients at all unless there is a successful judicial outcome. Many in the legal profession who practise in this field will hold a meeting free of cost to ascertain whether the client has a case or not. The overwhelming majority will tell a victim-survivor they do not have a case based on the application of the law relevant to the claim. It is very important that this House acknowledges the existence of ethical practice among legal practitioners as well as the honourable nature of the judiciary. Just as we in the legislature pride ourselves on how we discharge our ethical responsibilities under our code, so do lawyers under the fit and proper person test that is applied to members of the legal profession. The Government has heard reports from stakeholders that claim farmers are paying third parties from \$50 to \$100 for each potential new claimant the third party identifies, and that they sell claims to law practices for between \$800 and \$10,000.

Solicitors and barristers may pass on costs to claimants through disbursements after a claim is finalised, but that is money which should go to the claimant as compensation for the injury they suffered. As I stated earlier, those practices are unethical and have negative and traumatic impacts on people who are at the most vulnerable stage of their lives. By prohibiting claim farming in personal injury claims under the Civil Liability Act and personal injury claims arising from intentional torts, the bill will protect the community from exploitative conduct. The scope of the bill will result in creation of a new Act to prohibit the practice of claim farming in relation to certain personal injury claims under the Civil Liability Act 2002, as well as under personal injury claims arising from intentional torts.

As the Attorney General said in his second reading speech, the bill will include most common law personal injury claims, including those related to child abuse, assault, medical negligence and public and product liability. However, certain other personal injury claims are excluded from the scope of the bill. They are specified in section 3B (1) (b) to section 3B (h) of the Civil Liability Act. They include claims for dust diseases, motor accidents, workers compensation, public transport accidents, victims of crime, sporting injuries compensation and compensation under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977.

How will the proposed offence provisions? Specifically, the bill will create two summary offences that prohibit a person from contacting another person to encourage them to make a relevant claim with the expectation of receiving a fee or other benefit; and buying or selling a claim referral. The bill also includes appropriate exemptions to those offences to safeguard the effective provision of legal services and to protect legitimate practices that facilitate access to justice by ensuring members of the public are informed of their legal rights. It also will amend the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 to impose additional consequences on legal practitioners who engage in the prohibited conduct of claim farming.

Consultation during the development of the bill was a key priority for the Attorney General and his team. I take the opportunity to thank the Attorney General, his staff and the department, who worked very hard to ensure that we found the right balance. I also acknowledge the Opposition for supporting this legislation. I believe that when we put in place the legislative reforms needed to help all people, we see this Parliament and this Legislative Assembly operating at its best. Things of that nature may go unnoticed or unheralded, but they are ultimately very important. For Labor members of Parliament and for me personally, workers compensation and ensuring that workers are not being exploited are a priority. That said, I am confident that it is a priority for every member in this place as we continue to pursue a better outcome for workers and families throughout the State.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** It being 1.00 p.m., pursuant to standing and sessional orders, debate is interrupted for the committees take-note debate. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

#### *Committees*

### **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

#### **Reports**

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

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (13:00):** As Chair: It is with great pleasure that I address the House as the Chair of the Legislation Review Committee. On 28 February 2025 the committee tabled *Legislation Review*

*Digest No. 24/58*, dated 11 February 2025. It was the first report of the committee in 2025. In the digest, the committee examined 13 bills that were introduced during the last sitting week of 2024. It also reviewed 20 regulations and statutory instruments, which were examined and found not to reach the reporting threshold under the Legislation Review Act. Those are set out at part 2 of the digest. As members are aware, the committee has the important role of reviewing all bills introduced and all statutory instruments tabled in Parliament. The committee's scrutiny of legislation informs members of both Houses and the community about the potential impacts of legislation on personal rights and liberties, and any potential inappropriate exercise of government or legislative power.

I now draw members' attention to the key issues raised in the digest. The committee reported on the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2024, which amended the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999. The amendments created a new offence relating to sexual conduct and intimate relationships between corrections officers and people serving criminal sentences. The bill also deferred a wide range of significant matters to the regulations, including when a parole authority may extend or impose a further period of supervision for serious offences with a parole order in place, as well as the way medical records are kept and accessed at correctional centres.

In its report, the committee highlighted those wide regulation-making powers and commented that substantive matters impacting individual rights should generally be set out in principal legislation rather than in regulations. However, the committee noted that the provisions may be intended to build flexibility into the regulatory framework and allow appropriate authorities to better respond to changes in criminal law proceedings. The committee also acknowledged that regulations are required to be tabled in Parliament and are subject to disallowance. For those reasons the committee made no further comment.

The committee also reported on the Energy Amendment (Pipelines and Gas Safety) Bill 2024, which seeks to amend the Gas Supply Act 1996, the Pipelines Act 1967 and the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. The amendments would make significant structural changes to the regulation of gas networks in New South Wales—for example, by expanding government inspection powers, allowing the Minister and secretary to delegate their functions, introducing a new regulation-making power for compulsory acquisition of pipeline land and allowing indictable offences to be tried summarily. It is a large and complex bill, and the committee's report highlighted five separate issues that reached the reporting threshold under the Legislation Review Act. The report determined that four of those issues required no further comment: introduction of absolute liability offences and continuing offences, deferral of significant matters to regulations, introduction of penalty notice offences, and wide powers of delegation for the Minister.

The fifth issue highlighted by the committee related to wide new powers for gas industry inspectors, including powers of entry, search and seizure. For example, the bill seeks to provide that information provided at the request of an inspector would not be inadmissible on the grounds that it might incriminate a person. That may impact a person's privilege against self-incrimination. The committee acknowledged that the bill proposes safeguards by prohibiting the use of self-incriminating information in criminal proceedings if an objection was or could have been raised or if a person was not warned of their right to object. However, those powers can still be exercised without a warrant and on broadly defined grounds. For those reasons, the committee referred the matter to the Parliament for consideration.

Finally, I turn to the private member's bill. The committee reported on the Electoral Amendment (Voter ID and Electronic Mark Off) Bill 2024 (No 2), which seeks to amend the Electoral Act 2017. The amendments would provide that voters must show identification from a prescribed list of documents in order to vote and that election officials must use the newly established electronic authorised roll to mark off voters. The amendments would also require election officials to reject a person's claim to vote if they do not show a relevant identification document. The committee noted in its report that the provisions replicate the bill's previous iterations, introduced in this House in March 2024 and September 2023.

In its report, the committee commented that requiring a person to provide identification documents may infringe on their right to vote and participate in public elections. The report acknowledged the proposed amendments are intended to protect the integrity of the election process. However, the committee notes that every person entitled to vote is constitutionally obliged to do so, and the bill would limit access to voting while also creating offences for failing to do so. For those reasons, the committee referred the matter to Parliament for consideration. That concludes my remarks on Legislation Review Committee's twenty-fourth digest. I encourage all members to read the digest, which is available on the committee's webpage. I thank my fellow committee members for their work.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (13:06):** It is my pleasure to make a contribution to debate on the Legislation Review Committee report entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 24/58*. I thank the chair for her leadership and the secretariat for doing an amazing job, which allowed committee members to do what we do.

There were 13 bills for consideration during that period. Of those, seven bills were identified to have issues. The bills without issues included the Crimes Amendment (Animal Sexual Abuse) Bill 2024, the Health Services Amendment (Hospital Helipads) Bill 2024, the Health Services Amendment (Industrial Relations) Bill 2024, the Mental Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, the Ports and Maritime Administration Amendment (White Bay Cruise Terminal—Shore Power) Bill 2024 and the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment (FOGO Recycling) Bill 2024.

Issues were raised with seven bills. The Automated External Defibrillators (Public Access) Bill 2024 was found to have issues concerning absolute liability offences. The committee made no further comment on those. There were significant custodial penalties, which were referred to Parliament for consideration. Both the statutory rule expressed to commence before publication on the New South Wales legislation website and the penalty notice offences and wide powers of delegation were also referred to the Parliament for consideration. The Automatic Mutual Recognition Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 was found to have issues regarding the application of laws outside New South Wales, on which the committee had no further comment. The Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2024 was found to have issues regarding the wide deferral of powers to regulations. Again, the committee had no further comment on that.

The Electoral Amendment (Voter ID and Electronic Mark Off) Bill 2024 (No 2) was found to have issues in regard to access to voting and the right to participate in public elections, for which it was referred to Parliament.

The Road Transport Amendment (Driving Through Floodwaters) Bill 2024 was found to have issues regarding an insufficiently defined penalty notice offence, and that was referred to Parliament. The Strata Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 was found to have issues regarding regulatory powers impacting personal rights and liberties. It was also found to have retrospective application of laws and wide regulation-making power, about which the committee made no further comment.

The final bill we looked at was the Energy Amendment (Pipelines and Gas Safety) Bill 2024, which was found to have issues regarding the wide official powers of inspectors, the absolute liability offences and continuing offences, the significant matters deferred to regulations, the penalty notices offences and the wide power of delegations. The committee made no further comment except for referring the wide official powers of inspectors regarding privacy and property rights to Parliament for review. That concludes my comments regarding the report.

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (13:09):** It is with pleasure that I address the House as a member of the Legislation Review Committee on its digest No. 24/58, which was tabled on 11 February. The digest considered 12 bills, and for six bills no issues were identified: the Crimes Amendment (Animal Sexual Abuse) Bill 2024, the Health Services Amendment (Hospital Helipads) Bill 2024, the Health Services Amendment (Industrial Relations) Bill 2024, the Mental Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, the Ports and Maritime Administration Amendment (White Bay Cruise Terminal—Shore Power) Bill 2024 and the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment (FOGO Recycling) Bill 2024. I note that for the Automated External Defibrillators (Public Access) Bill 2024 there were issues identified and referred. No further comment was made on the absolute liability offences.

Regarding the Electoral Amendment (Voter ID and Electronic Mark Off) Bill 2024 an issue was also referred. The bill proposes to amend the Electoral Act 2017 to introduce a requirement that a person show a current ID document to an election official when voting. It also proposes to insert new section 127 (3) (d), which would require an election official to reject a person's claim to vote if they fail or refuse to show a relevant ID document. By requiring a person to produce ID documents to vote, the bill may infringe on a person's access to voting, thereby impacting on their right to vote and participate in public elections. That is quite contrary to what we would consider correct in a democracy like our own. While the committee acknowledges that the amendments are intended to protect the integrity of the election process, the committee notes that every person who is entitled to vote is constitutionally obliged to vote in each election, and the Act establishes an offence for failing to do so. By potentially limiting access to voting, a person may therefore be at greater risk of committing an electoral offence for those reasons. The committee refers the matter to Parliament for its consideration.

Regarding the Energy Amendment (Pipelines and Gas Safety) Bill 2024 issues were identified and referred: the wide official powers of the inspectors, the privacy and property rights, and the privilege against self-incrimination. Four other issues were identified, but there was no further comment. Regarding the Road Transport Amendment (Driving Through Floodwaters) Bill 2024, the issue identified was that it insufficiently defined "penalty notice offence", and that was referred to the Parliament. Regarding the Strata Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, on the matters of retrospective application of laws and wide regulation-making power, there was no further comment. But the wide regulatory powers impacting personal rights and liberties and investigation and enforcement powers was referred to Parliament. The bill proposes to grant the Fair Trading Commissioner broad and investigative enforcement powers by inserting new part 10A into the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 and the Community Land Management Act 2021. The committee notes that significant

powers to require a person to provide information or to do anything should be referred to Parliament for consideration.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (13:14):** I address the House in regard to the Legislation Review Committee report entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 24/58*, which was tabled on 11 February 2025. I am deputy chair of this wonderful committee. I pay my respects to the chairperson, the member for Auburn, who is in the Chamber. She runs a tight and efficient committee meeting, for which we are all grateful. The member for Parramatta, one of my fellow committee colleagues has just spoken. I also acknowledge the member for Upper Hunter as a fellow member of the committee. The three other committee members are in the upper House.

The Legislation Review Committee has two functions. The first is to look at the bills that have been put before Parliament. For those who are watching today—of which I am sure there are hundreds of thousands—the committee's function is to ensure that the bills do not, for example, trespass unduly on personal rights and liberties and are not inappropriate in the delegation of legislative powers. The second function is to look at the regulations made to support the bills. Again, our committee's function is to make sure that those regulations do not unduly trespass on people's personal rights and liberties and to make sure that the regulations do not have an adverse impact on the business community. There are other issues, too, that we need to be mindful of. I thank the chair and all members of the committee for the great work they do. I also thank the wonderful secretariat staff within Parliament that keep us on track and keep those meetings as efficient as they are. There are quite a few of them, and they do a tremendous job. I pay my respects to them and thank them very much for all the work they do.

One bill that came before us for consideration in this report is the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Bill 2024, which seeks to amend the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999. The amendments would create new offences relating to sexual conduct and intimate relationships between correctional officers and people serving criminal sentences. This is the sort of vital work we do. The bill would also defer a wide range of significant matters to the regulations, including when a parole authority may extend or impose a further period of supervision for serious offences with a parole order in place and the way that medical records are kept and accessed at correctional centres.

In its report, the committee highlighted these wide regulation-making powers and commented that substantive matters impacting individual rights should generally be set out in principal legislation, rather than the regulation itself. However, the committee noted that the provisions may be intended to build flexibility into the regulatory framework and allow appropriate authorities to better respond to changes in criminal law proceedings. It was for these reasons that the committee made no further comment on that piece of legislation. That is just one of the examples of the important work that the committee does. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (13:18):** I thank the chair and members for the Legislation Review Committee for *Legislation Review Digest No. 24/58* and for their work. The committee is necessary for the work of the Parliament.

I address some comments made by the member for Parramatta and respectfully submit a different position in respect of the Electoral Amendment (Voter ID and Electronic Mark Off) Bill 2024. With respect to her comment that the bill will somehow disenfranchise voters, I make clear that the Electoral Act as it stands today has provisions for section votes. So if people turn up to a polling station and they find that—

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Point of order: The committee considers legislation that is before the House and whether it constitutes an excessive use of power, cuts across the Constitution or infringes people's human rights. I draw the member's attention to the confines of the legislation. The member cannot debate the substance of the legislation. He can only debate the report and any transgressions within the framework of the legislation.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** To the point of order: I agree with all that, but I was simply responding to comments that had already been made in respect of the substance of the bill that the committee considered.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I will consult with the Clerk before making my ruling. The member for Kiama will confine his remarks to the subject of the take-note debate and to comments made during the debate.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** That is what I was doing. While I appreciate the point of order, it relates to the confines of the work of the committee not the debate in the House, which was what I was responding to, with all due respect. I was simply making the point that section votes can be undertaken by any person if they are disenfranchised in any way. If they turn up to a polling station and are prohibited from voting, they can seek to make a declaration or section vote that will allow them to cast their ballot. Under the circumstances, that would mean any person who felt they were being disenfranchised would in fact be enfranchised. That was the only point I wanted to make regarding my disagreement with the assessment by the committee member in this respect. I am not cavilling in any way with the argument about the scope of the committee or the confines of its deliberations.

I am simply making the observation that I think the reflection was incorrect, and I want to put that position to the House.

**Report noted.**

## **PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

### **Reports**

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

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (13:22):** As Chair: On behalf of the Public Accounts Committee, I take note of the committee's interim report entitled *Accountability measures for decision-making: Critical Communications Enhancement Program*. The Critical Communications Enhancement Program, or CCEP, was launched to address a longstanding weakness in New South Wales' public safety communications by delivering a single, interoperable radio network for emergency services organisations. It is intended to ensure that our frontline responders can communicate effectively in routine operations and during natural disasters when public safety depends on seamless, reliable communication. However, our inquiry found that the CCEP has become emblematic of broader issues in public project delivery: cost overruns, delays, limited stakeholder engagement and poor transparency.

When first scoped, the program had an estimated cost of \$400 million. By the 2021–22 budget, that had blown out to \$1.325 billion, and the Audit Office of New South Wales has advised that the final cost may exceed \$2 billion. Completion has been pushed from 2020 to 2027—a seven-year delay. This is not a matter of minor drift. It is a significant delay that has left emergency services relying on ageing legacy systems. In many cases, emergency services organisations have had to continue investing in their own standalone communications networks, resulting in duplicated infrastructure, cost inefficiencies and operational fragmentation. In some regions, coverage remains incomplete, and agencies report that they are unclear whether the current state of the program is yet fit for purpose.

In respect of business case assurance, the committee found that key business case assumptions were flawed, particularly in relation to costs and market readiness. There was insufficient early engagement with emergency services organisations, the very users of the network, and too little testing of commercial alternatives. That undermined the ability to scope the project accurately and set realistic budgets. Just as concerning was the lack of transparency in decision-making. Major changes to scope and budget, such as the removal of the emergency services paging network upgrade, were not adequately documented, nor were they communicated effectively to impacted agencies or the Parliament. There is no single agency currently responsible for tracking or reporting on realised benefits, including anticipated cost savings, geographic coverage gains or long-term efficiencies. Compounding those issues is the fact that long-term projects like the CCEP often span multiple years, political cycles and organisational restructures, with a high turnover of senior personnel.

When key witnesses from lead agencies appeared before the committee, many had only recently assumed their roles. In several cases, the actual decision-makers responsible for major shifts in project scope or expenditure had already left the organisation. That lack of continuity presents a clear risk to accountability and reinforces the importance of one of our recommendations, which is that the Government introduce annual public reporting on CCEP performance, including cost, coverage and benefit realisation. Transparent reporting ensures that the Parliament and the public are kept informed, and that institutional memory is preserved and decision-making is documented, regardless of who holds the role at any given time. The committee heard evidence from emergency services organisations, including the RFS, Fire and Rescue NSW, the SES and police. While all agencies expressed support for the intent of the CCEP, they also raised concerns about coverage gaps, integration issues and the need for clearer operational control frameworks, particularly during multi-agency deployments.

Put simply, frontline responders are not yet seeing the full benefit of the investment, and that is unacceptable. To restore confidence and deliver outcomes, the committee has made several recommendations: annual public reporting on cost savings, geographic coverage and performance metrics; a formal post-implementation review to assess whether benefits were realised and ensure lessons are learned for future information and communications technology infrastructure programs; strengthened governance and accountability arrangements, including whole-of-government frameworks for major technology project oversight; enhanced stakeholder engagement, including structured input from emergency services organisations into system design, testing and deployment; and clearer delineation of inter-agency roles and responsibilities to improve coordination and reduce duplication.

I emphasise that this is an interim report as part of a broader inquiry. The committee has resolved to examine a second major infrastructure project as part of our broader inquiry on accountability in government decision-making. We believe public confidence in major project delivery is critical and that oversight must extend beyond financial compliance to real-world outcomes and public value. The CCEP is too important to fail. It is not

only about radios and towers; it is about ensuring that the women and men on the front lines of fires, floods and emergencies have the tools they need to keep our communities safe. It is also about whether government can deliver on complex, multi-year, technology-driven infrastructure and whether Parliament has the visibility to hold it to account.

I thank all my fellow committee members, including the Public Accounts Committee deputy chair, the member for Cessnock, and all the secretariat staff for their outstanding and dedicated work, as well as all the agencies and witness who contributed to this important inquiry. I commend the report to the House.

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (13:28):** I echo the sentiments of the chair of the Public Accounts Committee, the member for Strathfield, on the committee's report into the Critical Communications Enhancement Program. As a new member in the House, this was one of my first inquiries. When I speak to my friends about government spending—and particularly when I spoke to them before I came to government—I find their perception and that of the public generally is that government spending is not exactly efficient and fit for purpose.

This program to build a critical piece of infrastructure for our emergency services to deal with disasters, floods and the like was initially forecasted to cost \$400 million and finish by 2020, so it is mind-boggling that costs blew out by effectively 400 per cent and the timeline blew out by seven years, to 2027. Blowouts like that really affect people's perceptions of the Government, particularly relating to accountability and transparency. The chair has already spoken about how the program has limitations and about ensuring that something similar does not happen again.

I would acknowledge all the people who worked on the report but time has escaped me. All members should pay heed to the 14 findings and seven recommendations made by the committee because the additional money and time required to complete the program could have been spent on building better hospitals and better schools, getting more police on the streets and enabling the Government to deliver the public goods and functions that the State needs. We cannot do that if we carry on like this.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** It being 1.30 p.m., pursuant to standing and sessional orders, debate is interrupted. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later time.

I shall now leave the Chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

### *Bills*

## **CRIMES (SENTENCING PROCEDURE) AMENDMENT BILL 2025**

### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Dr Hugh McDermott, on behalf of Mr Michael Daley, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (14:32):** On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The New South Wales Government is pleased to introduce the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Amendment Bill 2025. The bill will address a gap in the legislation for plea offers made by offenders who have become fit to be tried after having been earlier committed as mentally unfit to stand trial. It will do so by introducing two amendments to section 25E of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 to allow a 25 per cent discount on sentence for offenders who were committed as unfit to be tried but then made a relevant plea offer as soon as practicable after being found fit; and to require the sentencing court to consider whether the offender had a reasonable opportunity to obtain legal advice and instruct a legal representative in determining whether the offer was made "as soon as practicable". The rationale for this reform is procedural fairness. The full 25 per cent discount on sentence is already available for previously unfit offenders who enter a timely guilty plea, but not for those who make a timely plea offer. The bill will address that inconsistency, ensuring that previously unfit offenders are dealt with on an equal basis whether they enter a guilty plea or make a plea offer.

I turn now to the detail of the bill. Division 1A of part 3 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 sets out the applicable discounts for offenders who plead guilty to indictable offences. It does not apply to Commonwealth offences or child offenders. The discount available to an offender is based on the timing of the plea. The sooner a plea or offer is made, the greater the discount applied on sentence. The sliding scale recognises the practical value of a plea of guilty. This includes the benefit to witnesses and the community in resolving the proceedings without a contested trial.



Section 25E applies these discounts to circumstances where an offender offers a plea of guilty to an offence that is not the subject of the proceedings at the time, that offer is refused by the prosecutor and then is later accepted by the prosecutor, or the offender is later found guilty of the offence or a reasonably equivalent one. In that case, the discount available to the offender is determined by the timing of the plea offer, with the applicable discounts being 25 per cent for an offer made prior to committal; 10 per cent for an offer made at least 14 days before trial; and 5 per cent for an offer made closer to trial.

To give a practical example, an offender charged with murder may make an offer to plead guilty to manslaughter that is refused by the prosecutor. If that offender were later to be acquitted of murder at trial but convicted of manslaughter as a back-up offence, they would be afforded a 25 per cent discount on sentence for the manslaughter. That provision incentivises offenders to make plea offers, encouraging negotiations between parties and the early resolution of criminal proceedings where appropriate. The certainty of the sentencing discount regime is a central pillar of the early appropriate guilty plea reforms.

Part 4 of the Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act 2020 provides that a person is unfit to be tried where, among other things, they cannot understand the proceedings, plead to the charge or instruct a lawyer due to a mental health or cognitive impairment. Unfit persons are not legally capable of instructing their lawyers to make plea offers or entering guilty pleas. Section 93 of the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 allows a person whose fitness is in question to be committed for trial so that the District Court or Supreme Court can formally determine their fitness. In practice, this procedure applies to a relatively small class of defendants.

A person's fitness to be tried can change during proceedings. A person who was committed as unfit but later becomes fit will have lost the opportunity to negotiate with the prosecution, plead guilty or make plea offers during committal proceedings in the Local Court. Section 52 of the Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act allows matters to be remitted back to the Local Court for continued committal proceedings after a finding of fitness. This alternative pathway will remain available but can involve additional delay and may not be suitable in every case.

The existing section 25D (5) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act accounts for offenders who have become fit after committal and enter timely guilty pleas. However, there is no equivalent allowance for those who make plea offers. This gap in the discount regime could be seen to be unfair to offenders who were legally incapable of making a plea offer prior to committal as they were unfit at that time. Item [1] of schedule 1 will amend section 25E (3) to provide that an offender is entitled to the maximum discount on sentence if they make a plea offer as soon as practicable after they become fit, even if this occurs after committal. In the interest of procedural fairness, item [2] of schedule 1 will insert a new section 25E (4) requiring the court to take into account whether the offender had a reasonable opportunity to obtain legal advice and instruct a legal representative in determining whether the offer was made "as soon as practicable". This is consistent with the current section 25D (6) of the Crimes Sentencing Procedure Act that applies to discounts for plea offers in other circumstances.

This reform was originally proposed and endorsed by members of the Early Appropriate Guilty Plea Reforms working group. The working group exists to support continuous improvement of policy, practice and legislation to encourage early appropriate guilty pleas in accordance with the overarching objects of the early appropriate guilty plea reforms that were introduced in 2018. Its membership includes key criminal justice stakeholders, including representatives from the courts, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, NSW Police Force, Legal Aid NSW, Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), Law Society of New South Wales and New South Wales Bar Association, among others.

The proposal was also endorsed by the Early Appropriate Guilty Plea Reforms steering committee, which oversees the working group and includes senior representatives from the criminal justice stakeholder organisations that I just mentioned. Members of the working group were also consulted on the drafting of this bill. I thank the members of those governance groups for their work in helping to develop and refine the bill into its present form. In conclusion, this reform will appropriately recognise the value of plea offers made in the relatively rare circumstances contemplated by the bill and remedy any risk of unfairness for previously unfit offenders. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **CLAIM FARMING PRACTICES PROHIBITION BILL 2025**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (14:40):** I make a brief contribution in full support of the Claim Farming Practices Prohibition Bill 2025. Claim farming is the practice of third-party individuals or companies soliciting and generating legal claims, often personal injury, insurance or compensation claims, and then selling them to law firms or legal service providers for a fee. Claim farmers often use aggressive marketing tactics, such as cold calls, online ads or social media promotions, to attract potential claimants. They may exaggerate the likelihood of success or encourage people to file claims even when they have weak cases.

Many jurisdictions have laws restricting claim farming due to concerns about fraud, misrepresentation and unethical practices. Some claim farmers also mislead claimants into thinking that they are dealing directly with a law firm when they are just being referred for a fee. This bill is introduced to protect the people of New South Wales from exploitative, unethical and predatory practices that have plagued our legal system for far too long. Claim farming usually takes advantage of vulnerable individuals, often in distressing and traumatic circumstances, by coercing them into making personal injury claims for the financial benefit of third-party operators. That must stop, and this bill ensures that it will.

Claim farming is an unscrupulous industry that operates by targeting individuals who may not even be aware that their personal information has been accessed. Claim farmers engage in high-pressure tactics, misleading promises and even harassment to push people into pursuing legal claims that they may not otherwise have considered. They then profit by selling those claims to law firms or other claim farming entities, often at great financial cost to the claimant and with questionable legal merit. This bill is necessary because claim farming not only exploits individuals but also threatens the integrity of our legal system. By artificially inflating the number of claims, including fraudulent or weak cases, claim farmers add unnecessary burdens to our courts and insurance systems, ultimately driving up costs for everyone. Moreover, those practices can have lasting negative psychological impacts on claimants, particularly those who are survivors of trauma or abuse.

The bill will prohibit claim farming in two key ways. It will be illegal for a person to contact another individual to encourage them to make a claim with the expectation of receiving a fee or benefit. That includes both directly soliciting a claim and referring the person to another service for a financial incentive. It will also be illegal to buy or sell a claim referral. That means no individual or organisation can engage in the trading of claims for profit. To ensure compliance, the bill introduces strict penalties. Individuals or organisations found guilty of claim farming could face significant financial consequences, with fines of up to \$100,000 per offence. Additionally, the bill amends the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 to ensure that any legal practitioners convicted of claim farming offences will not be entitled to recover legal costs from claimants and must refund any fees already received. Furthermore, legal practitioners engaged in claim farming, even if not convicted, may face professional misconduct proceedings.

It is important to clarify that the bill does not limit legitimate legal services. The purpose of this legislation is not to restrict access to justice but rather to protect the integrity of the legal process. The bill includes key exemptions to ensure that access to justice remains unhindered for those who truly need legal assistance. The exemptions include contact related to class action notifications; contact by a law practice with a former client where there is reasonable belief that the client would not object; contact initiated by community legal centres, trade unions or similar organisations, where there is reasonable belief that the potential claimant would not object; and general public advertising of legal services, which remains permissible and outside the scope of claim farming offences. Those safeguards ensure that people in need of legal assistance can still access support without being subject to exploitative claim farming tactics.

In other jurisdictions, including Queensland and South Australia, we have seen that claim farming thrives in the absence of legislative action. The Minns Government is committed to ensuring that our State does not become a haven for those unethical practices. By acting now, we are not only protecting individuals from financial and emotional exploitation but also upholding the integrity of our legal system. We cannot allow a situation where people's personal and often painful experiences are treated as commodities to be bought and sold. We must not let the justice system be manipulated for profit at the expense of genuine claimants and the broader community.

The passage of this bill sends a strong message that claim farming will not be tolerated in New South Wales. The Claim Farming Practices Prohibition Bill 2025 is an important piece of legislation that will provide strong protections against predatory legal practices while maintaining the rights of individuals to seek justice. It ensures that legitimate legal claims are pursued in a fair, ethical and professional manner, free from the coercion and exploitation of claim farmers. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (14:48):** I support the Claim Farming Practices Prohibition Bill 2025. Claim farmers are individuals or organisations that target vulnerable people by obtaining their personal information, contacting them without consent and encouraging them to lodge civil compensation claims, often by using high-pressure and misleading tactics such as harassment, intimidation and making promises about legal entitlements that may not be correct or in the claimant's best interests.

Claim farming involves a range of problematic conduct, including getting a person's contact details without their consent, making uninvited contact with a person and pressuring or harassing them to make a claim. It may present as a claims management service or a survivor advocate organisation or similar.

Claim farming can also involve "selling" a person's claim to a lawyer or a claim farming organisation without the person's knowledge, or making promises about potential legal entitlements that may not be accurate or in the person's best interests. In many cases, individuals may collect referral fees from a law practice or another claim farming organisation for information pertaining to a potential claim. Claim farming also increases the potential for fraudulent and illegitimate claims and may pose risks to victim-survivors by casting doubt on the integrity of legitimate claims.

Claim farming activities can have negative and traumatic impacts on claimants. The purpose of prohibiting claim farming is to protect the community from these unethical and exploitive practices. The Government has heard reports from stakeholders that claim farmers are paying third parties \$50 to \$100 for each potential new claimant that the third party identifies and selling claims to law practices for between \$800 and \$10,000. Lawyers may then pass on these costs to claimants through disbursements after a claim is finalised. This is money that should go to the claimant as compensation for the injury that they have suffered. These practices are unethical and can have negative impacts on not only the claimant but also people who are most vulnerable, particularly when the person targeted is a victim-survivor of child abuse.

By prohibiting claim farming in personal injury claims under the Civil Liability Act and personal injury claims arising from intentional torts, this bill will protect the community from this kind of exploitive conduct. The bill will create a new Act containing offences that will, firstly, prohibit a person from contacting another person to solicit them to make a relevant claim—including referring the person to another to provide a service in relation to the claim or arranging for someone else to make contact—for a fee or benefit. Secondly, it will prohibit a person from buying or selling a relevant claim referral or agreeing to do so or arranging for a third party to buy or sell a referral for a fee or benefit.

This bill will also amend the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application (NSW) Act 2014 and establish specific consequences for lawyers involved in the practice of claim farming. It will provide that lawyers who are convicted of claim farming offences must not charge any legal costs and must refund any legal costs received in relation to that claim. It will confirm that contravention of claim farming offences by lawyers—regardless of whether they have been convicted—will be capable of constituting unsatisfactory professional conduct or professional misconduct. I wish to be clear that the prohibitions on claim farming in the bill will not affect legitimate legal practices that help people access the justice system. Existing pathways to justice for victim-survivors will remain intact.

Specific exemptions for the proposed offences have been incorporated into the bill. These include, firstly, when contact is made by way of notification of representative proceedings, which are also known as class actions; secondly, if a law practice contacts a potential claimant for whom they have previously acted, subject to a reasonable belief that the potential claimant will not object to the contact; and, thirdly, if a law practice contacts a potential claimant because they have been asked to do so by a representative of a community legal service or an industrial organisation, and the law practice has confirmed that the representative reasonably believes that the potential claimant will not object to the contact.

The content of the bill has been informed by extensive consultation with key stakeholders, including peak legal bodies, law firms, victim support and advocacy organisations, religious entities, the insurance industry and New South Wales government agencies. In May 2024 the Department of Communities and Justice [DCJ] sought submissions from stakeholders to understand the need for reform and to inform policy development. Additionally, in January 2025, DCJ released a draft bill and an accompanying background paper for public consultation. DCJ received a total of 32 submissions or written comments, with all non-confidential submissions published on the DCJ website.

The bill includes the consequences for legal practitioners who engage in claim farming. The maximum penalty for the two claim farming offences under the bill is 500 penalty units or \$55,000. The bill also includes additional consequences for lawyers to undercut claim farming practices. For example, the bill will insert new section 61A into part 6 of the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 to provide that lawyers who are convicted of an offence would not be entitled to charge or recover legal costs in relation to the claim to which the conviction relates, and would be required to immediately refund any legal costs already received in relation to the claim to the person who paid the costs.

By preventing lawyers from charging or recovering costs in relation to claims where they have been convicted of claim farming will act as a significant disincentive. It will ensure that the proposed financial penalties will not simply be absorbed as a "cost of doing business". The Government is confident that the combination of

strong monetary fines and additional consequences for legal practitioners will send a clear message to claim farmers and the law firms that are engaging with them that this practice must cease. If lawyers continue to do business in this way, they will be not only risking a criminal conviction but also risking their practising certificates and their livelihoods. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (14:55):** I speak in support of the Claim Farming Practices Prohibition Bill 2025, which will introduce new laws to stamp out a predatory and unscrupulous practice that has proliferated since I practised as a solicitor. When I practised as personal injury lawyer, specialising in medical negligence, I was not aware of claim farming. It is hard to believe that there are people who seek to take advantage of and make a profit from vulnerable people by cold-calling them, obtaining information under false pretences and pressuring them into making a compensation claim.

The vulnerable people I am talking about—and who are the subject of the bill—could be young people who have recently left the child protection system or who have potentially suffered abuse. They could be victims of sexual abuse or have experienced medical negligence. As the Minister for Families and Communities, and the Minister with legal parental responsibility for the 13,000 vulnerable children in the State, the idea that these children could become the target of predatory people seeking to profit from experiences they may have had does not sit comfortably with me at all. In fact, it horrifies me. The bill puts into place a prohibition that is necessary to protect those young vulnerable people.

Most people would not know what claim farming is; it is a concept unfamiliar to most of us. It is where predators prey on a victim's vulnerabilities, raise expectations, make misleading promises, and encourage disclosures that may not be accurate or in the best interests of the person making the disclosure. Predators gain personal information then use it for their own personal gain. They package the vulnerable person's details as a product and sell it to a lawyer so they can make a buck off the back of someone's abuse or harm. This is what claim farming is: the practice of obtaining information about a potential claimant, often by deception, pressuring them to pursue a civil claim for compensation and then profiting off the sale of their packaged details or "claim" to a lawyer.

In my day, personal injury lawyers were sometimes called "ambulance chasers" for their pursuit of injured people and their potential claim. It appears that a business model has now evolved that sees unscrupulous people pursuing and harassing potential claimants, obtaining their details through questionable conduct, then selling them to unscrupulous lawyers who are interested in making money, rather than in supporting victims. Claim farming is farming compensation claims from victims of child abuse, sexual abuse, medical negligence and other personal injuries. With this bill, we are seeking to stamp it out.

One might think that claim farming could see some victim-survivors making claims and getting the compensation they deserve. Well, think again, because the lawyers then charge their clients the additional fee they paid to the claim farmer as a disbursement. That can be up to \$10,000, which comes out of any compensation the injured person may have obtained through a legal claim. That means that if a person who has suffered a personal injury—let us say through child abuse—pursues a claim and is awarded damages, then before they even see a cent they will pay the lawyer's fees and those of the lawyer's claim farming mate, who sold their packaged-up details in the first place. That is not fair and it is not access to justice.

Claim farming involves a range of problematic conduct, including getting a person's contact details, often without their consent; making uninvited contact with the person; pressuring or harassing them to make a claim; presenting as a claims management service, a survivor advocate organisation or similar, then selling a person's claim to a lawyer or other claim farming organisation without the person's knowledge; and making promises about potential legal entitlements that may not be accurate or in the person's best interests. The Government has heard reports from stakeholders that claim farmers are paying third parties \$50 to \$100 for each potential new claimant the third party identifies and then selling their claims to law practices for between \$800 and \$10,000—costs that the lawyers then pass on to their clients. Those practices are unethical and further traumatise people when they are at their most vulnerable, particularly when the person targeted is a victim-survivor of child abuse, and claim farmers have little interest in the sensitivities of trauma-informed care.

The bill is designed to prevent vulnerable young people from becoming prey to yet another predator. By prohibiting claim farming in personal injury claims under the Civil Liability Act and personal injury claims arising from intentional torts, the bill will end that exploitation while not in any way preventing or limiting access to justice for those who need and deserve it. As the Attorney General stated in his second reading speech, the bill will include most common law personal injury claims, including those related to child abuse, assault, medical negligence, and public and product liability. However, certain other personal injury claims are excluded, as specified by the Attorney General.

The bill contains two summary offences: prohibiting a person from contacting another person to encourage them to make a relevant claim with the expectation of receiving a fee or other benefit, and buying or selling a claim referral. The bill includes appropriate exemptions to those offences to safeguard the effective provision of legal services and protect legitimate practices that facilitate access to justice. It also amends the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 to impose additional consequences on legal practitioners who engage in the prohibited conduct.

I thank the Attorney General for the extensive consultation undertaken during the development of the bill. As a result, the Government is confident that the bill strikes the right balance between protecting members of the community from unethical, predatory and exploitative claim farming practices and preserving legitimate pathways and practices that facilitate access to justice. In my role as the Minister responsible for child protection in this State, I make it clear that the Government seeks to ensure that children and young people who have been in the out-of-home care system understand any potential legal claims they may have as a consequence of, or separate to, their care experience—so much so that the Government ensures that every child's files are independently reviewed by legal practitioners, who make recommendations to them about any potential recourse they may have. New South Wales is the only jurisdiction in the country that undertakes such a legal audit for care leavers. I reassure members that the bill does not prevent or limit access to justice. Instead, its intention is to prevent the exploitation of vulnerable people.

Knowmore is an independent not-for-profit organisation that supports victims and survivors of child abuse. It has reported that it is aware of at least three claim farming businesses operating in New South Wales that target victims and survivors of institutional child abuse. Another organisation that assists victim-survivors of child abuse is the Survivors and Mates Support Network, or SAMSN. It has also told the Government that the way people are being targeted is not trauma informed and can cause distress and confusion for victims and survivors of child abuse, leaving them feeling re-traumatised. By incentivising claim farming organisations to identify more claims in return for more referral fees, claim farming increases the potential for fraudulent and illegitimate claims to come into the system, which undermines the integrity of the people making legitimate claims. [*Extension of time*]

I want to make sure that members understand that there is a range of professional and supportive avenues for victims that are designed to help victim-survivors, not exploit their experiences. Schemes like the National Redress Scheme offer victim-survivors culturally safe and trauma-informed advice, answer claimants' questions, help them to file applications and offer free legal support and counselling. The significant penalties for the offences established in the bill are not only monetary but will also have the potential to impact the legal certificates of lawyers who engage in the practice. The Government believes that the combination of strong monetary fines and additional consequences for legal practitioners will send a clear message to claim farmers and the law firms that engage with them.

The message the bill sends to the legal fraternity is that claim farming is not a legitimate cost of doing business, and if firms continue to do it then they risk a criminal conviction and their livelihood. With the support of the Parliament, the bill will introduce protections for vulnerable people from unscrupulous actors seeking to make a buck out of their misfortune. Claim farming is not okay, so the Government is acting to end this exploitative act. I thank the Attorney General for recognising an awful emerging area of legal practice and for responding in the interests of those who have suffered harm through no fault of their own, whilst ensuring that all avenues of justice remain open to them. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (15:07):** I speak in support of the Claim Farming Practices Prohibition Bill 2025. The bill will prohibit the practice of claim farming in New South Wales in relation to certain personal injury claims under the Civil Liability Act 2002 and arising from intentional torts. Claim farming is a predatory practice where individuals or organisations target vulnerable people by obtaining their personal information and contacting them without their consent to encourage them to lodge civil compensation claims. Claim farmers will often apply high-pressure and misleading tactics, making promises about legal entitlements that may not be correct or in the claimant's interest. Claim farming can have a negative and traumatic impact on claimants that erodes their trust in the justice system, all while the claim farmer is able to profit from the practice with no repercussion.

The bill aims to target claim farming by prohibiting its practice in relation to certain claims. It will create a new Act entitled the Claim Farming Practices Prohibition Act 2025. Proposed section 5 (1) to (3) creates offences that prohibit a person making contact with potential claimants where the person making contact receives or expects to receive consideration for the contact. That includes a person making contact to solicit the potential claimant to make a claim, to refer the potential claimant to another person to provide a service in relation to a claim, or to arrange a third party to contact the potential claimant, in contravention of the bill. The bill also introduces offences that prohibit the referral of claims for consideration. Under proposed section 6 (1), a person must not receive consideration for referring a claim, while proposed section 6 (2) prohibits the provision of consideration for a claim referral.

I note that the bill provides appropriate exemptions to offences to safeguard access to justice and preserve the proper functioning of the legal system. Proposed section 5 (4) exempts offences relating to contacting potential claimants where the claimant is contacted by notice given under the Civil Procedure Act 2005 or where a law practice contacts a potential claimant that it has previously provided services for or has been requested to do so by a representative of a community legal service or industrial organisation. Proposed section 6 (4) exempts offences relating to the referral of claimants if a legal practice refers the matter while acting for the claimant or if claims are referred as part of the sale and purchase of a law practice.

Proposed section 7 also makes exceptions for the advertisement of legal services. Schedule 2 to the bill amends the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014. The bill will insert provisions that prevent a law practice convicted of claim farming under the Claim Farming Practices Prohibition Bill 2025 from recovering costs related to that conviction. The bill demonstrates the Government's commitment to regularly reviewing and updating legislation to ensure that our legal system is fit for purpose and that public trust in legal justice is maintained. By prohibiting practices related to claim farming, the Government has shown that it will not tolerate exploitative and predatory behaviour on the most vulnerable in our community. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (15:10):** In reply: I thank the member for Wahroonga, the member for Prospect, the member for Campbelltown, the member for Mount Druitt, the member for South Coast, the member for Port Stephens, and the member for Fairfield for their contributions to the debate. The Claim Farming Practices Prohibition Bill will create a new Act to prohibit claim farming for personal injury damages, including those arising from intentional torts such as child abuse. The Government is acting to protect people who have suffered personal injury, including victim-survivors of abuse, from being exploited by claim farmers. Importantly, measures have been included in the bill to ensure that access to justice is not compromised. The Government acknowledges the importance of supporting victim-survivors and giving them access to trauma-informed legal advice and support services.

I take this opportunity to thank organisations such as Knowmore, Bravehearts and the Survivors and Mates Support Network, which work tirelessly to support victim-survivors of abuse. The bill will not prevent important organisations like this from supporting victims and survivors. Instead, it will protect people from the unscrupulous conduct of claim farmers. I note that the Legislative Review Committee has referred two matters relating to the bill for consideration. The first matter concerns the proposed extraterritorial application of the bill, and the second matter concerns the proposed regulation-making power. I will take this opportunity to address the two matters. Clause 4 (b) of the bill provides that an offence:

(b) is intended to have extraterritorial application as far as the legislative powers of the State permit.

This clause was included in the bill in response to stakeholder feedback that claim farming organisations may operate across State boundaries while engaging in conduct that impacts people in New South Wales. For example, a submission from Knowmore stated that it has received information that at least 23 law firms may be engaging in claim farming or related practices. Fifteen of those law firms have offices in New South Wales. It is important that organisations based outside New South Wales can still be prosecuted when they target potential claimants and solicit them to make claims in New South Wales.

I also note the Legislation Review Committee's comments relating to the regulation-making power. The regulation-making power only enables regulations to be made if they are of a savings or transitional nature. It is not a wideranging regulation-making power, and a power of this type has been used a number of times in other legislation. The power enables the Government to deal with unexpected or unforeseen consequences of the transition in law from the current Act to the Act as amended. The committee also noted that regulations remain subject to parliamentary scrutiny and can be disallowed under section 41 of the Interpretation Act 1987. Finally, I note the committee's comment that fines for the relevant offences would apply to law firms rather than individuals. In fact, the fines could apply to both individuals and law firms.

I thank the stakeholders that have contributed to the development of the bill, including victims support organisations such as Knowmore and the Survivors and Mates Support Network; legal peak bodies and law practices, including the Law Society of New South Wales, the New South Wales Bar Association and the Australian Lawyers Alliance; and insurance groups and religious groups. The bill will protect personal injury victims and victim-survivors of child abuse from exploitative and re-traumatising practices that prioritise profits over the interests of victims. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AMENDMENT (TRANSPORT SECTOR GIG WORKERS AND OTHERS) BILL 2025**

**Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 20 March 2025.**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (15:15):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025. The Minister for Industrial Relations claims:

This bill does not seek to replace the new Federal jurisdiction or to duplicate the important work that has taken place federally.

As the Minister is no doubt aware, section 109 of the Constitution would nullify the operation of any State law that attempted to replace a Federal law covering the same matter. This takes replacement off the table. The Minister's claim that the bill does not seek to duplicate "the important work that has taken place federally" needs to be examined closely. The Fair Work Commission is currently undertaking work on several applications made by the Transport Workers' Union [TWU] for employee-like road transport minimum standards orders, including applications MS2024/1 and MS2024/2, which were made on 28 August 2024, for minimum standards orders to cover those:

... who perform work that involves the transport by road of goods, wares or other things (other than food, beverages and other like things).

Application MS2024/3 was made on 28 August 2024, states:

... for a minimum standards order to cover employee-like workers who perform digital platform work in the transport by road of food, beverages and other like items.

Application MS2025/1 was made on 17 February 2025 for, "A road transport contractual chain order," for the "transport of cash and other valuables and the performance of ATM work." Finally, application MS 2024/04 was made on 26 September 2024 for a "road transport contractual chain order" for transport of a very wide range of goods, including:

the transport by road of goods, wares, merchandise, material or anything whatsoever, whether in its raw state or natural state, wholly or partly manufactured state or of a solid or liquid or gaseous nature or otherwise

Other goods include meat, crude oil or gas condensate, milk and cream, quarried materials, vehicles and waste materials. I note that much of the bill is not scheduled to commence for six months. Clause [2] of schedule 1 to the bill would expand the range of contracts and classes of contracts for which a contract determination can be made by the Industrial Relations Commission, but it is not scheduled for commencement until 18 months after the bill's assent. That means it will not commence before September 2026. This clause will bring the rideshare sector under the jurisdiction of the IRC unless, in the lengthy intervening period, either the TWU or one or more of the rideshare platform companies make an application to the Fair Work Commission for minimum standards orders for the sector.

It seems very unlikely that such an application will not have been made by September 2026. That leaves the bill very little, if anything, to do.

I note the presence of the Minister for Industrial Relations in the Chamber. If the Minister can point to any shreds of legislation that survive after the application of section 109 of the Constitution and schedule 1 [10] and [12] to the bill then perhaps a bill limited to those changes should have been brought to this House instead of this bill, which is puffed up with provisions that will never operate in the real world. Perhaps the Minister should focus on bringing legislation to fill real gaps in the rights of workers, instead of simply ticking off an IOU to the TWU for its help with donations to the Labor Party and its assistance at the ballot box. Pure virtue signalling has no real-world impact.

Where is the presumptive cancer legislation for our firefighters that the Minister promised before the election but has not considered a sufficient priority to introduce in the first two years of the Minns Labor Government? To be fair, perhaps the Minister is trying to keep her promise but has been blocked by Premier Minns or Treasurer Mookhey. However, the Parliament's time should not be wasted by bills that are duplicative of comprehensive Federal legislation and will therefore never operate in any effect. The Minister's claim that this bill is "nation changing" and that "the world is also looking at this today" is simply baffling, given that the bill mirrors—albeit poorly—Federal legislation that has been in effect since August 2024. With all of that in mind, the Opposition will not be party to this farce and will therefore oppose the bill.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (15:21):** I make a contribution to debate in support of the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025. The legislation will modernise chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act 1996 and extend its protections to gig workers in the transport industry. The bill is an essential step in ensuring fair pay, safer working conditions and appropriate legal protections for thousands of transport workers who contribute daily to the functioning of our economy. For too long, gig workers in the transport sector, such as rideshare and food delivery drivers, have operated in an environment lacking the fundamental protections that many other workers take for granted. Gig workers often face unstable incomes, unpredictable working hours and unsafe conditions with little to no recourse. The Minns Labor Government made an election commitment to address those issues, and we are delivering on that promise.

Chapter 6 has been an integral part of industrial relations in New South Wales, providing enforceable instruments that regulate pay and conditions for owner-drivers and taxi operators. However, the nature of the transport industry has changed significantly since chapter 6 was last reviewed in 1996. The rapid rise of gig work, facilitated by digital platforms, has fundamentally altered the way that transport services operate. The bill ensures that our industrial laws keep pace with those changes and continue to serve the needs of all transport workers fairly and effectively. One of the key aspects of the bill is the introduction of a mechanism to bring transport gig workers under the jurisdiction of chapter 6. The bill allows the Industrial Relations Commission—IRC—to declare certain contracts or classes of contracts as contracts of carriage. That means that transport gig workers can now access the same protections as traditional transport workers, including enforceable pay and conditions.

The bill removes several outdated statutory exclusions from chapter 6, which previously left certain categories of workers without adequate protection. However, it maintains exclusions for common carriers, livestock and primary produce transport, acknowledging the unique nature of those industries. Further, the amendments strengthen the IRC's ability to make contract determinations that cover contractual chains. That is particularly important in modern supply chains, where workers are often subject to complex and opaque contracting arrangements that can lead to exploitation. The IRC will now have expanded powers to ensure fair conditions across those chains, providing much-needed security for transport workers.

A critical component of the bill is its complementary nature in the Federal gig worker framework established under the Fair Work Act. While the Federal Government has made strides in providing minimum standards and unfair deactivation protections for gig workers, this bill ensures that transport gig workers in New South Wales have an additional layer of protection that is tailored to the specific needs of the industry. Importantly, the bill includes provisions to prevent duplication, ensuring a seamless interaction between the State and Federal frameworks. To ensure a smooth transition, the bill includes a range of transitional provisions. The new gig worker protections will take effect 18 months after the bill's assent, allowing time for businesses and workers to adapt. Similarly, the removal of exclusions from chapter 6 will come into effect six months after assent. Those transitional measures strike a balance between implementing necessary reforms and allowing adequate preparation time.

The bill is a historic reform that brings much-needed fairness and security to the transport industry. It ensures that gig workers, who have been excluded from essential protections for too long, are finally recognised under the law. It modernises chapter 6 to reflect the realities of today's transport sector, reinforcing its role as a cornerstone of industrial relations in New South Wales. The passage of the bill will send a strong message: New South Wales values its transport workers, and we will not allow them to be left behind as the economy evolves. It is time to ensure that all workers, regardless of how they are engaged, are treated fairly and equitably. I commend the bill to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** Before I call the member for Coogee, I welcome to the gallery a delegation of representatives from the Transport Workers' Union, including President Tony Matthews, Nick McIntosh, Robert Rasmussen, Rosalina Pirozzi, Jay Young, Keith Stone, Dan Magee and Garion Thain, guests of the Minister for Industrial Relations.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (15:28):** I strongly support the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Minister's guests—numerous members from the Transport Workers' Union who are joining us today: Tony, Nick, Robert, Jay, Keith, Dan and Garion. I thank them for their work and ongoing advocacy for gig workers, not just in this State but also across the Federal jurisdiction. I also acknowledge that, after 12 years of a conservative, miserable Government that sought to gut the industrial relations [IR] system in New South Wales and Federally, Labor governments across the country have had the really tough work of trying to right the wrongs of conservative governments that have tried to destroy the rights of workers. I say that as someone who comes from a very strong trade union background.

At the core of this bill is fairness and dignity. It is about ensuring that the workers who keep our State moving—whether they are traditional owner-drivers or gig economy workers—are no longer left behind. For too



long, our vulnerable transport workers have been ignored by outdated laws that fail to reflect the realities of modern work. For too long, we have allowed gig workers—rideshare drivers, food delivery riders, and others—to operate without the same protections and rights that other workers take for granted. For too long, the previous Government failed to act. Under the former Government, our industrial relations system stagnated—quite frankly, it went backwards—while the transport industry evolved. They failed to modernise chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act 1996, despite overwhelming evidence that reform was needed. Instead, they stood by as gig workers were denied basic protections, as owner-drivers faced instability, and as small business operators struggled with an unfair system. This failure was not just an oversight; it was a deliberate choice—a choice to prioritise big business over the rights of working people, and a choice that demonstrated a clear lack of care or compassion for the very workers who keep our State running.

As the party of the workers—all workers—the Minns Labor Government is making a different choice. We are choosing to stand with transport workers, regardless of the type of work they do. We are choosing to recognise the changing nature of work and to ensure that our laws evolve to protect those who need it the most. This bill delivers on our election commitment to modernise chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act and extend its protections to gig transport workers. It ensures that our industrial relations system keeps pace with the evolving nature of work while preserving the hard-won rights of workers who have built their livelihoods in this industry. I note as well that the Federal Government has taken important steps to provide gig workers with minimum standards and protections under the Fair Work Act. This bill does not seek to replace or duplicate those efforts. Instead, it ensures that, where appropriate, gig workers in transport—such as rideshare drivers—can access State-level protections under chapter 6. That will include people like our Uber drivers.

This is particularly crucial because taxis, a key competitor to rideshare services, are already regulated at a State level. It makes sense that rideshare drivers have the opportunity to access similar protections. Beyond gig workers, this bill makes vital improvements to conditions for owner-drivers—workers who have long been the backbone of our transport industry. It removes outdated exclusions, strengthens dispute resolution mechanisms, and ensures that when a principal contractor's business is sold, the conditions of owner-drivers are transferred to the new contractor. One of the most significant changes in this bill is the expansion of the number of trucks an owner-driver can operate while still retaining access to chapter 6 protections. Currently, an owner-driver loses these protections if they operate more than one truck. This bill expands that limit to three, allowing small business operators to grow without losing the safeguards that ensure fair pay and conditions.

At its core, this bill is about fairness. It ensures that all transport workers—whether they own a truck, drive a taxi, or deliver food via an app—can have access to basic protections and fair working conditions. It recognises that work in the transport sector has changed, and our laws must change with it. The previous Government failed to act on these issues. They had years to modernise our industrial relations system, yet refused to do so. Their inaction speaks volumes. It reveals a government that lacked the desire and will to stand up for vulnerable workers. It reveals a government that did not see the struggle of gig workers, the challenges of owner-drivers, or the realities of an evolving transport industry. By contrast, the Minns Government is taking action. We are strengthening chapter 6, modernising it for today's economy, and ensuring that it remains a shield for all of those who need it the most. We are choosing fairness over exploitation, dignity over neglect, and action over inaction.

Let's be clear: Opponents of this legislation will claim that it is unnecessary, or that it places burden on businesses, but let's remember who this bill is designed to protect. It is designed to protect the people who keep our State running: the truck drivers delivering goods to our supermarkets, our rideshare drivers getting people home safely, and the delivery riders bringing meals to our doors. These workers deserve fair pay, job security and safe working conditions. This legislation continues the proud tradition of Labor governments standing up for working people. Chapter 6 has been attacked before under the Howard and O'Farrell governments, but each time, workers and their unions have fought to preserve it. Today, we go further: We strengthen chapter 6 to ensure that no worker is left behind. This bill sends a clear message: We are the party of the workers. This party and Government will not tolerate an IR system that allows vulnerable people to be exploited. We will not accept an industrial relations framework that is stuck in the past. We will always fight for fairness, for dignity, and for a transport industry that works for all.

**Mr JAMES WALLACE (Hornsby) (15:35):** I share the concerns of the member for Miranda. The State Labor Government's Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025 duplicates what has already become Federal law as part of 2024 amendments to the Commonwealth Fair Work Act. Transport sector gig workers will be able to access the same protections under the existing laws as this bill proposes with the Commonwealth law prevailing, and the State law being made invalid under Australia's Constitution. Indeed, negotiations on terms and conditions for work and pay are already before the Fair Work Commission. We are told that meetings are scheduled every three weeks up until August. Industry groups have advised that this bill risks delaying, undermining or derailing those negotiations. At best, the State Labor Government's law be entirely redundant; at worst, the laws would be held to be unconstitutional or a source of

confusion or unnecessary duplication. The bill shows a government that is more interested in process and headlines over outcomes.

The State Government should be focused on workers compensation and rehabilitation laws for the gig economy workers. This is a complex area around workers compensation, but the job before the Government is to consider how to deal with compensation claims for injury and death, which occur far too often for these workers. The inconsistencies in legislation and contractual arrangements between workers and platforms across jurisdictions has led to confusion and uncertainty on this point. Injured workers in the gig economy should have the same level of clarity and the same level of protection as other workers. There are various options to achieve this, such as requiring gig platforms to provide personal injury insurance with appropriate cover; a new personal injury scheme; a scheme modelled on compulsory third party benefits; or extending existing workers compensation to specifically cover transport gig economy workers. The prevalence of drivers and riders using multiple apps at one time further complicates these matters. The State Government needs to be involved in a resolution of this issue. Ideally, that will be done so that these laws will be nationally harmonised.

This bill will not address this critical issue. I am a Liberal who has a fundamental concern with the treatment of workers using food delivery platforms. A sector that began under the banner as the sharing economy has begun to feel more self-serving of the companies that own these platforms and less about the sharing of resources between households and individuals, and less of a way for people to supplement their income. Instead, for many who drive and perform delivery functions, it is their entire source of income. Their pay is typically below minimum wage, particularly those who are dependent on the platforms to make a living. They typically will work longer hours, including at times outside peak times. Surveys show that drivers and riders in the most part are young men on temporary visas. They work in conditions that are undoubtedly dangerous. When demand is busiest on wet and cold nights, riders are on bikes delivering food to people's doors. If the worker rejects orders in difficult conditions, they can get penalised with lower ratings and earnings on the app and they risk losing future work.

Eighteen food delivery drivers have died while at work since 2017. Many more have been injured. A recent survey showed one in four had been in an accident, and one in eight had been injured while driving or riding their bike. These workers operate in a space that, until the path forward came under recent Commonwealth law changes, was unregulated by standard workplace laws, but highly regulated by the rules and policies of the platform itself. Often those rules were applied to the detriment of the worker.

The work on those platforms is also concerning because it does not provide the drivers and delivery riders with a meaningful pathway to promotion or personal development. Those workers need greater protection, which will hopefully be realised at the Fair Work Commission but will not under this bill.

I am proud that the previous Liberal Government changed laws in 2022 to require platforms to provide riders with high-visibility personal protective equipment, comprehensive training and verification of competency. Penalties and fines apply to platforms and riders who fail to comply with those requirements. I recognise the work of the member for Miranda on that genuine law reform. It was important to ensure that platforms did not continue to avoid responsibility for the safety of their workers under a strategy that many believed was designed to mitigate the potential for those drivers and riders to be considered employees of the platform. The bill before the Parliament should be opposed for the reasons I have set out.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (15:40):** I am proud to speak to the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025, which strengthens employment protections for New South Wales transport gig workers. I start by thanking the member for Hornsby for his comments. He spoke about gig economy workers being injured, needing greater protections and working for below minimum wage. That is why the bill is before us today—because, in our view, the former Government did not go far enough. It was shamed into providing high-vis gear and things like that after some unfortunate fatalities. But that is as far as it went, so this Government will finish the job.

The public rely on transport gig workers every day, often placing themselves in dangerous riding conditions so communities can benefit from the convenience their hard work provides. Previously, low rates of pay have unreasonably incentivised workers to take risks on our roads to complete more jobs, simply to earn a living. Those conditions are unfair and unacceptable. As a lifelong union member, I come from a proud line of unionists who have battled for the right to have safe workplaces and fair pay—conditions that are now often taken for granted. For those workers, these rights and amendments are absolutely essential. I believe that anyone with the capability to help those unable to help themselves should do so, which is why the amendments to chapter 6 to give transport workers recourse to an industry umpire to mediate or arbitrate instances of unfair dismissal are crucial promises proudly kept by the Minns Labor Government.

Prior to this legislation, gig workers have had no enforceable minimum rates of pay or minimum standards for workplace conditions, exposing them to an array of vulnerabilities such as unfair dismissal. Through the

abolishment of outdated exemptions, the bill improves dispute resolution procedures and the bargaining process. Since the 1970s, chapter 6 has protected owner-drivers and taxi operators, ensuring fair pay and conditions. Union-led campaigns fought to preserve those rights on multiple occasions when they came under attack by the Howard and O'Farrell governments. The bill ensures that gig workers in the transport industry have a mechanism to access the protections provided by the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission, allowing their pay and work conditions to be set by enforceable industrial instruments.

The legislation complements but does not duplicate the Federal Government's gig workers reform. It takes its cue from union, industry and community consultations to ensure that the reforms are fit for purpose for the modern gig economy and transport sector. It also establishes provisions for the reimbursement of tolls, allowing workers the ability to choose toll-free routes and giving them more rights over their costs and routes. The changes demonstrate the Government's commitment to ensuring that rideshare or gig economy workers, no matter how big or small, will have their rights protected. The bill abolishes the provision that owner-drivers who own more than one truck lose access to their protections under the Industrial Relations Act, such as minimum pay standards. That will ensure that more road transport workers are granted fair working conditions for their hard work.

Simply put, the bill protects the small business owners who keep New South Wales moving. It ensures that transport workers have access to the same worker protections others take for granted. I am proud of and thankful for the Minns Labor Government's work in establishing the bill, as it promotes equality and safe workplace practices and ensures a fair go across the rideshare gig economy. I thank the hardworking Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety, along with her talented team, who are seated in the advisers' gallery. I also thank all the stakeholders, especially the representatives from the Transport Workers' Union who are in the public gallery. They have been advocating for the changes for well over 10 years. They were a long time coming and they are much needed. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (15:44):** I am very proud to speak in support of the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025. I start by acknowledging my friends in the trade union movement who are in the public gallery. My former husband was a longstanding member of the fantastic Transport Workers' Union [TWU] as an owner-driver, so I know exactly what the bill means to its members right now. We went through it for years and it has taken a Labor government to fix it. I thank our fantastic Minister for Industrial Relations for bringing this important bill to the House. When we first heard about the bill, I was so happy and excited because I knew what it meant for not only owner-drivers and gig workers but also their families. It provides the security and safety that every other worker in the State enjoys.

Labor has always been and will always be the party of the worker. That is just how it is. I would not want to be a member of any other party. The people of New South Wales are lucky to have such a hardworking Minister representing their interests in this place. She works tirelessly on behalf of workers in every sector, private and public, across the State. As a member of this place, for 14 years I have gone to bat for the workers who put in the long hours and do the tough jobs. There are not many jobs tougher than being a transport sector gig worker, and those people deserve a fair go. The bill seeks to bring chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act into the modern era, when there are more jobs in the gig economy, such as rideshare and delivery drivers, than ever before.

The amendments outlined in the bill will ensure that chapter 6 better reflects the modern transport industry in New South Wales. The proposed changes have been guided by consultation with industry, unions and many other stakeholders, including the legal community. I thank all of the stakeholders for their input. I am confident the bill strikes the right balance for all parties. The Minns Labor Government is delivering on its election promise to modernise chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act and extend it to gig transport workers. There is a TWU official who is heavily involved in one of my favourite local cricket clubs. When we were first elected, in 2023, he never failed to get into my ear every time I saw him—and not just for five minutes but for 45 minutes to an hour. He never missed an opportunity. He backed off for a while when I finally delivered a white cricket fence—but I digress from the bill.

We sat in opposition for 12 years and listened to the anti-worker sentiment from the Liberal Party and The Nationals, and they still have not changed. They still have not gotten the message that it is in their best interests not to be anti-worker. Those people work hard for us every single day. The rhetoric members opposite spew out shows that they still have not learnt their lesson. I am surprised at the member for Hornsby. He was going okay for a little while, and then he was not, which was a bit of a shame. We pledged these reforms in Opposition, and now we are delivering on our commitment.

Chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act has protected owner-drivers and taxi operators for over 45 years, ensuring fair pay and conditions. Over the past two decades it has survived multiple shameless attacks from Federal and State Liberal governments, and we do not forget. We have very long memories. It is no surprise that the Liberals could not care a less about workers' rights. But each time, union-led campaigns fought to preserve them, and rightly so.

I remember sitting on the opposition benches in 2012 when the Coalition Government made changes to the Workers Compensation Act. That affected every worker in this State and was one of the darkest days in the history of the New South Wales Parliament. It happened at two o'clock in the morning under the cover of darkness. That did not stop the Coalition from going ahead with the changes. Again, the Coalition still has not changed.

A Minns Labor Government is going to strengthen chapter 6 again. We are going to modernise its provisions, and extend its coverage to the hardworking and vitally important gig transport workers. That will keep chapter 6 relevant in today's transport economy. Last year the Federal Government gave gig workers access to the Fair Work Commission for minimum standards and unfair deactivation remedies. Importantly, the bill does not seek to replace the new Federal jurisdiction or to duplicate the important work that has taken place federally. Instead the bill allows gig transport workers to access the protections of chapter 6 if the transport industry decides that some sectors of the transport gig economy are better left to State jurisdictions. [*Quorum called for.*]

[*The bells having been rung and a quorum having formed, business resumed.*]

I seek an extension of time.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** An extension of time is granted.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** The second part of the bill will modernise the existing provisions of chapter 6 to ensure they are fit for purpose in a modern road transport industry. The Minns Labor Government will be improving the dispute resolution procedures as well as the bargaining process. When we fix something, we do it properly. We will abolish outdated exemptions, streamlining how a transmission of business operates under the Act and addressing relevant supply chain matters, which was the subject of conversations for the past 12 years while we were in opposition. Gig workers in the transport sector are critical to our economy, and as the demand for those services continues to grow, our industrial relations legislation needs to adapt to ensure workers and small business owners are protected.

There is much more for us to do to clean up the mess left behind by the anti-worker former Liberal Government. Workers across New South Wales can be assured that we will continue to work every single day to improve their conditions of employment and the money they make. I assure the great community of Shellharbour that we are fully committed to modernising our industrial relations system and ensuring a fair balance between the interests of business and the rights of workers in New South Wales. As a former trade union organiser for 11 years, this is one of the best speeches I have had the honour of delivering in this House. Rideshare and delivery drivers deserve to have their pay and conditions set by means of enforceable industrial instruments. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (15:55):** I contribute to debate on the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025. The bill is an incredibly important reform that supports gig workers, who have waited too long for essential protections. The bill seeks to modernise chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act 1996 by providing a mechanism to extend its coverage to gig workers in the transport industry, such as rideshare and delivery drivers, and amending chapter 6 to ensure that it reflects the modern transport industry. I acknowledge the organisers and members of the Transport Workers Union in the public gallery and the incredible work they have been doing for many years to ensure protections are available to everyone across the transport sector. The Minns Labor Government is delivering on its election promise to modernise chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act and extend it to gig transport workers. The bill also improves protection for the State's hardworking owner-drivers and makes chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act fit for purpose in an evolving transport industry. Labor pledged that in opposition and now we are delivering.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The member for Granville will be heard in silence.

**Ms JULIA FINN:** Chapter 6 has protected owner-drivers and taxi operators since the 1970s, ensuring fair pay and conditions. Over the years, it has survived multiple attacks from the Howard and O'Farrell governments, and each time union-led campaigns fought to preserve it. Now we are strengthening chapter 6 again, modernising its provisions and extending its coverage to gig transport workers. That keeps it relevant in today's transport economy. Last year, the Federal Government gave gig workers access to the Fair Work Commission for minimum standards and unfair deactivation remedies, which was an incredibly important reform. The bill does not seek to replace the new Federal jurisdiction or to duplicate the important work that has taken place federally.

Until now, gig workers have also been excluded from coverage under chapter 6 of the New South Wales Industrial Relations Act, preventing them from accessing cost recovery and dispute resolution, and barring them from being able to argue for minimum rates and conditions in the Industrial Relations Commission. The bill proposes to end that exclusion of gig workers, as well as breadcarters and milk and cream delivery drivers. The bill does that by creating a mechanism that allows gig transport workers to access the protections of chapter 6 if

the transport industry decides that some sectors of the transport gig economy are better left to State jurisdictions. Put simply, it means gig workers will no longer be excluded from many of the rights and protections other workers are entitled to and all workers deserve.

Over the past 10 years, 18 gig workers have died on our roads, with many more near misses, pushed to work long and unsustainable hours by the unregulated digital labour platforms that have nothing stopping them from unilaterally slashing rates of pay for thousands of gig workers. Haidar Ali, a delivery rider who lived in Guildford in my electorate, died last month. While Haidar died in a house fire caused by the battery for the e-bike he used as a delivery rider, in learning about Haidar's life, I have learned a lot about how hard it is to be a delivery rider and the financial pressures he faced, which is not very different for delivery drivers either.

Gig workers already face heavy costs, year on year—fuel, tolls, insurance, registration and maintenance being the main burdens for drivers. I do not think gig economy delivery riders would be using cheap, dangerous e-bikes with dodgy chargers that regularly overheat—as Haidar's friends said of his bike—if they were highly remunerated.

It is entirely a myth that delivery riders and other gig economy workers are savvy entrepreneurs running an exciting and liberating new style of business. They work for a company, usually only one company, and they deserve the same rights and protections as other workers. They deserve a working environment that is as safe as possible. Like Haidar, many are students, focused on a future profession, not their entrepreneurial underpaid gig work as drivers or delivery riders. Most international students are entirely unaware of the rights and responsibilities of employees and employers in Australia. They are ripe for exploitation and have been exploited for too long. A report on gig economy workers by the McKell Institute from April 2023 found that 81 per cent of respondents depend on the money they earn from rideshare to pay bills and survive, 41 per cent of workers reported working more than 40 hours a week, despite not earning overtime rates, and 45 per cent of workers in the gig economy reported earning less than minimum wage, after costs.

We know that when drivers feel pressured to work longer hours, they spend more time away from friends and family. They also feel the pressure to rush or take risks to make enough money or avoid deactivation as decided by algorithms. This leads to high rates of work-related stress, anxiety and mental health issues. This pressure puts both driver and customer safety at risk. It is clear that these pressures are a deliberate design feature from the profiteering digital labour companies. This means the deaths and injuries that tear families apart and devastate communities are entirely avoidable.

We have seen these companies explode into the market in such a short span of time and, until now, effectively escape meaningful regulation that would bring them in line with the rest of the road transport industry in New South Wales. The bill will bring the predatory rideshare industry in line with the taxi industry, which it has been undercutting to the detriment of taxi drivers for 10 years. I know so many taxi drivers, former taxi drivers and plate owners who have seen their livelihoods and investments destroyed by rideshare, but this has never been of enormous benefit to rideshare drivers. Taxi drivers and rideshare drivers have both suffered.

Until about 10 years ago, when we only had taxi drivers, about 7,000 licensed and well-trained taxi drivers were operating in Sydney. We now have over 20,000 drivers in Sydney. This explosion in numbers has been followed by an increase in the market for these activities, but it also means that nobody is earning very much money at all. The reforms we see today are incredibly important. The bill will amend chapter 6 to ensure that it reflects the modern road transport industry. This is long overdue. We will be improving the dispute resolution processes, the bargaining process, abolishing outdated exemptions, creating new objects and fixing up how a transmission of business operates under the Act and addresses supply chain contractual claims. We are also making it easier to seek reimbursement for tolls so drivers do not need to choose between time and money.

Importantly for so many owner-drivers in this State, we will expand how many trucks an owner-driver can own before they lose access to the benefits of the protection of the minimum terms and conditions provided by the Industrial Relations Act, known as the IR Act. At the moment, owner-drivers can only own one truck and be covered by the IR Act. If they decide to buy and operate another truck, they lose access to protections given by the Act, including minimum pay rates and other terms and conditions. Our bill increases the number of trucks an owner-driver can own to three, which will ensure that more road transport workers are granted fair working conditions for the hard work that they do.

Simply put, this bill protects the small business owners who keep New South Wales moving. The bill will ensure gig workers in New South Wales receive a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. I thank the relentless Transport Workers' Union for its work in keeping this fight alive. In particular, I thank Tony Matthews, Richard Olsen and Nick McIntosh. We know that safe rates save lives, and the expansion of the protections that the bill introduces will save lives. The Minns Labor Government is ensuring that all transport workers have minimum standards, ending the race to the bottom that has gone on for far too long.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (16:03):** The Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025 will amend chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act 1996 to ensure that it reflects the modern transport industry. It will do this by extending its coverage to include the gig transport economy and modernising the specific provisions of the Act to ensure that it reflects an industry that has changed markedly since the 1970s. This is another step in fulfilling the Government's commitment to modernise New South Wales laws to respond to the rise of the gig economy. It is a pledge we made while in opposition and one we are now delivering on.

Whilst the gig economy has revolutionised the way people work, it has also opened up a new frontier of economic instability and employment insecurity. The Minns Labor Government is acting accordingly. Since the Government's election, the Federal Government has established a framework for gig workers in the Fair Work Act. The piece of legislation we are debating today seeks to complement the Federal regime for cases where the transport industry may decide that sectors of the transport gig economy are best suited to State jurisdictions. Ridesharing, for example, is one of these industries, owing to the fact that its main competitor—taxis—is regulated by the States.

Chapter 6 is such an important part of the Act. It has protected owner-drivers and taxi operators since the 1970s, ensuring fair pay and conditions. It has withstood attacks from backward-thinking Liberal governments, like those of Howard and O'Farrell. That is in large part due to the mass mobilisation of the union movement to preserve it, and I pay respect to members of the Transport Workers' Union for their long-held advocacy. I acknowledge their presence in the gallery today. I thank them for their work in making sure that this bill has come to the House. It is because of their fervour that we are able to stand in this place today and further strengthen chapter 6 by making it available to gig transport workers.

Chapter 6 is only good so long as it is relevant to the modern transport industry. Last year, the Federal Government acted on this front by giving gig workers access to the Fair Work Commission for minimum standards and unfair deactivation remedies. We are now bringing our State into line with these standards and bringing our economy into the twenty-first century. It beggars belief that members opposite—and we can see just how seriously they take this matter by the low attendance in front of me—had 12 years to enact reform and they did absolutely nothing. They should hang their heads in shame for leaving so many gig workers without protection and without fairness under the law.

This Government is also working to modernise the existing provisions of chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act to ensure they are fit for the modern road transport industry. The Minns Labor Government is improving the dispute resolution procedures and the bargaining process. We are abolishing outdated exemptions, creating new objects, fixing how a transmission of business operates under the Act, and addressing supply chain contractual chains. Schedule 1 [1] will insert new objects into chapter 6 to clarify its purpose and objectives. Schedule 1 [2] empowers the Industrial Relations Commission [IRC] to declare specific contracts or classes of contracts as contracts of carriage. That applies when the IRC is satisfied that the contract relates to transporting persons or goods and meets fairness considerations. Schedule 1 [3] seeks to remove outdated exemptions from section 309 (4) of the Act and extends chapter 6 protections to these workers.

Chapter 6 currently excludes certain categories of contract transport workers, including those whose contracts of carriage are for the carriage of bread, milk or cream for sale, or delivery for sale, or the delivery of mail on behalf of Australia Post, including the delivery of parcels. These exemptions border on ancient, so we are removing them to afford chapter 6 protections to persons who would otherwise be contract carriers. We know that often these goods are not the only ones that are precious in the eyes of our community. During the earlier days of the COVID-19 pandemic, trucks and transport workers carrying toilet paper were just as precious. Critically for owner-drivers, the bill will expand how many trucks they can own before they lose access to the benefits of the protection of the minimum terms and conditions provided by the Act. At present, if an owner-driver chooses to purchase and operate a second truck, they lose that protection. This is holding small business back. That is why, under schedule 1 [5], we will expand the number of vehicles that can be owned to three, ensuring that the small business owners who keep New South Wales moving are protected.

Schedule 1 [9] amends section 313 of the Act to expand the list of factors the commission must consider when making contract determinations for contracts of carriage. The amendment also allows the Industrial Relations Commission, which comprises a presidential member, to look into and take action on pay and other conditions within a contractual chain. That is quite significant, particularly for those who suffer financial loss or who are left high and dry when they are not paid according to the contract. A contractual chain is defined as a series of contracts or arrangements where a bailor or carrier performs work for a party in that chain. However, the commission cannot act if it believes doing so would interfere with the reasonable commercial arrangements between the parties. Since that power will likely impact commercial arrangements, the commission must carefully

consider what is reasonable. In doing so, it must take into account several factors, including the overall objectives of chapter 6 and the specific matters set out in the amended section 313 (2).

At its heart the bill restores dignity to workers who were ignored and overlooked by the previous Government. They were left without protections, ending up worse off. The bill enshrines protections for those workers, who work incredibly hard and contribute so much to our economy. As the member for Shellharbour stated earlier, it is churlish and regressive for those opposite to miserably oppose the bill. It makes one wonder whose interests they support in this place. They criticise and vote against important reforms but offer no alternative plan. They are content to let rideshare and delivery drivers, whom we stand proudly in support of today, bear the burden of their mess, their inaction, their ineptitude and their small-mindedness. This bill has been developed in spite of those opposite, not because of them. The rise of the gig economy has funnelled the benefits away from the workers who provide the service and keep our State on track, leaving them instead with uncertainty and financial costs that they may not have anticipated. They have to work incredibly hard to keep their head above water.

It would be remiss of me not to pay tribute to the depth of work that has gone into this bill. The Minister and her team have been consulting widely. She is a fantastic Minister, and I acknowledge her presence in the Chamber today. She is dedicated to delivering for the millions of workers across this State. It is because of her commitment that we are here today debating what is a truly historic piece of legislation. I acknowledge her team and the department for their work in bringing the bill to the House; it is truly nation changing. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (16:12):** I contribute to debate on the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025. I am proud and privileged to speak on this important piece of legislation, which honours an election commitment of the Minns Labor Government. I pay credit to my friend, the Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister Cotsis, for her significant work in bringing this bill to the Parliament. I am really proud to be part of the Government and the Cabinet that introduced this bill. I have long known that transport workers are the people who keep our State moving. Without them, supermarket shelves would be bare, petrol bowsers would be empty and the goods we need would simply not get delivered.

We have also seen how, in times of crisis, transport workers always step up to ensure that people receive essential goods and services. The distances that goods have to travel to be delivered so that people can live their daily lives are covered by our hardworking transport workers. I am proud to represent many transport workers in my electorate of Londonderry in outer Western Sydney, many of whom I have come to know over the years. Many of those workers are also small business owners, who have their own vehicles, pay themselves a wage, have an ABN and have to find their own work. I am proud of the Labor Government and what it is doing today in delivering on its election promise to modernise chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act to extend it to gig transport workers. It is well overdue. The bill, as previous speakers have said, improves protection for the State's hardworking owner-drivers and makes chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act fit for purpose in an evolving transport industry. Labor pledged that change in opposition, and now it is being delivered.

Chapter 6 has protected owner-drivers and taxi operators since the 1970s by ensuring fair pay and conditions—something very basic that all people are entitled to. Over the years, it has survived multiple attacks from the Howard and O'Farrell Liberal governments. Now Labor is once again strengthening chapter 6 by modernising it and extending its coverage to gig transport workers, who, until now, have not been covered. The changes keep the Act relevant in today's transport economy. I challenge any member of this House to think about how much they rely on gig transport workers in their everyday life. The fact that those workers have not been entitled to fair pay and conditions is outrageous.

Last year the Federal Government gave gig workers access to the Fair Work Commission for minimum standards and unfair deactivation remedies. This bill does not seek to replace the new Federal jurisdiction or to duplicate that important work, but rather creates a mechanism that allows gig transport workers to access the protections of chapter 6 if the transport industry decides that some sectors of the gig transport economy are better left to State jurisdictions. The Government will be improving the dispute resolution procedures and the bargaining process, abolishing outdated exemptions, creating new objects, fixing up how a transmission of business operates under the Act and addressing supply chain contractual chains. Most importantly for so many owner-drivers in New South Wales, the Government will be expanding how many trucks an owner-driver can own before they lose access to the benefits of the protection of the minimum terms and conditions provided by the Act.

At the moment, owner-drivers can own only one truck to be covered by the Act. If they decide to buy and operate another truck, they lose access to protections given by the Act, including minimum pay rates and other terms and conditions. How ridiculous. This bill increases the number of trucks an owner-driver can own to three. That will ensure more road transport workers are granted fair working conditions for the hard work they do, which

is moving things around for the members and the people we represent and contributing to our local economies. Simply put, this bill is about protecting the small business owners who keep our State moving.

As I said before, I am proud that my electorate of Londonderry is home to many transport workers. I take this opportunity to share the story of one of those workers and put it into *Hansard in support of this bill*. Joe Lewis is a proud Transport Workers' Union member from Londonderry—like me—who owns a small trucking company. Joe's company delivered hundreds of thousands of dollars in labour for a project but, as is unfortunately common in that part of the industry, he was left paying the bill out of his own pocket. The member for Liverpool spoke earlier about how incidents such as that will be remedied by the changes proposed in this bill. The company he was working for went under and Joe had no recourse for recovering the money he was owed. Any reasonable person can see that that is not fair. The changes this bill makes will give people like Joe protections to ensure they receive payment that is fair, in full and on time. The bill will ensure that transport businesses, owner-drivers and gig workers are finally given a truly fair go.

None of this would have happened without the strong advocacy of members of the Transport Workers' Union. I thank them on behalf of all the transport workers whom I represent for their tireless advocacy over many years. They are known to do that; they do not give up when they know that something is unfair and needs to be fixed for their members. I thank Tony Matthews, Richard Olsen and Nick McIntosh for helping this Government achieve real reform, for pushing us in opposition and for being here to witness the Government putting this bill forward today for the road transport industry and for all those workers who deserve fairness. It is a basic Australian principle. I am proud to be part of this Government every day, and I am especially proud today that we are stepping up and delivering for our workers.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:19):** I contribute to debate in support of the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers) Bill 2025. Stuck in lockdown, with a positive rapid antigen test and no access to groceries; nursing a broken foot, unable to drive to the shops; needing to get your mother-in-law to the doctor when you are stuck in meetings; needing to courier an important document across the city before the end of the day; or needing a safe ride home after a night out—in situations like those, we all turn to transport sector gig workers. Whether it be couriers, Uber drivers, or for late-night dinner deliveries or grocery orders, the community has grown to rely on transport sector gig workers. As our society has evolved to rely on those workers, so must our industrial relations laws evolve. We must ensure those workers are afforded fair and reasonable workplace protections.

I am pleased to support the bill, and I thank the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety for driving this important change in the legislation. I also acknowledge the efforts of many workers, trade unionists, families, friends and organisations who have fought for this change. I recognise the fierce advocates in the Transport Workers Union—some of whom are in the gallery—who have rallied for this change for 15 years. In the Prospect electorate there are thousands of workers in the transport sector. Their locations include Wetherill Park, Smithfield, Eastern Creek, Bungaribee and Huntingwood. Those workers are fierce advocates. I am proud to have stood on the picket line with them more than once, and I am proud that this reform has been driven by that union and by a Labor government.

The Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers) Bill 2025 will modernise chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act to extend coverage to the gig transport economy. It will ensure that transport gig workers, like rideshare and delivery drivers, are afforded protections, whilst also updating the provisions of chapter 6 to better serve our modern transport industry. Our economy has changed rapidly over recent years, however industrial relations laws have not kept pace. During and after the pandemic, our expectations as consumers changed. For the first time in our State's history, people were confined to their homes. Due to lockdowns and physical distancing requirements, people were unable to access the things they really needed. Transport gig workers were vital to keeping us connected to the basics.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has ended, our reliance on the transport gig economy has expanded. Our expectations as consumers have changed. We want things faster, and we want them delivered to our door at the click of a button. It is great to have that access, but we must ensure that the workers behind those services are fairly compensated and protected. Currently, many transport gig workers have no minimum rates of pay or conditions. They have no unfair dismissal protections, and no recourse to an independent industrial umpire. Those are safeguards that most employees and employers in New South Wales take for granted. The bill will make important changes to extend legal protections to gig workers that are already offered under chapter 6 to couriers, taxi drivers and owner-driver truck drivers.

Chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act has served the workers of New South Wales since the 1970s. Currently, chapter 6 applies to owner-drivers and taxi drivers. It enables the making of enforceable instruments that set pay and conditions. As a result, numerous chapter 6 instruments are in force throughout the New South Wales transport industry. Through the years, chapter 6 has withstood attacks from other governments, including



the Howard and O'Farrell governments. Each time, trade unions led campaigns to preserve it—and won. As the party of the worker, Labor stood behind chapter 6. Today, we are protecting chapter 6 again. The Minns Labor Government is delivering on its election commitment by modernising chapter 6 and extending its application to transport gig workers.

Last year, the Federal Government introduced closing loopholes legislation to provide gig workers access to the Fair Work Commission. Federal legislation enabled the Fair Work Commission to make minimum standard orders for gig workers, and gave access to unfair deactivation remedies. The bill aims to complement that Federal legislation by creating a mechanism that allows transport gig workers to access the protections of chapter 6 if the transport industry decides that some sectors of the transport gig economy are better handled by State jurisdictions. I now address key elements of the bill. The chief amendment in the bill is in schedule 1 [8]. The amendment creates a mechanism to include transport gig workers under the Act. It provides that a contract for the transportation of goods and persons is taken to be a contract of carriage if the particular contract is facilitated through a digital labour platform or booking service. That allows transport gig workers to access the protections and fair conditions within chapter 6.

The next suite of amendments seek to modernise the existing provisions of chapter 6 to better reflect our modern transport industry. Schedule 1 [1] does that by inserting new objects into chapter 6 to outline the underlying purpose of the chapter. Schedule 1 [3] removes exemptions within section 309 (4) of the Act. Currently, chapter 6 excludes certain categories of contract transport workers, including those whose contracts are for the carriage of bread, milk or cream, or the delivery of mail on behalf of Australia Post. Those exclusions are archaic and deprive persons of the protection of chapter 6.

Schedule 1 [5] also seeks to modernise chapter 6 by amending section 309 of the Act to extend the operation of chapter 6 to contract carriers who own or operate up to three motor vehicles. At present, an owner-driver can only own one truck and still access the protections of chapter 6. The bill allows owner-drivers to operate up to three trucks and keep access to the commission's protections. The Industrial Relations Commission will also be empowered to apply a contract determination to successors of principal contractors. That ensures that where a business is sold, hard-won conditions will automatically transfer to the new principal contractor and owner-drivers down the supply chain.

As another measure to modernise chapter 6, schedule 1 [2] to the bill permits the Industrial Relations Commission to declare particular contracts as contracts of carriage. Any such declaration must be made in accordance with factors contained in new section 3B (b) of the Act. Those factors include that the person has low bargaining power or that contract terms would be unfair or operate unfairly in relation to the person. Schedule 1 [9] also amends section 313 of the Act to provide a broader and non-exhaustive list of considerations the commission must consider when making a contract determination about contracts of carriage.

The bill provides that the Industrial Relations Commission will be able to inquire into and take appropriate action in relation to remuneration and other conditions in a contractual chain. That ensures platform companies, their drivers and the organisations that represent them all have the opportunity to be heard before the Industrial Relations Commission when it makes a decision. Schedule 1 [13] also strengthens the commission's ability to facilitate bargaining and impose good-faith bargaining obligations on all parties. That amendment, and others within the bill, will help improve dispute resolution procedures and achieve more reasonable outcomes for all contract parties.

Transport sector gig workers face inherent risks at work. They drive in peak traffic conditions and at all hours of the day and night to get us where we need to go. Small transport businesses, owner-drivers and transport sector gig workers face immense supply chain pressures. Low rates of pay and competition in the market create a perverse incentive for those workers to take risks on the road and accept too many jobs, which may be needed to make ends meet. Gig workers have no rights to workers compensation, leaving them extremely vulnerable. Since 2017, 18 delivery riders have been killed on Australian roads—15 riders in Sydney alone. [*Extension of time*]

I thank the House. Four food delivery drivers were killed on New South Wales roads in 2020. The devastation their families felt was compounded by the fact that an outdated workers compensation system denied any type of statutory compensation. Today the Government is changing that. In the Prospect electorate, we are extremely proud of our workforce. Whether they be carpenters, teachers, CEOs, pharmacists or logistics and delivery drivers, every one of them deserves to return home to their family at the end of their shift. With this bill, we are supporting a vulnerable workforce to have fairer pay and working conditions and a place to turn to go for support if they face injury or accident at work. The changes will improve road safety for riders and drivers in the gig economy and, therefore, for all road users.

The delivery ecosystem is fast growing. The global market is worth more than \$150 billion, more than tripling since 2017. The pandemic gave the sector an enormous boost, with delivery drivers offering a lifeline to the hurting restaurant and retail industries. The sector is expanding rapidly, but its economic structure is still evolving. It is essential that we act to ensure that the workers behind its success are not overlooked. As the bill expands who is covered by chapter 6, it will enable the commission to examine contractual chains that exist in modern supply chains. That will improve transmission of business provisions and update dispute resolution and bargaining under the chapter. The bill protects and supports the men and women who run the small businesses that keep New South Wales moving. In 2022 then leader and now Premier Chris Minns said:

The rise of the gig economy has revolutionised the way people can access work. But that shouldn't mean workers should be left more vulnerable.

Those words ring just as true today. The bill acknowledges the significant contribution of transport sector gig workers to our economy, and it will provide them with greater dignity. We have evolved to rely on those workers every day. It is now time for the Government to offer them the same legal protections offered to other couriers and taxi drivers under chapter 6. That is the first step in supporting the thousands of gig workers in New South Wales to feel more safe and secure at work—something every worker in New South Wales deserves. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:32):** On behalf of The Greens, I wholeheartedly support the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025. We are thrilled to see the modernisation of the Industrial Relations Act 1996 to now include gig workers, who face so much precarity in the course of their work. I acknowledge the members of the Transport Workers' Union in the gallery today. Over many years I have observed the amazing efforts of union members to organise and speak to gig workers and delivery drivers on King Street in Newtown during the busy Friday and Saturday night delivery times. I pay tribute to their consistent engagement with those workers, at a time when they were not adequately represented or protected.

Some of these workers face not only an absolute lack of protection of their rights but also, unfortunately, a lot of hostility from people who are frustrated by delivery drivers. In the electorate of Newtown, there is a constant battle between the enthusiastic support from people getting their food delivered and the less-enthusiastic support for the fact that delivery riders need to drive in certain locations. We need to work collectively to put things in place. While we are talking about gig workers, I think it is incumbent on local councils and the State Government to recognise that we have moved to a different model of delivery work.

In the old days, when we used to deal with taxi drivers parking outside of petrol stations, they would have open public spaces where people could stop to grab a cup of tea and something to eat. Sadly, for gig workers currently doing delivery work, there is not the same kind of infrastructure and public support—for example, public toilets, tearooms, lunch rooms and air-conditioned spaces. Those workers have to engage with problematic workplace conditions because we have not moved with the times. That is a conversation for another day, but I always reiterate that council-owned properties and spaces that are closed at night could be accessed by the workers serving our community.

The object of the bill is to amend the Industrial Relations Act 1996 to provide for the extension of regulations under the Act to gig workers. Specifically, it seeks to modernise chapter 6 of the Act to extend its coverage to transport sector gig workers, such as delivery drivers and rideshare drivers, giving those workers the ability to argue for improved conditions in the Industrial Relations Commission. Additionally, it will remove outdated and unfair conditions that currently restrict contract drivers who deliver bread, milk or cream—I do not think we have ever talked as much about bread, milk or cream as we have in this debate—or drivers contracted to Australia Post from applying for the same protections.

In the face of growing demand for rideshare and delivery services in our community and the extreme unsafety experienced by gig workers, the modernisation of the Act is long overdue. As has been reported by the Transport Workers' Union for many years, 18 food delivery drivers have been killed on Australian roads, with 15 of those being in Sydney. I remember the tragic death of one of those drivers at the intersection of Cleveland and Elizabeth streets.

We have seen some improvements in response to safety concerns but, sadly, we have also seen an increase in fines being issued to workers who are already financially insecure when the police catch them putting themselves at risk. The financial stress that they are under means they often have no choice but to put themselves at risk to make ends meet. Working within a system where they are not guaranteed a minimum wage but are instead paid per job, they are incentivised to work as quickly as possible, leading to often unsafe and sometimes fatal outcomes. The pressures placed on those workers for the benefit of multinational companies are unacceptable.

and reflect a clear pattern of exploitation in the name of profit for big business, experienced most often by migrant and international student workers.

Increasingly, gig workers have proven to be essential workers, often delivering groceries, meals and transportation when other services are unavailable or unsuitable. For years they have done that work without being afforded the basic protections that would be considered completely essential in any other workplace. When we talk about providing essential worker housing, one of The Greens' biggest concerns is that people's definition of "essential worker" is often limited to those who work in the public service, like nurses, teachers and frontline emergency service workers. But during the COVID pandemic, the work provided by delivery drivers and gig workers was actually critical. If we are talking about the affordability of housing in our city and in our State, we need to ensure that there is affordable housing for all workers and that we are not picking and choosing which workers fall into the "essential worker" category.

The conditions those workers are asking for would be considered the bare minimum in most jobs. It should not be considered revolutionary. Sadly, we are not seeing much revolutionary action from the Government when it comes to delivering a reform agenda. But workers need better conditions, and gig workers must be included in that.

Sadly, while the bill will not address all of the risks that people face within their workplace, it will finally provide a mechanism for demands to be considered by the Industrial Relations Commission. In debating the bill, it is crucial to acknowledge the precarious status of those who choose to work in these unsafe environments. We know from the amazing research of the Transport Workers' Union that most platform delivery riders in Australia are migrants on temporary visas and many are international students. They represent a labour force that faces persistent racism and is consistently exploited with little protection.

Research from the University of Queensland indicates that many choose to work in food delivery because, unlike other industries, there is at least transparency, independence and a guarantee that they will be paid at the end of the day. That is a damning indictment, and we need to be doing more in this State. I know many members across the political spectrum are keen to protect migrant workers and international students who are exploited at work. The high percentage of migrant workers in the gig economy is a damning reflection on the rates of underpayment, mistreatment and exploitative working conditions migrants face in this and other industries. There is so much more that we need to do. In the electorate of Newtown, such workers are often young international students with limited working rights or government support. If they are homeless or at risk of homelessness, they have no access to crisis accommodation or temporary accommodation. Delivery drivers and gig workers often make the decision to go faster and harder and risk their own safety in order to raise enough money to pay their rent. We need to look at what we have created in a holistic way and make sure that people are adequately supported.

I commend the New South Wales Labor Government for bringing in this reform, particularly the Minister for Industrial Relations. There is so much more we need to do in this space. I look forward to participating as the deputy chair of the committee that will inquire into temporary workers and the increasing risk of modern slavery. If we work collectively not just in New South Wales but across our country to improve the rights of workers, then those seeking to profit from worker exploitation will not be able to do so. The bill presents an important step forward in improving the working conditions of some of the most vulnerable workers in New South Wales who contribute so much to the community. The Greens and I look forward to seeing ongoing action taken by workers and the union to improve conditions and safety, particularly for those people who are more vulnerable and not necessarily recognised for the absolutely essential work they do.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport) (16:42):** I speak in support of the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025. I am really grateful to the Transport Workers' Union [TWU] for its advocacy. I speak as the Minister for Regional Transport and the newly appointed Minister for Roads as well as a former transport business operator for nearly 20 years. I have two children and a husband who still work in the transport industry and are proud TWU members like myself. I know personally about the importance of this bill and the importance of the advocacy of TWU in protecting the rights of some of the most vulnerable people in our community. As the member for Newtown said, they are essential workers. They really do represent a sector of our economy that is completely undervalued. Everybody wants their goods and services, but they do not want to pay for the convenience of having them brought to them. Many people are very reluctant to actually value those who work in the sector.

Transport is a difficult sector to work in. It involves long hours and there are many logistical constraints. There is also a lot of regulation and a lot of safety issues just by the very nature of the work. We owe a debt of gratitude to every single transport worker for the work they do every day, which is never recognised as it should be. We know that that transport sector work can provide a strong pathway to economic independence and viability

particularly for migrants but also for younger people. There are so many opportunities. It is really sad when people working in the sector are not protected and are seriously injured or die because safety has not been considered.

I congratulate Minister Cotsis on the bill and the Treasurer as well. We heard from the Deputy Premier a few minutes ago about all the members who have all been so committed to this work, along with the Premier. We made an election commitment to modernise chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act. Strengthening protections for small businesses and owner-drivers is at the heart of what the bill seeks to do, particularly in the rideshare and delivery sector of the gig economy. The entry costs and rising overheads faced by aspiring owner-drivers are daunting. They may include the cost of a heavy vehicle, and then there is yearly registration, insurance, regular maintenance, vehicle repairs, petrol and tolls. There are logistical constraints about where and how to have breaks. They also have to ensure that the asset they have invested all their money in is working at a level that can repay the investment.

More often than not, owner-drivers finance their vehicles against their homes and take on a massive financial risk that they hope will pay off. The vehicles depreciate rapidly, so it is a difficult formula to make work. Unfortunately, the road transport industry is not kind. It is cutthroat, and drivers carry the weight of the costs with very little security in their business arrangements. When I was running my business we had a contract with a major supermarket to get its stocktake team around the State. It was turned on and off very quickly, with little negotiation or even conversation. They just said, "Yes, you've got the contract." Then a couple of years later they said, "No, you haven't got it." That is a daily lived reality that makes the sector so tenuous.

The TWU fought for chapter 6 to be maintained against the interventions of the Howard Government and organised a convoy to Canberra. They worked to force the Howard Government to preserve chapter 6 even though other aspects of State industrial law dealing with independent contractors were overridden following the enactment of the Independent Contractors Act 2006. In that action the Howard Government took a sledgehammer to the rights of workers, as did the O'Farrell Government. In 2011 there was an attempt to incorporate the Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales into a super tribunal that could have significantly reduced the scope of chapter 6. Members on the Opposition side of the House have been attacking the rights of owner-drivers and the transport sector for generations.

Without the union-led campaigns that have preserved chapter 6 in its existing form, we would not be here today delivering on the commitment of the Minns Labor Government to protect it. We are not just maintaining it but modernising it and extending its application to gig transport workers to ensure that it keeps its relevance as a modern piece of industrial relations legislation. There has been activity not just at the State level. Last year the Federal Government acted to provide gig workers access to the Fair Work Commission, including giving the Fair Work Commission the ability to make minimum standard orders for gig workers as well as providing them with access to unfair deactivation remedies. Thinking about it now, it seems so obvious. Why has it taken so long to get there? Again, I pay tribute to the gentlemen in the gallery for their work as a union and the many delegates and activists within their part of the movement got that put in place.

It is important to note the bill does not seek to replace that new Federal jurisdiction or to duplicate the important work that has been taking place federally. Instead, it creates a mechanism that allows gig transport workers to access the protections of chapter 6 if the transport industry decides that some sectors of the gig economy are better left to State jurisdictions. It removes duplication by providing direction to the IRC about how it must deal with any application made with respect to a cohort of workers who are subject to the Federal application of the minimum standards and also acknowledges the operation of the Federal deactivation scheme.

I will not go into the detail because Minister Cotsis has already outlined the bill far more cogently than I could, having worked on it for so long. But, in short, the bill will allow contract carriers to recover the costs of tolls incurred from carrying out their work. That is particularly important in the heavy vehicle industry, where the tolls are much higher. Under the former Government we had toll mania, and this Government has work to do on that reform. But this bill provides at least some relief. When transport operators are at the skinny end of the contract chain with a big supplier, they are the ones who carry all the risk. They bear the fuel costs and toll increases while people still get their milk, or whatever the operator is carrying, for \$1 a litre.

Ensuring that owner-operators with up to three vehicles retain access to protections through chapter 6 is really important. I was in a taxi the other night and the driver talked about how he wanted to get another couple of taxis. These are small business people. Three taxis or three heavy vehicles is not a massive fleet. Those drivers do not carry much weight in industrial negotiations, so we need to ensure they are protected. Through the bill, the Government will ensure that rates and conditions remain stable when business transfers occur between principal contractors. Too often, small businesses are mashed in that process. The commission is allowed to rule on the termination of contract agreements between the principal contractor and the contract carrier if they are unfair. That is important. Just because there is a contract does not mean it is fair. The huge size of those at the apex point

of contractor chains needs to be looked at because they have the power that an owner-driver does not. The bill grants the IRC increased scope to deal with industrial disputes on an interim basis if it sees fit to do so.

I speak from experience when I say that the changes in the bill will go a long way to help transport businesses and the road transport industry itself. I again thank the Transport Workers' Union for its relentless advocacy, particularly President Tony Matthews, State Secretary Richard Olsen and Assistant Secretary Nick McIntosh. Minister Cotsis also mentioned other members in her contribution. I see Garion in the gallery, but I do not have my glasses on to see everyone else. I am sorry. I appreciate the work they do each and every day to protect transport workers in our State. New South Wales does not move without transport workers. They are the salt of the earth and should be protected to ensure that our economy continues to move and grow.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (16:52):** The Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025 seeks to modernise chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act 1996 by providing a mechanism to extend coverage to gig workers in the transport industry, such as rideshare and delivery drivers, and amending chapter 6 to ensure that it reflects the modern transport industry. Over recent years the workplace environment has changed dramatically, and the laws designed to protect workers in the modern world have fallen behind. In many cases, full-time employment has been replaced with casual workers. In many industries, former employees have been forced to establish themselves as contractors, carrying the burden of managing their own payroll, vacation time and registering for GST.

This change has affected workers in some industries more than others, like transport workers, who are the backbone of our society. They deliver food to our supermarkets and keep Australia moving. If it were not for workers in the transport industry, our entire State would grind to a halt. Many of these workers are owner-drivers who have had to establish themselves as contractors and bought their own trucks. On top of doing payroll, vacation and GST, they are also responsible for maintaining those trucks. In a previous life when I was working in and around the automotive industry, I gained an interesting insight into the life of transport workers. For example, most people who buy a motorcycle do so as a reflection of their personality. A lot of people buy a car based on what suits the needs of their family. But when it comes to transport workers, the only factor is economics and how long they can keep their truck on the road and the wheels moving. That is not just for profitability but also out of a deep sense of responsibility for what their job entails for the greater needs of society.

On top of the changing nature of the workforce, entirely new industries have emerged that take advantage of the lack of union protection for some of the State's most vulnerable workers, like gig workers, rideshare drivers and delivery drivers. Many of those workers are owner-operators trying to make ends meet and get food on the table for their families. They often work for large multinationals like Uber or Amazon. Of course, it is great that we are able to jump online and get whatever we want delivered—sometimes within hours—right to our doorstep. But that comes at a cost. These workers have no protections and no bargaining power. They are often paid below the minimum wage and are regularly forced to work in unsafe conditions without the protection of workers compensation. A reform like this is long overdue.

I acknowledge the work of the Federal Government to provide a framework within the Fair Work Act. The bill is designed to complement those protections rather than duplicate them. For example, the main competition for rideshare drivers is taxis, which are regulated on a State-by-State basis. The amendments in the bill allow the transport industry to decide whether some sectors of the transport gig economy are better handled by the State. By amending chapter 6, the bill ensures that it reflects the modern transport industry. Chapter 6 has protected owner-drivers and taxi operators for over 50 years, and much has changed during that time. Over those years chapter 6 has survived multiple attacks by both State and Federal Liberal governments, which is not surprising given that they continually attack unions, failing to appreciate that each union is made up of family members who are simply doing everything they can to work hard for their employers. Quite rightly, they expect a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. Their toils are the only reason businesses survive.

But each time chapter 6 came under attack, union-led campaigns—especially those undertaken by the relentless Transport Workers' Union [TWU]—were necessary to preserve it, and now the Minns Labor Government is strengthening it. The bill makes significant changes for owner-drivers. It removes old exclusions, such as for owner-drivers and gig workers delivering on behalf of Australia Post; improves dispute resolution; allows the transmission of the way that a business operates so that if a principal contractor's business is sold, the hard-won conditions transfer automatically to the new principal contractor and the owner-drivers down the supply chain; and allows the Industrial Relations Commission [IRC] to inquire into the contractual chains and establish liability through the entire supply chain.

Importantly, the bill changes the number of trucks that an owner-operator can have to access the protections of chapter 6. At the moment, owner-drivers can have only one truck that is covered by the Industrial Relations Act. If they decide to get ahead in life and expand their business by operating another truck, they lose access to the protections provided by the Industrial Relations Act, such as minimum pay rates and other terms and

conditions. This bill increases the number of trucks that an owner-driver can own to three, ensuring more transport workers are granted fair work conditions for the hard work they do by keeping access to the commission's protections.

I will share the story of one of my constituents, Dominic Luppino, who is an owner-driver for a concrete supplier. He has also stepped up to be a union delegate, working diligently to ensure good workplace outcomes not just for himself but also for other owner-drivers. Over the past few years various disputes have been raised with the Industrial Relations Commission. However, the commission has not had the power to make rulings outside of a 30-day determination. Time and time again, that has left Mr Luppino and his fellow owner-drivers with no recourse available to them because when a dispute arises it is about an owner-driver's pay and conditions or unfair dismissal, and the commission is poorly equipped to help resolve it.

The Industrial Relations Commission does not currently have the jurisdiction to make interim orders for the determination of contracts and can only issue determinations for 30-day periods. The purpose of such an order is to restore the original contract and provide interim relief for owner-drivers who are reliant on the contract whether matters leading to the dispute can be addressed in good faith or not. For the IRC to recognise its lack of jurisdiction to make interim orders and also the impractical nature of its orders is a clear sign of a system urgently in need of reform. Owner-drivers have mortgages and bills to pay and mouths to feed.

This bill will expand the jurisdiction of the IRC so it can deal with disputes in a meaningful way before they escalate out of control and before owner-drivers are left high and dry. I thank the relentless TWU for its decades-long advocacy in this space. In particular, I thank Tony Matthews, Richard Olsen and Nick McIntosh for their work on behalf of owner-drivers who have suffered from the inadequacy of the present system. Their hard work has paid off with this bill. I also acknowledge Keith Stone, who is with TWU in the public gallery today. As an owner-driver, he has played a special role in getting these reforms before the House. I thank him for his work and for being here today.

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

Before I call the member for Miranda, I acknowledge the members of the Transport Workers' Union [TWU] in the public gallery and thank them for being here. I am the daughter of a truck driver, and my father was a member of the TWU for a long time. I also welcome members of the Ku-ring-gai Chamber of Commerce, who are guests of the member for Davidson and the member for Wahroonga.

#### *Public Interest Debate*

### **GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (17:01):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that, after two years of Labor Government, New South Wales businesses and families are worse off.
- (2) Notes that, in two years of government, Chris Minns and NSW Labor have delivered:
  - (a) a 118 per cent increase in business insolvencies in the year ended January 2025 compared with the year ended January 2023;
  - (b) the lowest annual dwelling approvals, commencements, and completions in 10 years;
  - (c) net debt growing from 11.9 per cent of gross State product in 2023-24 to 14.2 per cent in 2027-28, resulting in interest payments of \$8.6 billion, more than double those paid under the former Coalition Government;
  - (d) no substantive cost-of-living measures while slashing Active Kids, Creative Kids, First Lap, energy relief, Back to School Vouchers, and the Regional Seniors Travel Card;
  - (e) delays to the former Coalition Government's critical infrastructure pipeline while failing to deliver any major new infrastructure of its own; and
  - (f) a meaningless cashless gaming card trial, allowing problem gambling to skyrocket.
- (3) Condemns the Minns Labor Government for budget mismanagement, slashing cost-of-living support and essential services, and delaying vital infrastructure.

That is certainly a lot to take in in only seven minutes. There is a lot you can say about the incompetence of the Minns Labor Government and the poor record they have left for the people of New South Wales. I acknowledge the presence of members of the Ku-ring-gai Chamber of Commerce in the gallery, and I note that members on my side of the House all have a passion for small business. I thought I would indulge the House with the performance—

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** Oh, come on!

**Ms ELENi PETINOS:** Don't yell "oh" at me! This Government has the worst record on small business in history.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. Government members will not be provoked. They will remain silent.

**Ms ELENi PETINOS:** Visitors to the Chamber should note that this is how those opposite treat small businesses. They are not interested in listening to the numbers that affect small businesses every day. We understand how hard it is to run a small business. The members sitting opposite do not understand that businesses across the State are suffering, because they are only interested in the unions. In the year leading up to January 2023, which was the last year of the former Coalition Government, 3,300 businesses went insolvent. I ask members to compare this with the 7,200 insolvencies in the year leading up to January 2025. That is the Minns Government record, and it shows how they feel about small businesses.

The environment they provide makes businesses struggle and die. The one thing we can say about the Minns Labor Government is that it is great at spin and terrible at delivery. Do I need to repeat those small business numbers? They went from "a fresh start for New South Wales" to "building a better New South Wales". It is two years after that fresh start, but there is no plan—just spin and inaction. It appears that the only thing that works on that side of the House is the marketing department. They are not building houses. Housing approvals have dropped to the lowest level in 12 years, which is leaving the development pipeline running dry amid the higher taxes and charges implemented by the Minns Labor Government.

New South Wales is already 40 per cent behind its National Housing Accord target. It is not feasible for developers to build new homes in the current high-tax environment under Labor. Victoria is meeting its National Housing Accord target while New South Wales Labor are slugging home builders with new taxes, including a \$12,000 tax on every new home in greater Sydney. They have also increased Sydney Water charges. Labor has set Western Sydney six of the highest housing targets, and yet there is no plan or funding for improved infrastructure to support higher populations in those local communities. It appears that the members opposite getting really agitated. It must be hard to know that this is the record they have to defend. They are not delivering anything for communities across New South Wales.

Since the Government does not like hearing about housing, maybe I will talk about cost-of-living measures. They loved talking about these when we were in government, but there is not much to crow about under Labor. I will look at the current record of the Minns Labor Government. It is cutting cost-of-living support, including Active Kids and Creative Kids, energy bill relief, back to school vouchers, the Regional Seniors Travel Card and First Lap. A new program supposedly targets multicultural and underprivileged communities, but areas like Bayside Council do not qualify even though it is represented by the Minister for Multiculturalism—go figure. If you can work that out, Madam Deputy Speaker, you are doing better than me. During the Federal budget last night, we learnt that those opposite think cost-of-living measures are delivered by saving households five bucks a week. What is the Federal Treasurer crowing about?

**Mr Clayton Barr:** That's Canberra.

**Ms ELENi PETINOS:** They all go to the same school of economics. People will save \$5 per week at some point next year. That is a saving of about 70 cents. That is what they think cost-of-living relief is. They are not doing anything to target the hip pocket of the people they represent because they do not know how to balance the budget.

**Dr Marjorie O'Neill:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 76. I am not quite sure why the member for Miranda is going on about the Federal budget.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I do not uphold the point of order. The member for Miranda is speaking generally to her motion. Government members will come to order.

**Ms ELENi PETINOS:** Visitors in the gallery should know that this interruption means the Government is concerned about what we are saying. The Government members want to cut us off because they do not want the public to know the truth about their mismanagement of the budget and their bad record in New South Wales. Businesses and our communities are worse off under Labor. It cannot manage the budget, and it is not delivering cost-of-living relief. It is not delivering projects in our communities. There is no movement in this State. All the government does is spin. The marketing department of the Labor Party is very happy to be running the narrative. The Government is all spin and no substance. New South Wales is worse off after two years of the Minns Government.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:09):** I thank the member for Miranda for moving the motion. It is appropriate. Two years into the four-year term of a new government, it is good to take stock. What have we achieved? Are we open to criticism? Those questions are fair enough. I welcome the Ku-ring-gai Chamber of Commerce. It is great to have them here to see this debate. Sometimes not much happens in this House, but something is happening now, and they will see a vote go up or down. Since we are talking about anniversaries, I hope the House will indulge me. For some members, particularly on this side of the Chamber, it is our 10-year anniversary. I take the opportunity to thank my constituents. For 10 years I have had the honour of serving the people of The Entrance electorate. My colleagues on the Central Coast have worked hard to make things better for people in that area. I thank my constituents for their support over 10 years. It is such an honour to represent them in this place as part of a Labor government.

To get back to the motion, what a smorgasbord of complaints. It reflects where the Liberal Party is at the moment: It is a very grumpy organisation. Its members got a committee together and said, "What are we going to do? We have to come up with something about the first two years." They have people complaining about this and that, and everything that changed on 25 March 2023. There is no self-reflection that March 2023 represented a decision that some of the things they were doing were not supported by the people of New South Wales, and that is why we needed a change. Most of the complaints in the motion go to the budget and budgetary settings that the incoming Government inherited from those opposite. People in the Chamber and in the public gallery need to understand that we did not inherit a zero position, with the books perfectly balanced. We inherited the largest debt handed from one government to another in the State's history—it was \$130 billion.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

Members opposite can talk over me all they want, but it will not change the reality. That \$130 billion handed from the Liberal-Nationals Government to the incoming Labor Government was the largest debt in the State's history. In budget settings, the balance is even more important. Was that budget we inherited in deficit or surplus? It was in deficit. The last budget of the outgoing Liberal-Nationals Government had a deficit of \$10 billion.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** How much?

**Mr DAVID MEHAN:** It was \$10 billion, but it got worse.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The Clerk will stop the clock. Members will come to order. I apologise to people in the public gallery and thank them for sitting quietly.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN:** The 2022-23 budget had a deficit of \$10 billion on the books. By the time of the election in 2023, that had grown to \$12 billion. In that period of less than 12 months, the previous Government took a \$10 billion deficit and turned it into a \$12 billion deficit. That is what this Government inherited. In our first budget, we cut that back to \$10 billion. In our second budget, we cut it again to \$5 billion. We cannot do these things overnight. That is prudent budget management, and it is heading in the right direction. How did we get to the largest debt handed from one government to another in the State's history?

In the Liberal-Nationals Government's 2021-22 budget, the deficit was \$15 billion. In the 2020-21 budget, the deficit was \$7 billion. In the 2019-20 budget, before the pandemic, the former Government delivered a deficit of \$7 billion. The last surplus budget in this State was 2018-19, and it was \$1.4 billion—a small surplus. That is the position this Government has inherited. We need to understand that. We have improved on that position. Going forward, we are keeping expenses below 2 per cent and revenue is growing at 3-plus per cent. That is a sustainable position. We are fixing the mess created by those on the Opposition benches. We have done it without privatisation and while paying public servants more than they will ever get from those opposite.

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping) (17:14):** It gives me great pleasure to contribute to my first public interest debate. I can think of no better topic than two years of a failed government. I welcome the Ku-ring-gai Chamber of Commerce. They will probably be acknowledged by every member who speaks today, but I add my voice in saying that they are very well represented by the member for Wahroonga and the member for Davidson. They could not have two harder working representatives. Once again, I am very pleased to speak on the motion. To start, I will focus on paragraph (2) of the motion.

It notes that in two years of government, Chris Minns and NSW Labor have delivered a litany of failures, listed in subparagraphs (a) to (f) of the motion. It could go on for many pages, but it is appropriate that it stops at (f) because that is exactly what the people of New South Wales would give this Government. It would get an F from small business, an F from families, an F from patients waiting for elective surgery and an F from the commuters who turn up for trains and buses that never come. It is a government run by media spin and media management. When Government members looked at the calendar, they would have been thrilled to see a two-year anniversary, which they could plot into their media calendar to have something to talk about.



Let us see what the Premier had to say on this two-year anniversary. He told *The Daily Telegraph* he has black eyes and a bloody nose. I have never had a black eye or bloody nose. Despite having four brothers, I never got into a lot of fights. But I think I understand that you get a black eye and a bloody nose because you have been in a fight. Chris Minns is not even in the ring. There are no fights on that side of the Chamber; they are focused purely on media management. To be in a fight, they would have to pick an issue. They would have to take on a vested interest. Those guys are not fighting.

Their one announcement today, as they mark this two-year anniversary, was to indicate the number of people coming to New South Wales—something they had nothing to do with. People who did not spend their money during the pandemic are coming to our wonderful State, which has nothing to do with Labor, and yet that is what they highlighted today as part of their two-year anniversary. They could not even do a good announcement because this is a do-nothing government. That is probably a bit unfair. This is a "do a review and create a taskforce" government. But those reviews and taskforces are doing nothing for the families, workers and small businesses in this State who are doing it tough, and it is beginning to show.

When asked during question time this week what he was doing for small businesses, the Premier mentioned two things that are not even real: the emergency services levy [ESL] and workers compensation. The ESL is nowhere to be seen, stuck in Treasury, and workers compensation is but a twinkle in the Treasurer's eye. We have not seen either of those pieces of legislation. The best that the Premier can come up with for small businesses is two pieces of abstract reform that no-one has yet seen. The help for small businesses is not worth the paper the media releases are written on. There is no plan for payroll tax reform and no plan to get the economy going to help small businesses.

It is not just small businesses. Families have had their cost-of-living support cut. Elective surgery patients are waiting longer than ever. Houses are not being built and infrastructure is being delayed. But the worst part is what those opposites have done to the budget.

They absolutely smashed the State's budget by letting debt and deficits get out of control. Gross debt is getting to an eye-watering \$200 billion. I try to have a sense of humour in this House, but that is just depressing. My children will have to pay off that debt. This Government has done nothing in two years. The people of New South Wales and my children will pay.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (17:19):** I join in the public interest debate and acknowledge the motion moved by the member for Miranda. My contribution to this debate follows that of the member for Epping who, I acknowledge, has been a member of this House for a hot minute, so she may have missed the mess left to the Minns Government by the previous Coalition Government, which handed the biggest single government deficit from one government to another.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

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

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** The member for Epping probably missed the 12 years of mismanagement, waste and neglect.

**Ms Monica Tudehope:** I was in the Premier's office.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The member for Epping will cease interjecting.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** I stand corrected. The member for Epping was part of the mess. She worked in the then Premier's office.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The member for Liverpool will not respond to interjections.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** The member for Epping was part of those driving the mess that this State was left in and was inherited by the Minns Government from those opposites. In her contribution the member for Miranda referred to housing and her motion references housing completions. Among the many other things that the member for Miranda obviously has to do, she may have missed the most recent figures showing that New South Wales has had a 40 per cent increase in housing approvals, which, for the information of member for Wahroonga, is the highest number since May 2023 and the highest rate in the country.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** They need to be approved before you can build them.

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

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** I note the interjection by the member for Cessnock. They need to be approved before the housing can be built. My community is one of the areas that will benefit. Liverpool has had almost 1,000 first home buyers who will benefit under the Minns Government's scheme, which saved them \$18 million in free or discounted stamp duty. That is part of the cost-of-living relief measures that the Government has implemented. The legacy of the member for Miranda, who was a previous Minister for Fair Trading, was that the former NSW Building Commissioner threatened to quit unless she did. I wonder who won? The Building Commissioner.

**Ms Eleni Petinos:** Point of order: Personal reflections should be made by way of substantive motion. The member for Liverpool should not mislead the House and make imputations about my character.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The member for Liverpool will return to the substance of the motion.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** I reflect on the contribution of the current Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, who is present in the House, and who has passed two tranches worth of strata reforms that our community has been crying out for. Not a week goes by when I do not have residents who are part of a dodgy strata scheme talking to me about the neglect under those opposite. Strata schemes were not fit for purpose. They left workers and other ordinary citizens high and dry. The previous Government sat on a report for two years and did nothing about it. That is the type of Government we had under members opposite. I also note that in terms of cost-of-living measures, one of the first measures the Minns Government introduced was a \$60 a week toll relief cap.

**Mr Mark Coure:** You got a new hospital.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The Clerk will stop the clock. I direct the member for Oatley to remove himself from the Chamber under Standing Order 249A until the conclusion of the debate. The member for Leppington will also be removed if he continues to interject.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Oatley left the Chamber at 17:24.]*

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** As I was saying, one of the first things the Minns Government did was to introduce a \$60 a week toll cap, which returned money back into the pockets of motorists. Many of those motorists spent thousands of dollars a year navigating the almost completely privatised toll roads network that the previous Government presided over.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. I warn the member for Hornsby that he is close to being called to order.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** Toll relief was one of the reasons the Minns Government was elected. Under the previous Coalition Government, not only was navigating the toll roads network incredibly expensive but also most people would work a complete day of their week just to feed into the toll system. A total of \$561 million will go back into motorists' pockets in this State. The New South Wales Government has also delivered the largest pay rise in over a decade to our frontline workers who were under a wages cap for 12 long years under the previous Government. Because of that wage cap, teachers, police officers, nurses and a range of other frontline essential workers decided it was better to work in a different part of this country than it was to work in New South Wales. Now police officers are staying in New South Wales.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The member for Coffs Harbour will come to order. The member will be removed from the Chamber if he continues to interject.

**Mr JAMES WALLACE (Hornsby) (17:26):** As we acknowledge two years of the Minns minority Labor Government, we should consider—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Leppington will not take lessons from the member for Terrigal and the member for Oatley. The member for Leppington will not interject as he enters the Chamber.

**Mr JAMES WALLACE:** As I was saying, today in acknowledging two years of the Minns minority Labor Government we should reflect on the state of the services that this Government has been entrusted to oversee and run. Commuters have experienced repeated chaos on the trains through cancellations and delays, particularly those affected in the outer suburbs. As the former transport Minister said before resigning after a scandal, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union—one of Labor's biggest financial donors—was a like a constrictor strangling the Sydney train network, yet the Premier would not condemn the union's behaviour. The Premier failed to act before a summer of hell for commuters. Action could have been taken either at the commission or through Federal intervention, but it was never requested by Premier Minns.

There have been cuts to our local schools. School communities have been robbed of their discretionary budgets, which many were using for capital works or to pay for additional learning support officers. More people are waiting for surgery in public hospitals. Over 100,000 names are on the surgery waiting list, which is an increase of 13 per cent in the last quarter alone.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Government members will resume their seats.

**Mr JAMES WALLACE:** Those who are most vulnerable—those who seek to access mental health care—have been put at risk by being denied the services they need because of the mass resignation from our health system of psychiatrists. Young couples who are looking to start a family in difficult circumstances have been faced with cuts to the IVF rebate. That is \$2,000 that has been ripped out of struggling families. This Government is obsessed with announcements and headlines over actual outcomes. Premier Minns is obsessed with sounding good in the media, but our State needs a policy agenda that is sound and good.

Under this Government, there is no plan to pay for the infrastructure that our city and State need. There is no plan to pay for the next phase of the metro until 2040. We are told by the Premier that is a problem for a future government. It will be a future Liberal government that delivers on the next legs of the metro, but we need that investment now and we are not getting it. There is no funding for infrastructure because this Government has lost control of the budget. State gross debt is projected to reach \$200 billion by the next election; there is no plan to pay it off.

The interest bill on that debt will be \$8.6 billion per year. To put that into perspective, it is the size of the combined annual budget for police, Fire and Rescue and emergency services combined. Just like a household, we must pay that interest bill. Every single household in this State will have to pay an extra \$2,500 a year in State taxes and charges. That is not for government services but for interest on the debt.

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

**Mr JAMES WALLACE:** There will be higher land taxes, higher payroll taxes and higher stamp duty. Families will pay higher taxes, either directly on the family home they purchased or indirectly through groceries and consumer services. That is what will drive up inflation in this State. The legacy of the minority Minns Labor Government will be a future where people will need to choose between paying taxes they cannot afford or paying for services they desperately need. The issue goes beyond economic management. This Government lacks the vision to address social issues. The cashless gaming trial could best be described as a flop. The Government's plan to buy back 9,500 poker machines was left undone and is now ruled out. Rather than pursuing meaningful reform that will help problems gamblers and prevent more people becoming problem gamblers, the Minns Labor Government is in bed with the poker machine industry. In New South Wales, over \$8.1 billion will be lost on poker machines, mostly by problem gamblers. That is the legacy of the Minns Labor Government.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (17:31):** I welcome the opportunity to speak on the topic of the public interest debate submitted by the member for Miranda, who does not know the difference between a State and Federal budget and is no stranger to lambasting those in the public service. I am not surprised that members opposite want to draw attention away from 12 years of the Liberal-Nationals failure. They should be careful what they wish for. In only two short years, the Government has been actively building a better New South Wales for all. For members opposite to say that New South Wales businesses and families are worse off under the Minns Labor Government is tremendously disingenuous. Sitting opposite me in this Chamber is the party of criticism. Its members do not wish to remedy the problems faced by the people of the State; they just create them. That is why they are in opposition. They were so incompetent that they cooked the books of the Transport Asset Holding Entity of NSW. Their own Attorney General, Gabrielle Upton, had a policy brief document sitting in her office for so long that her staff threw it a birthday party.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The Clerk will stop the clock. Government members will remain silent. The member for Heathcote does not require any assistance.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART:** We just saw that they do not back gig workers and small businesses like owner drivers. In fact, the member for Miranda spoke against the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Gig Workers) Bill 2025. We are the party of the workers and the party of the bush. We lifted the wages cap that caused real wages to go backwards after 12 years under their Government.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The Clerk will stop the clock. Government members will be placed on calls to order if they continue to interject.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART:** On top of the 4.5 per cent pay rise last year, we are providing a 10.5 per cent pay rise over three years to the workers who make New South Wales function. Let us talk about reducing the debt.

Opposition members left us with the biggest debt ever handed from one government to another. We were left with fixing their mess. Gross debt will be \$8.7 billion lower in June 2026 compared with what was forecast when we took office. Labor members are great economic managers. Inflation in Sydney is also down from 7.3 per cent at the election to 2.4 per cent in December 2024. Let us address the cost of living. We have implemented the \$60 per week toll cap after the former Government privatised motorways and made Sydney the most tolled city in the world.

We have also provided \$435 million for rebates on energy bills, with \$250 for families and seniors and \$350 for low-income households and those with medical conditions. We have moved the biggest housing reforms in a generation. We have waived stamp duty for first home buyers purchasing homes of up to \$1 million. We are overhauling the planning sector to increase housing supply. Just recently the Government delivered on rental reform, which will positively impact over 2.3 million renters in New South Wales. We are ending no-grounds evictions and making it easier for renters to own a pet, helping create a fairer rental market. Let us talk about infrastructure. In Heathcote alone, we are upgrading Heathcote Road after 12 years of the former Government promising without delivering. We are fixing Garie Road after it fell away on its watch.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The member for Holsworthy will cease interjecting.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART:** We are building a school hall for Sutherland Primary School that is long overdue. We are building an urgent care centre in Bulli.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Heathcote will resume her seat. I call the member for Holsworthy to order for the first time. I call the member for Holsworthy to order for the second time. I call the member for Holsworthy to order for the third time. I direct the member for Holsworthy to remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of the public interest debate.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Holsworthy left the Chamber 17:36.]*

**Ms MARYANNE STUART:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I apologise. I could not hear. We are also building a police station in Helensburgh after 12 long years of promises. Those changes are in just one of the 93 electorates across this State. The people of New South Wales want us to work relentlessly on their behalf, and we are. That is what we will continue to do. While the member for Miranda sits in her marginal seat and dreams about what it was like being in Government, we are getting on with the job. We are just warming up. We thank Opposition members for the opportunity to contribute to this debate.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** If further members wish to contribute to the public interest debate, they will need to seek leave to do so. Members who are directed to leave the Chamber cannot return until the end of the debate and so will be unable to cast a vote if there is a division.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** I seek leave to make a contribution to the debate.

**Leave not granted.**

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

**Leave not granted.**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (17:38):** In reply: To borrow a term from the new member for Epping, I did not realise I was signing up for the 5.00 p.m. comedy hour. The interpretation of the motion before the House is laughable. It is appalling that members opposite think it is acceptable to rewrite history. Following the proper process, I acknowledge the contributions of the member for The Entrance, the member for Epping, the member for Liverpool, the member for Hornsby and the member for Heathcote. I particularly recognise the contributions of the member for Epping and the member for Hornsby. I am incredibly proud to hear their first contributions to a public interest debate and thank them for their insightful and considered contributions. I also highlight the contribution of the member for Heathcote, who seemed to be confused about the motion before the House given she only spoke about the time that the Liberals and The Nationals were in government delivering for the State.

She clearly did not have enough to say in this debate because even with only five minutes, she finished 45 seconds short. That is not surprising; her electorate adjoins mine and I have seen her performance.

I return to the leave of the question. Let us talk about the Liberals and The Nationals' record on the economy whilst we were in government, since it seemed to draw the attention of those opposite. I remind the House that before the previous election the budget was on track to return to surplus by 2024-25, with a projected surplus of \$328 million. Those opposite talk about their economic management but, with all of the rivers of taxation gold, what has happened to the surpluses they promised? Nothing—there are deficits as far as the eye can see.

On the Government benches, there are a lot of references to what they inherited, but the Liberals and The Nationals got this State through COVID. The current Government cannot say that it is steering through stormy waters; it just cannot manage the budget. Government members do not understand the priorities of the people of New South Wales. They are all spin and no substance. The marketing department is in control. They have not provided any support to small businesses while in government. They are not on track with housing. There is no new infrastructure in this State. Projects that were in train under the former Government have not been delivered on time or under budget. The people of New South Wales will be able to give us their verdict in two years time.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....33

Noes .....49

Majority.....16

#### AYES

Anderson, K  
Butler, R  
Clancy, J  
Cooke, S  
Cross, M  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Di Pasqua, S  
Donato, P  
Griffin, J  
Henskens, A  
Hodges, M

James, T  
Kemp, M  
Lane, J  
Moylan, B  
Petinos, E  
Preston, R  
Provest, G  
Roberts, A  
Saunders, D  
Singh, G  
Sloane, K

Speakman, M  
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 (teller)  
Bali, S  
Barr, C  
Butler, L  
Car, P  
Catley, Y  
Chanthivong, A  
Cotsis, S  
Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Dalton, H  
Davis, D  
Dib, J  
Doyle, T  
Finn, J  
Greenwich, A

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

O'Neill, M  
Park, R  
Piper, G  
Quinnell, S  
Saliba, D  
Scully, P  
Shetty, K  
Smith, T  
Stuart, M  
Vo, T  
Voltz, L  
Warren, G  
Washington, K  
Watson, A  
Whan, S  
Wilkinson, K

#### PAIRS

Davies, T  
Layzell, D

Tesch, L  
Saffin, J

**Motion negatived.**

#### *Bills*

### **INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AMENDMENT (TRANSPORT SECTOR GIG WORKERS AND OTHERS) BILL 2025**

#### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (17:49):** I contribute to debate on the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025. I note the complete lack of interest from those opposite. The member for Newtown spoke in the debate but the very fact that earlier this afternoon there was no-one at all sitting on the other side of the Chamber shows their complete disregard for the workers. But they cannot escape them.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: The member for Ryde was in the Chamber the entire time the member suggested there were no Opposition members present. It is an outrage and a misrepresentation of the state of the House. Most of the time there are only one or two Government members in the Chamber.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** There is no point of order. I am sorry that the member for Wahroonga is outraged. The member for Parramatta has the call.

**Ms DONNA DAVIS:** As I was saying, when I was in the Speaker's chair this afternoon there were no Opposition members in the Chamber. In fact, a quorum had to be called—which shows their complete disrespect and disregard for the workers of this State. Opposition members' absence reflects their complete distaste for the workers in our community. Perhaps they think they do not have workers in their electorates, so they do not have to represent the workers of this State. The fact that they could not bring themselves to be in the Chamber in the midafternoon to debate such important legislation points to the calibre of those opposite. The people of this State have been waiting for this legislation for 10 years.

The object of the bill is to amend chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act 1996 to extend certain provisions relating to contracts of carriage to transport sector gig workers and make further provisions about contracts of bailment and contracts of carriage, among other items. I note the important specifics in the bill. The bill allows the Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales to assist in the bargaining of pay and other conditions for certain transport sector gig worker contracts. Introducing that much-needed protection for transport sector gig workers is an important milestone in legislation—and something that was neglected by the former Liberal-Nationals Government. The bill also provides that contract determinations and contract agreements for contracts of carriage must include provisions specifying how tolls incurred in the course of work performed under a contract of carriage are to be reimbursed and setting out a carrier's reasonable obligation regarding routes that must be taken to effect a delivery. At a time when people are doing it tough, the introduction of those provisions in contracts for transport sector gig workers is more important than ever.

The Minns Labor Government has continued its commitment to building a better New South Wales with the \$60-a-week toll cap and this bill extends that commitment. Provisions specifying how tolls incurred in the course of work are to be reimbursed will help transport sector gig workers access cost-of-living relief. However, at its core, the bill is about supporting small businesses in the transport industry. I will share the story of one of my constituents, Parsuram Patel, who works in the road transport industry. Parsuram, a proud member of the Transport Workers' Union, has a small fleet of trucks and works for a single principal contractor. A new principal contractor bought out the company that Parsuram supplied trucks to. Through that transfer of business, the new contract terms reduced the rates that he was paid.

Parsuram's story is one of many small businesses deprived of certainty. The amendment to chapter 6 will directly help contract carriers like Parsuram because it introduces protections for small fleet operators, with the transmission of business provisions ensuring that small business owners like Parsuram have some protections. The transfer of business provisions will ensure that contract carriers are not forced to rely on the generosity of a new principal contractor. When owner-drivers incur massive entry costs just to start the vital work of keeping New South Wales moving, they deserve the security of knowing that a transfer of business higher in the supply chain will not undermine the pay and conditions they enjoy. The bill will also ensure that contract carriers like Parsuram can operate up to three vehicles and automatically remain under the protection of chapter 6, which will provide much-needed security and stability to hundreds of small businesses across New South Wales.

Earlier today a wonderful contingent from the Transport Workers' Union was in the gallery. I acknowledge Richard Olsen, Nick McIntosh and Tony Matthews, who, for over a decade, have worked alongside other union officials in this relentless campaign. Their advocacy on behalf of all transport workers should not go unnoticed. Small road transport businesses like Parsuram's have benefited from their efforts. They have also been leading the fight to introduce world-leading regulations for rideshare drivers. This bill gives those workers the ability to stand before the Industrial Relations Commission and make the case for minimum pay and conditions in line with all other workers covered by chapter 6. On behalf of the workers in my electorate, I thank the Transport Workers' Union.

It is also important to acknowledge the role of many fighters along the way without whose involvement this reform would not be taking place. I acknowledge Senator Tony Sheldon in the Australian Parliament for his tenacity and those Labor MPs of the Fifty-Seventh Parliament who started the ball rolling and took to the 2023

election our commitment to deliver the changes. I thank them for never giving up, being a voice for the voiceless and a profile for those often unseen and unnoticed. Finally, I acknowledge our Minister for Industrial Relations, the member for Canterbury, and give her a big vote of thanks. She always wears her heart on her sleeve but does not lose sight of the need to move the dial to effect significant change, in this case for the benefit of those with no voice. The bill sends a strong signal that the Minns Labor Government is delivering for the road transport industry, small businesses, the people of Parramatta and people across the whole of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (17:57):** I am delighted to speak in support of the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025. I acknowledge that the Minister for Industrial Relations is in the Chamber, and I thank her and her team for bringing this bill to the House. I will not go into too much detail because the Minister has already done so, but I will tell a couple of stories that highlight the importance of industrial relations and industrial relations law reform. Strong industrial relations laws ensure that our workers get what they need and deserve, which is a safe environment to work and operate in so they return home safely at the end of the day.

I am a very proud member of the Transport Workers' Union, and have been since I left the Australian Regular Army as a veteran. I was working at Sydney airport when Ansett went broke. The late former Senator Steve Hutchins was the union secretary at the time and Tony Sheldon took over after Steve entered the Senate. When Ansett went broke, we had a fight on our hands. With the House's indulgence, I will tell the story. We had to fight for the Australian transport workers.

It was a shocking time. I acknowledge that the Hon. Daniel Mookhey also fought very hard on that campaign. It was an enlightening time for me, having spent my formative years from the age of 17 in the army. Thankfully, I was welcomed by my union, of which I am proud to be a member to this day. When we talk about veterans issues and workers, such things are important to acknowledge.

I return to the bill. Many members have already spoken about the amendments to chapter 6. While in opposition, Daniel Mookhey, Adam Searle and the member for Canterbury worked very hard to see these amendments come to fruition. They were opposed at that time. However, I am delighted to know that Opposition members, as I am advised, are not opposing the bill. I thank them for that.

**Mr Edmond Atalla:** No, they are opposing it.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** They are opposing it?

**Mr Edmond Atalla:** Yes. Silly Opposition.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** I was just talking to an Opposition member outside, and they said they were supporting the bill, so I am not really sure what they are doing. I am shocked, because every worker deserves to have laws in place to protect them. This amendment to chapter 6 ensures that it will happen. I urge members opposite to think realistically about how this position will impact their political agenda. They should think about what they can do to put provisions in place for workers. At the end of the day, this is a protection for workers. We have gig workers now, but we did not in the past. When I say "the past", I mean over the past 10 years. The bill ensures there are provisions for those workers.

This issue was first brought to my attention when I was shadow Minister for Local Government, shadow Minister for Veterans, and shadow Minister for Western Sydney. It was the Hon. Charlie Lynn, who was a Liberal member in the upper House, who first brought it to my attention. We met in the Parkes Room with two blokes who were bread deliverers. At that time, there was no protection for those workers because milk, bread and cream carters were not protected under the Act. Why? When I was growing up, our milk was delivered by small businesses. They were willing to take the risk, and they did not want to be covered by the Act. However, things changed. There was the Tip Top matter, which I will come back to. With the indulgence of the House, I will include some references and quotes.

At the end of the day, this legislation is about providing support to workers who are out there having a go at a time when everyone is finding it very difficult to survive financially. These people are some of the lowest paid workers in society. Members opposite should really think about that. This Parliament is at its best when members come together to do the right thing. This is the right thing to do. There is no substantiated economic impact to anyone else. The bill amends the legislation to provide workers with protections that every other worker enjoys at this time. If it is good enough for the existing workers to enjoy those protections, then it is fair enough that this Parliament reacts to a new workforce. Actually, the workforce is not very new. It has taken a bit of time to get here, but we should do the right thing.

I said earlier that I would refer to some quotes. Mark Goldfinch and Paul Clapson pointed to the deadly pressure that rate cuts place on owner-drivers like themselves. Companies—I will not mention a specific company—have gotten away with slashing rates that drivers depend on. For years, drivers have worked on public holidays, losing that time with their families. They are lucky to even have a break. Owner-driver John Kiernan told 7.30:

The feeling in your guts, the knots and panic attacks I get—it's like a heart burn—

He went further:

Someone will either be on the road and lose their life or through stress or something else.

That pressure has pushed transport workers to the brink, forcing them to work longer hours and forgo vehicle maintenance, devastating their mental health. When we were in opposition, my colleagues and I called on the former Government to act. It did not act. Tonight, Opposition members have the opportunity to correct that. I was in opposition for eight years. I get that Opposition members want to oppose everything from the Government. They want to have the bravado of slamming down the Government. Trust me, any government will provide opportunities for an opposition to do that. However, this is not such an opportunity. These people need help, and members need to come together to provide the support those people need and deserve. [*Extension of time*]

To cut a long story short, the matter before us has been going on for a very long time. People need this legislation for a safe workplace and conditions. We can accomplish that tonight. I urge the Opposition to rethink its position on the bill. Opposition members often refer to our "union mates". Yes, these are my union mates. I am a very proud member of the Transport Workers' Union. I was a coal truck driver, and the union helped me after I left the Australian Regular Army. I went on to do further studies in business, law and commerce, but I was very humbled, and I will never forget how I was welcomed into the family and supported. I was also welcomed and supported by Caltex, airport fuel services and the whole industry at that time. It was a good demonstration that when we work together and do the right thing, we help people.

In closing, I say that the pursuit of prosperity for every worker in this State is the enduring responsibility of every member of Parliament. I am a proud Labor member, and the cause of the great party must forever prevail. I know that that is something that members opposite may not subscribe to. However, I trust in them. Whilst they do not subscribe to my point, they think about the causes of people who need help. We must provide that help. Tonight the Opposition has that opportunity.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (18:09):** I make a contribution to debate on the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025. I acknowledge the Transport Workers' Union, my colleagues on this side of the Chamber, members of the Labor Party and the connection between the labour movement and the Labor Party, which has created the circumstances that enable this bill to come before the House today. I think it is appropriate that I also acknowledge members of my family who are or were members of the Transport Workers' Union.

My auntie's husband, Joe Brugnani, is a now-retired Newcastle owner-driver. For many years, my father, Ray Mehan, worked for Tim Farragher Removals in Newcastle, but not Farragher Logistics. The Farragher brothers in Newcastle never got along, and everybody knew that. I fondly remember dad taking me and my brother for a drive in the removalist truck during school holidays. We would help out for the day, absorbing the world of men away from supervision and interacting to get the job done quickly. As I said to one of dad's workmates at the time, I never saw my father drive as fast as when the work was finished and they were travelling back to the depot in that removalist truck. I also acknowledge my grandfather Jim Mehan, who was a crane driver in Newcastle working for Brambles. He was a life member of the Transport Workers' Union.

Chapter 6 is important. In many ways, it is a provision unique to New South Wales. It enables the Industrial Relations Commission to make orders with respect to how certain workers who are not employees are to be paid. It is a very powerful piece of legislation used by owner-drivers, who work for themselves and sell their labour not as employees but as self-employed people, to get a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. It is an important provision that has been in the New South Wales Act for some time, as is appropriate. Again, I am proud to be part of a modern Labor Party that is so connected to its history that it is updating this very old provision in the New South Wales Industrial Relations Act and bringing it up to date by including gig workers. Those workers are not treated as employees and, until now, they have had great difficulty achieving a fair day's pay for the work they provide. That is what this bill will enable, and I look forward to seeing the Transport Workers' Union representing those gig workers and getting them the fair pay they deserve.

I underline that this is yet another piece of industrial relations legislation from the new Labor Government that extends the rights of workers in New South Wales. I also underline how it connects the Minns Labor Government with the strong Labor tradition of representing working people in this State. I reject the notion that



sometimes gets put around that the modern Labor Party is somehow different from its predecessors and does not represent working people in the way it used to. This legislation gives the lie to that, as does all the other industrial relations legislation we have brought to this House. This is good legislation, and I commend our great Minister for Industrial Relations for it. I love my colleagues and I love all their work. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (18:13):** I contribute to debate on the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025 for a couple of reasons. Unlike other members, I do not have a family history with the Transport Workers' Union, and I have never been a member of the Transport Workers' Union. But I have, over a long period, observed its passion for protecting the rights of owner-drivers and people in the gig economy, such as the delivery riders and drivers whom we see around our cities these days. The Transport Workers' Union has had that passion for many years. The Minister for Industrial Relations also has that passion. She has been talking about the need for reform and protection for those workers since we were in the upper House together.

I was not going to speak in this debate, but when I listened to the shadow Minister and the other Coalition contributor to the debate earlier I was astounded by the arrogance of their contributions, which sought to demean the way the Government has gone about closing loopholes to protect people who work in the gig economy. They strutted into this place and spoke down to the Minister. They suggested that the bill is not necessary and the Government is wasting time on it. I do not think the Government is wasting a second if it is looking after the rights of gig workers. I live in Queanbeyan and I do not see a lot of people on electric bikes there, but I do when I stay in Sydney. I see them waiting on the side of the street for jobs, I see the risks they often take in traffic on their electric bikes, and I appreciate the absolute need to make sure they are not exploited by multinationals and other companies who employ them.

The same goes for owner-drivers in the trucking industry, who, we know, over many years have been pushed towards unworkable delivery time frames by the companies that ask for their services. Those people deserve protection. We know that the Federal Labor Government has been working to make sure they get protection at the Federal level. I do not think we could be anywhere near as confident if there was to be a change of Federal Government at the next election. We all hope that will not happen. We also need to make sure that we are closing loopholes and protecting those people at the State level. From what we have seen today, the bottom line is that Minister Cotsis is passionate about this issue and is doing a fantastic job closing the loopholes.

Today we have seen Opposition members' lack of interest. Their arrogant and superficial attempts to dismiss the bill show that they continue not to give a damn about owner-drivers who are working for multinational companies. That is why we saw no action from them in their 12 years in government, and it is why we will continue to see them dodging these issues with their spurious arguments about things not being needed, or having a little whinge about things they think this Government should be doing or is not doing as fast as they would like. Opposition members constantly amaze me. The world started in 2023 for most of them. The reality is that their 12 years of inaction cannot be fixed in two years. There is a lot of work to do, and I am proud to be part of a government that is doing it. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (18:17):** Much like the member for Monaro, I did not intend to speak to the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025. But, after hearing Opposition members, I was outraged and moved to speak. This is an extremely important bill that expands protections for transport workers and is part of a suite of reforms that Labor has brought in during its two years in government. Anyone unfortunate enough to watch the public interest debate earlier would have seen the bluff and bluster of Liberal Party members. They come into the Chamber and talk about aspiration and choice. But when it comes to walking the walk—whether it is the State Liberals or the Federal Liberals—they are caught out time and again. They are always in favour of protecting the suits and the bosses.

Opposition members had a choice to come to the Chamber today and look after some of the most vulnerable workers in some of the most dangerous industries. Once again, they have failed. Whether it is on penalty rates, job security or handing money to consultants and undermining public sector workers, Liberal Party members will come into this House or go to Canberra and undermine workers. These are important reforms that expand protections for transport workers. I have spoken previously in this House about an incident a number of years ago involving my father-in-law. Thankfully, as a transport worker, he was protected by a series of industrial relations laws. When driving his truck during COVID, he had hand sanitiser in the truck, as he was required to do as part of stopping the spread.

That ignited, and he suffered significant burns to his body. He is still recovering. He has not been able to go back to work. Thankfully, he is protected by a series of laws that protect workers. To think that there are workers who do the exact same job that would not have been protected in the same scenario because they happen to be "gig workers" is abhorrent, and we should expand protections as much as we possibly can to protect them.

The protections have been adapted for the modern transport industry. We have gig workers and delivery workers. We do a lot of our shopping online now. Therefore, the transport industry has expanded, and we need to ensure that the laws are updated and continue to protect workers. Once again, I am disgusted by members opposite. They are a miserable lot who, when it comes down to it, failed to protect workers time and time again. We listen to them in debates and try to figure out what their policy is and what they believe in. The one thing they believe in is protecting the suits and the bosses and always putting the workers last. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:20):** I contribute to debate on the Industrial Relations Amendment (Transport Sector Gig Workers and Others) Bill 2025. Workers in my electorate and across the State often bring to us issues of concern around one of the most vulnerable group of people. As many members have noted, drivers often work in the gig economy. The Minister has worked with a huge team of experts and listened to a broad group of people across the State. She has worked with persistence and with compassion to bring this piece of legislation here today. I am really pleased. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (18:21):** In reply: Madam Temporary Speaker, I know many people in your multicultural electorate of Drummoyne are owner-drivers and small business operators. I acknowledge all owner-drivers who have campaigned for many years to see justice and to see a bill introduced in this form in New South Wales. I thank members for their contribution to the debate, and I will expand a little bit on what they have said. I acknowledge the member for Miranda and the member for Hornsby for the Opposition. I also acknowledge Government members representing the electorates of Mount Druitt, Coogee, Heathcote, Shellharbour, Granville, Liverpool, Londonderry, Prospect, Newtown, Riverstone, Parramatta, Campbelltown, The Entrance, Leppington, Monaro and Blue Mountains. I thank members for their passionate speeches and for sharing their constituents' experiences.

The primary purpose of the bill is twofold: to provide a mechanism to extend the coverage of chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act, known as the IR Act, to gig workers in the transport industry, and to amend chapter 6 to ensure that it reflects the modern transport industry and is fit for purpose. This is what Labor members promised in opposition, and today we fulfill that promise. The passage of the bill through Parliament will be the culmination of a decade-and-a-half-long fight by the Transport Workers' Union, and I note a number of its members are in the gallery. This is about improving the provisions of chapter 6. At present, chapter 6 covers owner-drivers and taxi drivers—and they are small business operators. I am astounded that the two Opposition members who contributed to the debate did not understand that this cohort of contractors have been running small businesses for a very long time and have been campaigning for workplace justice. Owner-drivers and taxi drivers have been fighting for enforceable industrial agreements like awards and contracts that set their pay and conditions.

Our amendments provide a pathway for transport gig workers in New South Wales to access the same protections afforded to owner-drivers and taxi drivers for the first time. We know that transport gig workers are some of the most vulnerable workers in society, and they need this Parliament to act on their behalf. The Government acknowledges that the Federal Government has also made important reforms to gig regulation, but it is crucial that New South Wales provides its own mechanism for transport gig workers to access minimum conditions and is ready to step in when workers or industry choose to engage with our State system. Our reforms will therefore complement the Federal Government's gig worker initiatives, and they have been shaped through extensive consultation with unions, industry and the community, ensuring they are practical, effective and tailored for today's transport sector.

In addition to providing a mechanism for transport gig workers, the bill will modernise chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act, ensuring it aligns with the needs of today's road transport industry. It will strengthen contract determinations and agreements and dispute resolution procedures. It will improve the bargaining process, removing outdated exemptions such as the delivery of parcels on behalf of Australia Post. It will introduce objectives for the chapter, clarify how business transfers operate under the Act, how contract agreements are terminated and address toll cost recovery. Those are very big reforms. A key change that will matter to so many owner-drivers is that we are expanding the number of trucks an owner-driver can own while still being protected under the Industrial Relations Act. That is one of the biggest reforms.

I am so proud to stand here in this House now, having met many owner-drivers 20 years ago and 10 years ago when I was the Opposition spokesperson. They came knocking at our door wanting support as small business operators who work so hard. They own their truck; it is their small business. They do not work nine to five. They do not work from home. They are on the road, day and night. They do not take holidays. They work during the Christmas and Easter periods. They work damn hard, and they deserve access to the commission and an expansion of their rights. I am so glad to have heard Labor members speak in a considered way about the people they know in the transport industry and in the gig economy. They also read and understood what this bill means for those working people, as opposed to members opposite. Right now, owner-drivers lose access to the commission,

including minimum pay rates, if they own more than one truck. That is unfair. The bill raises the limit to three trucks, ensuring more road transport workers will receive the fair pay and conditions they deserve for their hard work.

I turn to the issues raised in the debate. The member for Miranda and the member for Hornsby alleged that the bill was duplicative and unnecessary. The allegation of duplication is rejected completely. The point of the Government's reform is to create a mechanism for industry and gig transport workers to access chapter 6 if they want to because a particular cohort of workers may be better covered by the State jurisdiction—for example, rideshare. Taxis are regulated on a State-by-State basis, and there is a strong argument that rideshare gig regulation should be administered consistent with taxis. The bill provides clear direction about how the Industrial Relations Commission must deal with any application made with respect to a cohort of workers who are the subject of a Federal application for minimum standards.

With respect to the allegation that this bill is redundant because the Federal legislation to close loopholes covered the field for road transport workers and transport gig workers, this is plainly not true. As is often the case, it indicates that the Opposition is not across its brief.

When the Federal Government implemented its gig reforms, it was careful to acknowledge the importance of chapter 6 and the terms and conditions that provide for workers remaining in place. Other States and Ministers, even those from the opposite side of politics, acknowledge the importance of chapter 6 and how it has endured the test of multiple governments, which is really important. Section 536JP of the Fair Work Act provides that chapter 6 of the IR Act and the Fair Work Act are designed to co-exist and work together especially with respect to road transport workers. The effect of section 536JP is that contract terminations, and potential future minimum standard orders for road transport workers, will apply together. This would have been the case even if the Government had not amended chapter 6. The modernisation of chapter 6 is clearly not redundant because, as a matter of law, it will continue to cover and protect thousands of New South Wales transport workers long into the future. That may not be important to the Opposition, but it is to the Labor Government.

The heart of this bill is lifting the wages and conditions of working people. Just as Opposition members resisted improving wages of public servants when they opposed the abolition of their wages cap, they now oppose improving the conditions of gig workers and owner-drivers. In 1993 the Liberal Fahey Government expanded the jurisdiction of chapter 6 to include bicycle couriers. In 1994 it established the Contract of Carriage Tribunal to deal with goodwill disputes following a case that had left many concrete industry owner-drivers who had paid goodwill to obtain work without any compensation following the termination of their contracts. It is a shame that the current Liberal Party is not following the example of the former Fahey Government. We think New South Wales workers deserve better, and we are making things better.

We heard the member for Hornsby go off script. For a moment I thought, "That sounds like a Labor member of Parliament." But then he said something else and I remembered otherwise. I inform the member for Hornsby that at 10 o'clock tomorrow owner-drivers will be in the Parkes Room, and he is more than welcome to come and meet them. They are small business operators and great Australians who have contributed to the economic advancement of Australia and to their families. I invite the member for Hornsby and other members opposite to come and meet them. They will be very welcome if they come along. Extending workers compensation is an election commitment of this Government. When the Government brings forth the legislation, I hope the member for Hornsby gets up in the Opposition party room and supports it. He sounded very empathetic, particularly about the deaths of gig workers over the past five years.

In contrast to Opposition members, who oppose improving the rights of working people, we heard unequivocal support from the Government and crossbench. I acknowledge the great Western Sydney MP the member for Mount Druitt, who noted that this bill provides an additional layer of protection for transport gig workers and that the vulnerable nature of their work means they need protection under the State industrial relations [IR] jurisdiction. The member for Coogee pointed out that the Opposition had neglected our IR system for 12 years in government. They did nothing but trash our IR institution and make working conditions worse for public servants. As the member pointed out, only Labor stands up for working people.

The member for Heathcote is an excellent new local member who won her seat from the Liberals. She is a steadfast and fastidious member who has many small businesses in her electorate. Recently, the Premier attended a Sutherland Shire Business Chamber meeting. The member is a strong advocate for small businesses and she noted that this Government is delivering on its election commitment. We absolutely are. I acknowledge the member for Shellharbour, who spoke about the long fight to reform chapter 6. The hardworking member represents a large number of owner-drivers who work long hours and drive extensive distances in the Illawarra and on the South Coast. The member stated that there is much more for this Government to do to clean up the mess left by those opposite.

The member for Granville—another great Western Sydney MP—said that the bill modernises chapter 6 and keeps it fit for purpose in an evolving transport industry. It ensures that we are modernising and keeping up to date with the demands of our community. The new member for Liverpool—a terrific new member for the south-west—spoke about the importance of this bill providing a mechanism for transport gig workers to gain the coverage of the IR Act because some parts of the transport industry are better left to State jurisdictions. I know that the member for Liverpool is a strong advocate for the large number of gig workers who live in her electorate.

The Deputy Premier, the member for Londonderry, spoke about the essential role that transport workers play in the State. In times of crisis it is our transport workers who stand up for us, and today we stand up for them. The member for Prospect spoke about how our economy has changed rapidly and our IR laws need to keep pace. Workers' rights always need to be improved to match these changing conditions. The member for Newtown noted The Greens' support and said that this bill will help to make the working conditions of transport workers safer.

The member for Maitland, our new roads Minister, spoke to the financial risks that small business owner-drivers take on every day. The member for Maitland absolutely knows about this from her experience in her previous working life. She understands the need for owner-drivers to have fair pay and conditions, which is at the heart of this bill. The member for Riverstone, a great member of the TWU, said this bill allows the commission to inquire into contractual chains and assigns liability across the entire supply chain. The member for Parramatta is another strong advocate and represents a large number of gig workers and owner-drivers who work in her community. She is passionate about this bill because of the new night-time economy precincts that have been set up.

The member for Campbelltown, who was a truck driver, is a proud member of the Transport Workers' Union. Having spent many years in opposition with the member, I know that he is a strong supporter of that union. He has also made heartfelt speeches in this forum on many occasions about people who have died or been left bankrupt because they had nowhere to go. I acknowledge both his experience and very strong advocacy. I acknowledge the member for The Entrance. I know many owner-drivers live on the Central Coast in the member's electorate. He spoke from the heart about his family's contribution as transport workers. We know that transport workers do it tough, particularly in regional New South Wales. I think about them working in those cold winters in the middle of the night.

They are carrying the economy on their backs. We expect those transport workers to get to those big shops to do the deliveries. Some may think it just happens like that, but we know that those guys work really hard.

The member for Leppington talked about his hardworking father-in-law, and I am glad to hear that he is doing much better. I know it was a distressing time and I wish his father-in-law all the very best. I know he wants to get back behind the wheel. The member for Monaro was very exercised about how the Opposition spoke about the bill, as its contributions were just vacuous. He is basically saying that those opposite must have a policy and belief, even from opposition. Regardless of what electorate we represent, we all have gig workers who deliver and owner-drivers who live in our electorates. Those opposite should stand up and represent them. The member for the Blue Mountains is a strong advocate and has many owner-drivers living in her electorate, a number of whom I have met. She made a heartfelt speech about her constituents.

Hopefully in a few minutes this House will support the passage of the bill. It has taken a huge effort over 15 years—a lot of effort in opposition, working side by side with those workers, the election of the Minns Labor Government and a number of inquiries. I acknowledge my colleague the Treasurer, Daniel Mookhey, as a member of the TWU but also as someone who led a number of those inquiries in the other place. He stood with the TWU during those difficult times when they had to look into the eyes of the family members of those who died while the gig platforms were still active—the workers had died but the apps were still going. They are just some of the horrendous stories. I also acknowledge Senator Tony Sheldon's lifetime of effort.

I have already acknowledged in my second reading speech the many people involved in the drafting of the bill. I acknowledge the Transport Workers' Union members in the gallery tonight. I spoke today to one of the gentlemen, Mr Keith Stone, an owner-driver who lives in Penrith and has driven a truck for 50 years. He is a big contributor to Australia and a volunteer, and he loves driving a truck. Those people—mostly blokes—are hardened, but what they have contributed to building Australia is remarkable. I thank them very much. I note the representatives and members who have been in the Parliament over the past couple of weeks, and tomorrow will be a big day for them as well. I acknowledge the late Steve Hutchins, who would have been proud today. This represents a lifetime of his work. When I first became the shadow Minister for Industrial Relations, I dealt a lot with Wayne Forno, and I give him a shout-out as well. I hope I have not missed anyone.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Richard Olsen.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I have already mentioned Richard Olsen—the amazing Richie—and, of course, Nick and the team. I mentioned them in my second reading speech. I also acknowledged the industry groups, the employer groups, the platform groups and the Industrial Relations team. I have mentioned all of them. I thank the Parliamentary Counsel for its time and attention in drafting the bill, in particular Richard Hurford and Annette O'Callaghan.

I acknowledge that some stakeholders raised the need to modernise the commission's procedures and processes as they relate to chapter 6. I understand the commission is working on that, not only for chapter 6 but for the whole Industrial Relations Act. The commission is pursuing that modernisation in conjunction with its user groups. I thank my incredible ministerial staff, who are absolutely brilliant, for getting us to this point. In particular, I thank Tom Craven. I know the team will appreciate me shouting him out. From the outset it has been complex, challenging, tedious needlework getting through to this point. As everyone who deals with us knows, we have an open-door policy. We will consult to the nth degree to get this right, because it has to endure. When we leave this place, these important rights have to endure. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Business of the House*

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

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (18:46):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide:

- (1) That the routine of business for Wednesday sitting days where the House has a Friday sitting day be amended by removing item 15 (take note of committee reports for up to 30 minutes).
- (2) That the routine of business for Friday sitting days be:
  - (a) Speaker to take the chair at 10.00 a.m.;
  - (b) giving of general business notices of motions (general notices) for up to 15 minutes;
  - (c) general business notices of motions for bills for up to 40 minutes;
  - (d) committee reports — take-note debates for up to 40 minutes;
  - (e) Government business;
  - (f) community recognition statements for up to 20 minutes;
  - (g) private members' statements; and
  - (h) adjournment without motion until the next sitting day at 4.00 p.m. or at the conclusion of private members' statements if concluded prior to 4.00 p.m.

The motion is substantially the same as the one the House resolved in September for its routine of business on Fridays. The only change is to provide for there not being a hard cut-off time for Government business. I need to change the routine of business on Fridays because the resolution the House carried when it determined the routine of business for Fridays was limited to 2024, and I did not pick up that limitation from the document that was provided to me. I know that the issue of what should occur on Fridays was debated, and I know that the will of the House was not to limit it to 2024. But the error was mine, for which I apologise to the House. I should have picked it up. But, in any event, this issue was debated. It was somewhat contentious but has previously been resolved, and I just propose that the routine of business be substantially the same as the will of the House indicated in October or November last year.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (18:48):** Consistent with the Opposition's position on this matter, I move:

That the motion be amended by:

- (1) Omitting paragraph (1).
- (2) Omitting paragraph (2) (d) and inserting instead:

- (d) at 11.00 a.m., question time;
- (e) general business orders of the day for bills up to 40 minutes;

The amendment provides for the following.

First of all, the number of parliamentary sitting days in 2025, consistent with 2024 and 2023, are an historically low number of sitting days. The Minns Government has tried to patch up that low number by introducing, for the first time in more than 12 years, Friday sitting days. It is our contention that the motion by the Leader of the House has two major defects. The first is that there is no provision for question time. We will have the cost of Parliament sitting for a day, but have no capacity to scrutinise Executive Government. These are fake sitting days; they are not real sitting days in the Westminster tradition if there is no question time.

My amendment seeks to introduce question time on Friday sitting days and to allow 40 minutes for general business orders of the day for bills, which is debate on private members' bills. The Government's proposal is to introduce 40 minutes for second readings of private members' bills, but there is not one minute on a Friday to allow debate on private members' bills. With 13 crossbench members and a minority government it is, frankly, ridiculous that no increased time for the debate of private members' bills is allowed for on Friday sitting days. My amendment proposes to delete paragraph (1) of the motion so that the take-note debate remains on Wednesdays and take that extra time, plus another 10 minutes, so that there can be second reading debate on private members' bills on Fridays. We think that is far more consistent with the general principles of democracy. I see the Government Whip laughing. He clearly does not care about democracy, consistent with his general behaviour in this place. No-one would be surprised by that.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** Oh, jeez.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** There he goes. It is like pushing a button really—you always get a reaction. We seek to enhance executive accountability by having question time and to enhance the opportunity for private members' bills to be debated beyond the 90 minutes allowed on Thursdays. That is supportive of democracy and will keep this Chamber as a place of democracy, rather than what is proposed by the Government. I ask crossbench members to support my amendment.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (18:53):** In reply: These issues were put to the House last year and determined. I adopt what I told the House on the last occasion. There is no need to repeat that, other than to say this. Firstly, since being in office, the Minns Government has passed through this House three times the number of bills that any of the preceding governments did. Secondly, the number of sitting days I drew to the attention of the House previously was not correct. Thirdly, it has been the crossbench that requested additional time for private members' ability to contribute. Also, the crossbench indicated that the sitting dates have been too late.

Arising from the change in sitting times and the use of Fridays, the Government has been able to utilise the time to allow members who do not wish to participate in community recognition statements or private members' statements to leave at a reasonable time. That cannot always be the case. It was hoped that the Friday sitting days would prevent the House having to do what it did a few weeks ago and sit until about 4.30 a.m. to receive a message from the other place. Quite frankly, with the House sitting for an additional six hours on Friday, there simply is not time to provide for private members' business if the general routine of question time for an hour and a half is removed from that time schedule. One cannot have it every way. One cannot leave at a family-friendly hour and not have Fridays.

I accept that there is an expanded crossbench and those members are entitled to their private business. I regard what the Manager of Opposition Business said about private members' business and a lack of being democratic as treating members with contempt. Members of this House who truly participate in the democratic fabric of this House utilise extensively being able to give general business notices of motions for 15 minutes. It is important to them and their electorate. Members of the crossbench want to be able to give second reading speeches for their private members' reports. To the members of committees—and there are many of them who are complaining about their workload—to be able to discuss their committee reports and bring them to the attention of this House is an important part of scrutinising of the Executive Government.

The Government needs the time to enact legislation, and we have two to four bills to be considered at Friday sitting times. Having additional private members' statements and community recognition statements is really important to members who have limited access to be able to represent their electorates and to be able to put views in the House. I regard providing private members with additional time to be paramount. We have all sat here as members of the House for a number of years, basically getting five minutes every two or three weeks to represent people in our electorate. I found that contemptible as a member of the Opposition. I do not want that to occur to this Opposition.

I also have looked at the number of Opposition members who have actually turned up on Fridays, let alone late divisions. On Friday 20 September 2024 they mustered 30 votes. On 15 November they mustered 26 votes. On 21 June they mustered 22 votes. They have not even been turning up and participating in the democratic process. People like the member for Willoughby, the member for Davidson, the member for Manly, the member for Wahroonga and the member for Badgerys Creek have not even turned up at times on Fridays and have not even got pairs.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** What a disgrace! He has had cancer treatment.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** No.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** What a disgrace to say that about the member for Davidson.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I am talking about a time prior to that.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** I've never missed a Friday.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** Order! The Manager of Opposition Business will be removed from the Chamber if he continues to behave in a disorderly manner.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** You have treated this House with absolute contempt.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** The member for Heffron has moved a motion, to which the member for Wahroonga has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

*[In division]*

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order: I draw your attention to the fact that a member is wearing unusually casual attire in the Chamber.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** I have sought advice from the Clerk. There is no point of order. The member for The Entrance can remain in the Chamber.

*Later,*

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: I believe the member for The Entrance is wearing shorts. That is not business attire and it is unparliamentary.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** I sought advice from the Clerk and I have ruled on the point of order. If the member for Wahroonga wishes to question my ruling, I ask that he refer the matter to the Speaker.

*Later,*

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** Point of order: I like the member for The Entrance, but I ask him to stand in his place. Is his attire appropriate for this place and in accordance with the standing orders?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** I understand the point of order. I sought advice from the Clerk when the member for Coffs Harbour took the first point of order. I then ruled on the point of order. If any member wishes to question my ruling, I ask that they refer the matter to the Speaker. The member for Lane Cove will resume his seat.

Ayes .....34

Noes .....43

Majority.....9

#### AYES

Butler, R  
Clancy, J  
Cooke, S  
Cross, M  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Dalton, H  
Davies, T  
Donato, P  
Griffin, J

Kemp, M  
Lane, J  
Leong, J  
Moylan, B  
Petinos, E  
Preston, R  
Provest, G  
Roberts, A  
Shetty, K

Smith, T  
Speakman, M  
Taylor, M  
Thompson, T  
Toole, P  
Tuckerman, W  
Tudehope, M  
Wallace, J  
Williams, R

## AYES

Hannan, J  
Henskens, A  
Hodges, M

Singh, G  
Sloane, K

Williamson, R (teller)  
Wilson, F

## NOES

Aitchison, J  
Atalla, E (teller)  
Bali, S  
Barr, C  
Butler, L  
Car, P  
Chanthivong, A  
Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Davis, D  
Doyle, T  
Finn, J  
Hagarty, N (teller)  
Harris, D  
Harrison, J

Haylen, J  
Hoenig, R  
Holland, M  
Hornery, S  
Kaliyanda, C  
Kirby, W  
Li, J  
McDermott, H  
McGirr, J  
McKeown, K  
Mehan, D  
Minns, C  
O'Neill, M  
Park, R

Piper, G  
Quinnell, S  
Regan, M  
Saliba, D  
Scruby, J  
Scully, P  
Stuart, M  
Vo, T  
Voltz, L  
Warren, G  
Washington, K  
Watson, A  
Whan, S  
Wilkinson, K

## PAIRS

Anderson, K  
Ayyad, T  
Coure, M  
James, T  
Layzell, D  
Saunders, D

Kamper, S  
Dib, J  
Catley, Y  
Saffin, J  
Cotsis, S  
Tesch, L

**Amendment negatived.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....50  
Noes .....27  
Majority.....23

## AYES

Aitchison, J  
Atalla, E (teller)  
Bali, S  
Barr, C  
Butler, L  
Butler, R  
Car, P  
Chanthivong, A  
Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Dalton, H  
Davis, D  
Donato, P  
Doyle, T  
Finn, J  
Hagarty, N (teller)

Harris, D  
Harrison, J  
Haylen, J  
Hoenig, R  
Holland, M  
Hornery, S  
Kaliyanda, C  
Kirby, W  
Leong, J  
Li, J  
McDermott, H  
McGirr, J  
McKeown, K  
Mehan, D  
Minns, C  
O'Neill, M

Piper, G  
Quinnell, S  
Regan, M  
Saliba, D  
Scruby, J  
Scully, P  
Shetty, K  
Smith, T  
Stuart, M  
Vo, T  
Voltz, L  
Warren, G  
Washington, K  
Watson, A  
Whan, S  
Wilkinson, K



## AYES

Hannan, J

Park, R

## NOES

Anderson, K

Clancy, J

Cooke, S

Cross, M

Crouch, A (teller)

Davies, T

Griffin, J

Henskens, A

Hodges, M

Kemp, M

Lane, J

Moylan, B

Petinos, E

Preston, R

Provest, G

Roberts, A

Singh, G

Speakman, M

Taylor, M

Thompson, T

Toole, P

Tuckerman, W

Tudehope, M

Wallace, J

Williams, R

Williamson, R (teller)

Wilson, F

## PAIRS

Catley, Y

Cotsis, S

Dib, J

Kamper, S

Saffin, J

Tesch, L

Coure, M

Layzell, D

Ayyad, T

Sloane, K

James, T

Saunders, D

**Motion agreed to.***Community Recognition Statements***THOMAS HASSALL ANGLICAN COLLEGE**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (19:17):** Education is the foundation of opportunity, and Thomas Hassall Anglican College has spent 25 years shaping young minds and enriching my local community. On 6 March I was honoured to celebrate this milestone and commemorate the opening of the John Flynn Centre for STEM, a state-of-the-art facility that will equip students with the skills to thrive in an ever-evolving world. The centre features eight maths classrooms, six science labs, a design and technology room, and dedicated learning spaces, all designed to ignite curiosity and foster innovation. Named after John Flynn, a pioneer of the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the centre embodies the same spirit of discovery and problem-solving that defines modern STEM education. With STEM careers among the fastest growing in Australia, facilities like this equip students with future-ready skills. The real impact comes from dedicated teachers who inspire, challenge and shape the next generation of innovators. Congratulations to Thomas Hassall Anglican College on this incredible achievement—another step towards endless possibilities.

**TRIBUTE TO PHILLIP SMILES, FORMER MEMBER FOR NORTH SHORE**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (19:18):** I acknowledge the passing of former member for North Shore Phillip Smiles on 5 March 2025. Phillip represented what was once known as the electorate of Mosman from 1984 to 1991. When this electorate was abolished, he was elected to represent the electorate of North Shore from 1991 to 1993. He was the first Liberal to represent the electorate of North Shore; Independents had represented the electorate from its inception. Since then, the electorate of North Shore has been represented only by Liberals. I stand in this place as one of his successors. I never met Phillip. His family, who remember him very fondly, recognised his service by saying, "Phillip served his State and communities with passion." At this time I extend my sympathies to Phillip's partner, Lynette; his children, grandchildren and other family; and his many friends and loved ones. Vale, Phillip Smiles.

**TRIBUTE TO GEOFF STARKEY**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (19:19):** It is with great sadness that I report the passing of Geoff Starkey, who was a life member of the Mollymook Surf Life Saving Club. He was a much-loved member of our South Coast community and, most importantly, beloved husband of Nicole. Geoff began his surf lifesaving journey at South Maroubra in 1971, where he gained his Bronze Medallion. As a junior, Geoff loved to carry out patrols and row surfboats. After a short time away from the coast, Geoff relocated to Mollymook and joined Mollymook Surf Life Saving Club. Geoff dedicated himself to the club for more than 50 years, holding many leadership roles including president, secretary and chief training officer. In 1982 Geoff and Noel Turnbull

facilitated one of the first women's bronze squads in Australia. As Geoff said, "Up until then, surf lifesaving was a real men's bastion," but he insisted that women make great surf lifesavers. On behalf of the South Coast, I thank Geoff for his remarkable contribution to surf lifesaving and to the Milton-Ulladulla community.

#### **ENDOMETRIOSIS AWARENESS MONTH**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater) (19:20):** I acknowledge the women of Pittwater who live with endometriosis every day. This month is Endometriosis Awareness Month. Endometriosis affects over one million women in Australia. That is one in every seven women or girls, making it as common as diabetes or asthma. Despite that, the average time for a confirmed diagnosis of endometriosis is over 6½ years. That means that thousands of women experience debilitating chronic pain but are expected to just get on with life while waiting for a diagnosis. Endometriosis often requires complex treatment to help relieve symptoms, including medication or surgery. Those symptoms can include fatigue and pelvic pain, significantly impacting everyday life for women living with the condition. A report by Endometriosis Australia indicated that 70 per cent of women with a diagnosis have had to take unpaid time off work to manage their symptoms. I hope that recent additions to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme to cater for endometriosis treatment mark the beginning of further improvements in care, research and accessibility.

#### **BRENDA CLOUTEN MEMORIAL ART SCHOLARSHIP**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport) (19:21):** I recently had the pleasure of attending the twentieth anniversary celebration of the Brenda Clouten Memorial Art Scholarship at Maitland Regional Art Gallery. Established in 2005 by patrons Vicki and Bruce Woods to honour their dear friend Brenda Clouten, who died of breast cancer, the scholarship has been instrumental in supporting young Hunter artists with study, travel and studio support. I congratulate Sandy Sanderson, this year's scholarship winner, whose remarkable work and creative vision embody the spirit of our community. Sandy's achievements not only highlight her talent but also enrich the Hunter's cultural landscape. I also recognise all of the other finalists, whose dedication and innovation are on full display in an exhibition at the Maitland Regional Art Gallery until 15 June 2025. I encourage everyone to visit. I sincerely thank Vicki and Bruce for their enduring commitment to the arts and for ensuring that Brenda's legacy continues to inspire emerging artists in our community and across the Hunter.

#### **ROBERT AND DOREEN ROLSTON**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (19:22):** Today is 26 March, which is a very special day. I congratulate Regentville locals Robert and Doreen Rolston on their incredible seventieth wedding anniversary. They married in Ireland on 26 March 1955. They met when Doreen was walking up a mountain on her way home from church—always a good outing. She dropped her handbag, which rolled down the mountain. Robert caught the handbag and kindly returned it to her, and they were married two years later. The couple decided to migrate abroad and, after considering different countries, decided to call Australia their new home. They departed London from the Tilbury Docks on Christmas Eve in 1956 and arrived in Australia in January 1957. The couple initially resided in an ex-army camp at Wallgrove before moving to St Marys and finally settling in Regentville. I congratulate them on calling Australia home and on their seventieth wedding anniversary.

#### **TAMIL SENIOR CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION**

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (19:23):** I recognise the Grandchildren's Day celebration held this month by the Tamil Senior Citizens' Association, a cherished annual event that brings generations together in a vibrant celebration of Tamil heritage, family and community spirit. Each year the grandchildren of Tamil seniors are invited to showcase their talents through music, dance, speech and performance. The energy, pride and cultural richness on display are reflected not only in the talents of the younger generation but also in the deep roots of tradition, identity and connection nurtured by the Tamil community. I commend the Tamil Senior Citizens' Association executive team, led by president Mr Arumugam Perumynar and secretary Mr Coomaraswamy Karunasaladeva, for their continued dedication to creating inclusive intergenerational spaces where language, culture and community thrive. Grandchildren's Day exemplifies the importance of passing on cultural heritage with pride and joy. I thank Tamil Senior Citizens' Association for its ongoing commitment to enriching the lives of seniors and families in the Strathfield community and beyond.

#### **CLARENCE REGIONAL AQUATIC CENTRE**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (19:24):** I congratulate Clarence Valley Council and the community on the opening of the brand-new Clarence Regional Aquatic Centre last Saturday. The state-of-the-art facility marks a milestone for Clarence Valley, providing a fun and accessible space for fitness and competitive swimming. There is now a brand-new 50-metre competition pool, two indoor heated pools and a splash pad. By Christmas there will be a brand-new water slide for everyone to enjoy. The original pool was built after a tragedy

in Grafton that saw 13 boy scouts drown in the river on the 11 December 1943. It was fitting that the scouts were again honoured on Saturday. I congratulate the community working group, including Councillor Allison Whaites, Stephen Donnelly, Allura Paterson and Gareth Smith. The new centre will be a safe place to learn to swim, to keep fit and to enjoy a dip over the summer for generations to come.

#### **KATOOMBA LEURA PRESCHOOL**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (19:25):** I celebrate a Blue Mountains gem, the Katoomba Leura Preschool. Nestled between the two villages, it is truly extraordinary. Its focus extends beyond early learning. The wonderful staff foster a sense of belonging for all the children and families who attend. Its philosophy is embedded in play, cultural awareness and environmental sustainability. Students are encouraged to explore their world through curiosity, risk taking, discovery and connection. Upon visiting the preschool, I felt immersed in the physical spaces, which were stimulating, fun, relaxing, comforting and challenging. They put play and nature at the core of the learning experiences on offer. I imagine it is a place where many positive memories are forged, led and supported by an incredible team of educators. I give a huge shout-out to the whole team, including director Alison Staniford, Cat, Emily, Vanessa, Amy, Talia, Peita, Jeanine, Perrine, Kayla, Bonny, Taylor, Sandy, Bella, Maia, Alice and Annalise. I thank them for all their fabulous work.

#### **ADVENTIST DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF AGENCY**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (19:26):** For the past three years the Adventist Development and Relief Agency SouperVan has been helping the Wauchope community by providing free meals, essential items and support for those doing it tough. Each week between 80 and 120 locals rely on the service, and every Wednesday evening it provides a warm meal and a sense of belonging to people facing economic, social, medical or personal challenges. The SouperVan was recently told it needed to relocate from its central spot on the main street. In response, the community quickly rallied behind them, launching a petition that gathered around 600 signatures in a short time in support of keeping the vital service accessible. Thanks to the strong backing from local residents and Port Macquarie-Hastings councillors, the SouperVan will remain in its current location and continue to serve the community where it is needed most. I commend the volunteers and supporters of the SouperVan for their incredible work. Those services are so important to ease the financial strain on families and support those in difficult circumstances.

#### **GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (19:27):** The Greek diaspora in New South Wales is celebrating Greek Independence Day. In March 1821, Maniot and Greek revolutionaries fought for freedom after being occupied for four centuries. The Greek War of Independence lasted nine years and amassed more than 240,000 casualties. Blacktown electorate is home to approximately 1,020 people of Greek ancestry. The Hellenic Orthodox Parish and Community of Blacktown Districts Limited has been based in Blacktown for 52 years and has played a significant role in preserving Greek heritage and language. People from Greek heritage have made a significant impact on the Blacktown local government area, including George Nicolaidis, OAM, the former mayor and a local historian; Dr Vlasios Brakoulis, a psychiatrist who is internationally recognised for his research and clinical work on obsessive-compulsive and related disorders; Con Tsiakoulas, an organiser for the plumbers union; and Elfa Moraitakis.

#### **ANNA BANOVIC**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (19:28):** I ask the House to join me in congratulating Anna Banovic of Movement Martial Arts, who recently received a sporting excellence award from Ryde Sports Foundation. Anna's dedication to Brazilian jujitsu has been nothing short of remarkable. Her exceptional performances in competition have earned her numerous titles, including at the prestigious State championship. Anna's success is a testament to her discipline, perseverance and passion for her sport. Brazilian jujitsu requires immense skill, strategy and resilience, qualities that Anna has demonstrated at the highest level. Her achievements inspire young athletes across Ryde, proving that hard work and commitment can lead to excellence. I also acknowledge the team at Movement Martial Arts for their role in fostering talent and supporting athletes like Anna to reach their full potential. Sporting success is rarely achieved alone, and it is clear that Anna has benefited from an environment that values dedication and continuous improvement. I congratulate Anna on the well-deserved recognition. Ryde is proud of her achievements, and we look forward to seeing her continued success in the years to come.

#### **GEORGES RIVERKEEPER**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (19:29):** Congratulations to Councillor David Walsh on his recent appointment to vice-chairperson of Georges Riverkeeper executive group. I have known David for many years and witnessed his commitment to enhancing our community through his work on Canterbury-Bankstown council. Georges Riverkeeper is a fantastic organisation, founded in 1979 by local councils with a shared commitment to

improving the health of the river and ensuring its management and protection. The organisation has played an essential role in preserving that vital natural resource for our community. The Georges River holds significant cultural and historical value for the East Hills region, and its protection has long been a priority for local community groups. Georges Riverkeeper is a key part of that ongoing effort, and I am thankful to see that organisation continue in its mission to protect and preserve the Georges River. I congratulate David again and thank him for his involvement in protecting our beautiful river for future generations.

#### **JIMMY TANNER**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands) (19:30):** I recognise Armidale legend Jimmy Tanner for his longstanding service and dedication to his community and the Armidale Rams Rugby League Football Club. Jimmy started out as a player in 1947 and, since that time, has supported the club as a life member, coach, groundsman, barbeque chef and chief fundraiser. I congratulate Jimmy on his incredible support to the Rams, to New South Wales Country Rugby League and to the many players who have benefited from his expertise, skills and experience. I thank Jimmy for his hard work and commitment to the Rams over many years, and the many junior players coming through also send him their thanks. Jimmy Tanner is a complete and utter legend of rugby league in Armidale and the Northern Tablelands. On behalf of the Armidale community, I thank Jimmy for his unwavering community spirit and all his hard work for the local footy club.

#### **KAMILIA MAHFOUZ**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (19:31):** Congratulations to 2025 Prospect Local Woman of the Year, Kamilia Mahfouz. After migrating from Egypt, Kamilia arrived in Australia. With limited proficiency in English, Kamilia felt isolated. She enrolled her children at an early learning centre but, after a negative experience, Kamilia moved them to Uniting Grantham Heights Early Learning Seven Hills. Inspired by the centre's inclusive spirit, Kamilia began volunteering. Through that work, she practised and became fluent in English, which enabled her to complete a Diploma in Early Childhood Education. Kamilia commenced employment at the centre, rising quickly to the director position. As director, Kamilia strives to give every child quality care and education, whilst offering cohesive and meaningful family support. Through programs like the Community Pantry and Diversity Feast, Kamilia is instilling values of multiculturalism, respect and belonging. Kamilia exemplifies the spirit of community in Western Sydney. I thank Kamilia for her resilience and compassion.

#### **TRIBUTE TO GEOFFREY EDWARD BROWN, JP**

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (19:32):** Tonight I honour a member of the Forestville RSL Sub-Branch, Geoffrey Edward Brown, JP. Sadly, Geoff passed away late last year. Geoff was an integral and highly valued member of the sub-branch and broader Forestville community, especially with his model trains, which he proudly showed off to my kids and me. In 1955 Geoff was enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force. From 1982 Geoff held a life membership of the Returned and Services League of Australia. He joined the Forestville RSL Sub-Branch after previously being a member at Dee Why. In his time at Forestville, he was leader to the cenotaph and memorial walkway and part of a team that kept the cenotaph and surrounds in pristine condition. Geoff was appointed to the sub-branch committee and later became one of the three sub-branch trustees. Just last year Geoff was also very proud when he received a certificate recognising his 50 years of service as a justice of the peace. It was an accomplishment he held very dear, and so he should. I offer my deep condolences to Geoff's wife, Betty, and their family. Geoff lived a truly phenomenal life. May he rest in peace. I miss you, mate.

#### **MINARAH COLLEGE STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (19:33):** The difference between a good school and a great school is the presence of an empowered student voice. I recently had the pleasure of joining the Minarah College school community to induct the 2025 leadership team with a special badging ceremony. It was a joy to see the pride on the faces of parents and school staff in the achievements of those young leaders. Minarah College values leadership qualities. I was proud to welcome last year's school leaders to the New South Wales Parliament and see firsthand the way that they look out for their peers and represent their school. If my initial impressions are anything to go by, the new leadership team are poised to make a fantastic and positive impact at Minarah College and in our community more broadly. Special congratulations are in order for the Minarah College 2025 captains, Gabriel El Haddad and Quraisha Aiyas. Gabriel and Quraisha lead a bright and enthusiastic team of student leaders who strive to make an impact in their school and across our community. I wish them the very best.

#### **EVETTE AND MARK MORAN**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (19:34):** I congratulate Evette and Mark Moran, who were awarded Best in the World for Public Service Development at the International Property Awards 2025 for the Mark Moran

retirement community in Vacluse. That follows on from their 2024 win for Best Design, Australia and Asia. The announcement took place at the international grand final at the Savoy Hotel in London. Evette Moran said they wanted to celebrate the win with all their members at Vacluse, describing it as a "win for all of us". The Morans said they had a simple aspiration: to celebrate ageing and change the perception of ageing across the world. I congratulate Evette and Mark, and their residents and staff, on their incredible achievement.

#### **FAIRFIELD CITY POLICE AREA COMMAND AWARDS**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (19:35):** I was recently honoured to attend the 2025 Fairfield City Police Area Command medal and awards ceremony, an event that celebrated the dedication and service of our local police officers. Hosted by Superintendent Craig Middleton, APM, Fairfield City Police Area Commander, the ceremony was a reflection of the outstanding work done by the local police in keeping our community safe. The event saw the special attendance of Assistant Commissioner Brett McFadden, APM, whose leadership continues to inspire those within the Police Force. Police Chaplain Reverend George Habib was also in attendance, offering his guidance and support to the officers. It was a privilege to join my local parliamentary colleagues in recognising the hard work and sacrifices made by our police officers. Those dedicated individuals go above and beyond to protect and serve, often putting their own safety at risk to ensure that our community remains safe. I am grateful to have been part of the ceremony.

#### **DAWN BEAUMONT-STEVENS**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (19:36):** Tonight I recognise Dawn Beaumont-Stevens, a beloved member of the Griffith community, known for her contributions as a singer, music teacher and advocate for others' potential. A musically gifted individual, she was accepted into the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and mentored by Gladys Moncrieff, "Australia's Queen of Song". As a young mother, Dawn began teaching music to children, sharing her talent with countless students over the years. Her dedication extended to community service, where she organised fundraising events, including performances at aged-care facilities, to support local causes. Legacy became a cornerstone of Dawn's life, inspired by her father's time in Burma as a prisoner of war. She also convened the Griffith Polio Support Group for many years, showcasing her ongoing commitment to community welfare. Dawn was named Griffith City Council Citizen of the Year in 1995, and her life was celebrated in the play *One True Note*. That title reflected her empathetic, action-oriented personality, which resonated deeply with everyone she touched.

#### **HILDA LAIB**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (19:37):** At a recent community afternoon, tea we celebrated the remarkable contributions of Mrs Hilda Laib as the Penrith 2025 Seniors Local Achievement Award recipient. Hilda was nominated for her outstanding work in the community as a volunteer. Hilda has worked for over 20 years with the Anglican church in Kingswood, working every Friday as a volunteer in the charity shop to raise much-needed funds for community activities, as well as welcoming new arrivals to the area through the outreach helping program. As an active member of the Penrith Country Women's Association over the past 18 years, Hilda has held the prestigious positions of president, welfare officer and international officer, and is currently the sitting welfare and cultural officer. Hilda continues to be an advocate for women in the community, in all areas of the city, rural and remote communities. I am honoured to recognise Hilda for her continuous and tremendous service to the people of Penrith.

#### **HARRY SKELLY**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (19:38):** I recognise Harry Skelly. Harry was recently nominated and announced as the winner of the 2025 Australia Day Award for Crookwell Young Sportsperson of the Year in the Upper Lachlan shire. Harry has been recognised for his mentorship and leadership roles in sport and other areas, including academia, work and community. Harry demonstrated his admirable characteristics through his mentorship and leadership of peers and younger students in his role as school captain in 2024. Harry was awarded the Award for Industrial Technology, Doug Brown Personal Best Award and the Albert Cecil Kadwell Memorial Agricultural Scholarship at the Crookwell High School Presentation Day/Night 2024. Harry has achieved awards in his chosen sports of hockey and swimming, and has undertaken sporting umpire roles. I congratulate Harry on his well-deserved award and recognise his significant contribution to his community.

#### **HELENSBURGH STANWELL PARK SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (19:39):** I acknowledge the Helensburgh Stanwell Park Surf Life Saving Club. I was fortunate enough to visit there last Sunday to present awards to the nippers at their Annual Junior Presentation. All of them were highly excited and passionate about undertaking their surf lifesaving training and developing lifelong skills. But this does not happen without a lot of work from their families, who take them

to and from training every Sunday. Some of these talented youngsters play sports as well—athletes at every level. I sat there and watched as, one by one, mums and dads put up their hands to take on the next season's roles and responsibilities. These clubs would not operate without those volunteers. What a fantastic community. I had not had much to do with surf lifesaving before being elected to this place, and I take this time to thank and congratulate this lovely club, which typifies the spirit and the heart of the Northern Illawarra. I thank Justin, Christine and Celia, who stood down on Sunday after years of volunteering in executive positions. I know they will not stray far from the community as they are so entrenched in it and love these kids.

#### LIONS CLUB OF BOX HILL GABLES

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:40):** I acknowledge the Lions Club of Box Hill Gables. The club was chartered on 23 March 2025, with 29 members who are keen to give back to their local community. President Pratibha Bhanushali worked diligently to establish the Lions Club, instilling the international motto of "Liberty, Intelligence, Our Nation's Safety". This is evident through various projects completed by the club, including its involvement with the new temporary primary school at Box Hill. The Lions group held fundraising barbecues, a book drive and sourced supplies for students as the 2025 school year began. It was an honour to attend the inauguration of the Lions Club, together with the member for Castle Hill, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of The Hills Shire Council and distinguished guests. I wish President Bhanushali and her members great success as they stride to support the Box Hill Gables community.

#### MATILDA CASEY

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (19:41):** I congratulate Matilda Casey, a remarkable local talent who will be bringing the beloved character of Annie to life at the Capitol Theatre in Sydney from 25 March to 1 June. At just 13 years of age, Matilda is already making a name for herself in the theatre world and her passion for performing is truly inspiring. Rehearsals for the show began just one week after Matilda embarked on her high school journey, showcasing her dedication and incredible work ethic. Matilda's love for the iconic song *It's a Hard Knock Life* speaks to her vibrant energy and enthusiasm, which will undoubtedly shine through on stage. With her natural talent and commitment, there is no doubt Matilda will deliver a performance that will leave the audience captivated and cheering. From sitting in the audience watching *Annie the Musical* to now stepping into the spotlight herself, Matilda's journey is motivating, and Parramatta could not be more proud of her. On behalf of the Parramatta community, I wish Matilda the best of luck. I am sure that all theatregoers will enjoy a wonderful performance. Chookas!

#### SARA MALLISON

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (19:42):** Today I recognise the Castle Hill Young Woman of the Show 2025. Last Sunday I attended the Castle Hill Show, Horse Section, where I met the Young Woman of the Show, Sara Mallison. Sara formerly was a resident of Baulkham Hills but now lives on a property at Rylstone in the States north-west. Sara's fields of expertise are cattle and sheep, although her main expertise is with sheep rather than cattle. The role of Young Woman of the Show, in Sara's case, is to represent and be the ambassador for the Castle Hill and Hills District Agricultural Society. Sara expressed to me that it is wonderful to find connections with other young women of the shows and to meet other young women at the various locations. I recognise and acknowledge Sara as the Castle Hill Young Woman of the Show 2025. I wish Sara the very best in representing our local district agricultural society.

#### ACCESSIBLE DIVERSITY SERVICES INITIATIVE

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:43):** I congratulate the Accessible Diversity Services Initiative [ADSI] on hosting such an inspiring International Women's Day event. It was fantastic to see the Granville Centre filled with so many women from our community. The event provided an opportunity for women to connect with organisations that are dedicated to empowering and uplifting them. ADSI's commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and the advancement of women's rights is invaluable. Through its tireless efforts, it has become a driving force in our community, creating positive change and opening doors for countless women. It is events like these that remind us of the power of unity and the importance of supporting one another. We must all continue to champion women's empowerment, not just on International Women's Day but every day. I thank ADSI for making this day possible and for its ongoing dedication to our community.

#### TRIBUTE TO HELEN ANNE HILL

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:44):** I take this opportunity to remember and honour the life of Helen Anne Hill, a dedicated local community volunteer and proud member of the Liberal Party. Helen touched so many lives as a dedicated volunteer, cherished friend, loving wife, mother and grandmother. Helen's commitment to our community was unwavering. As a devoted volunteer with Killy Cares since its inception, she brought warmth and kindness to those in need by cooking meals, providing transport and always offering a helping

hand. She embodied the very essence of compassion, care and companionship—values at the heart of Killy Cares and our community. Helen's love for our beautiful region was evident in everything she did. Over the years, Helen was always a great support and contributor personally to me, and through the Liberal Party's Empire Bay Branch. Now reunited with her beloved husband, Mark, who was also a generous friend and volunteer, Helen leaves behind a true legacy of love, service and dedication. To her three sons, daughters-in-law and eight grandchildren, we extend our deepest sympathies for Helen's loss. Vale, Helen Hill.

#### **BIRRONG BOYS HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:45):** I take this opportunity to congratulate Birrong Boys High School on holding its Iftar on Tuesday night. Birrong Boys High School is one of the exceptional public high schools in my electorate. It has an outstanding record of achievement, with young men going through to university or into the building industry, in particular, where they will continue to build New South Wales. That record is also evidenced by the school's Father and Son Project, which is putting up new murals around the school. Birrong Boys High School, its staff and sponsors have made a significant difference by holding Iftar every year. It brings the community together and allows the school's young men to shine. Thank you to everyone at Birrong Boys High School.

#### **MONTE SANT' ANGELO MERCY COLLEGE**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (19:46):** I congratulate Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College on its sesquicentenary, marking 150 years of educating young women in my community of the lower North Shore. Since its founding in 1875 by the Sisters of Mercy North Sydney, Monte has been a cornerstone of girls' education in our area, shaping generations of strong, compassionate and capable women. This milestone is a testament to the enduring legacy of Mother Mary Ignatius McQuoin, whose vision and determination helped lay the foundations for Catholic education in Australia. Her values continue to inspire Monte and the school's commitment to academic excellence, service and leadership. I thank Monte's principal, Mrs Nicole Christensen, for her fantastic work as a prominent figure in the North Shore's educational community and congratulate her on overseeing Monte's sesquicentenary during her tenure. I congratulate the broader Monte community, including the students, staff, teachers and alumni, on reaching this significant milestone. I was excited to join them to celebrate. I wish the school every success in the years to come. Congratulations to Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College on its 150 years.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### **CREATING CANOPIES INITIATIVE**

#### **CARNARVON GOLF CLUB**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:47):** Greater Sydney Landcare, in partnership with Landcare New South Wales, has been on a mission to transform our urban landscape. Through the Creating Canopies initiative, it is working to plant 200,000 native trees across Greater Sydney from 2023 to 2025. This project, which is funded by the New South Wales Government, is more than just an environmental effort; it is an investment in the future of our cities, our health and generations to come. The initiative builds on the success of stage one, which ran from 2020 to 2022 and saw the planting of an incredible 105,000 native trees. Since 2020, the collective efforts have led to the planting of 245,442 native trees across the region. The impact of this project is undeniable: 145,000 native trees have been planted since the beginning of stage two; 3,725 dedicated volunteers got their hands into the soil to make it happen; 143 planting events were hosted, fostering community involvement; 35 corporate groups joined in, demonstrating the power of partnerships; and 18 local government areas benefited, bringing much-needed greenery to the urban environment.

The numbers tell a story of commitment and the power of a community coming together for a great cause. With each tree planted, they are helping to fight urban heat, restoring biodiversity and strengthening community ties. Why is this work so crucial? The urban heat island effect is real, and it is intensifying. Many areas across Greater Sydney, particularly in electorates like mine in Auburn, have less than 30 per cent canopy cover, leaving them vulnerable to rising temperatures and extreme weather.

Our trees are not just decorative; they are our best defence against climate change. They filter the air we breathe, cool our streets and provide shelter for native wildlife.

Carnarvon Golf Club in Lidcombe is one green space that exemplifies that value. The Greater Sydney Landcare has proudly partnered with the club to enhance the green space, increase canopy cover and improve water quality. With the support of golf club members, corporate teams and Landcare volunteers, they have created a sustainable environment that benefits both wildlife and the wider community. That makes Carnarvon Golf Club more than just a place of recreation; it has become an urban sanctuary. It is home to a rich array of flora and fauna,

with over 700 trees and shrubs planted including eucalypts, melaleucas, acacias, banksias and hakeas. Many of those will grow three metres tall or more, playing a critical role in reducing urban heat and supporting biodiversity.

Today we face a challenge, with the New South Wales Government identifying the club as a potential site for a cemetery expansion. That decision has placed a cloud of uncertainty over the future of that vital green space, effectively halting Landcare's efforts at the site. That is a great tragedy for our local community at a time when urban greening is more important than ever, when our cities are heating up and natural habitats are disappearing. We cannot afford to lose green spaces that have been intentionally cultivated to support both people and the environment. Carnarvon Golf Club was designated as an open space for the transport oriented development plan for both Berala and Lidcombe. That initiative aimed to create a more sustainable, liveable and cooler urban environment right in the heart of those transport oriented developments.

Losing the space to cemeteries contradicts that mission and undermines years of dedicated work. As the local member of Parliament, I am disappointed at that loss and cannot stand by while the community centre green space is jeopardised. That is why we have been calling everyone across New South Wales to stand with us to protect Carnarvon Golf Club. I urge everyone to sign the petition, raise their voices and let decision-makers know that green spaces matter. They are not just patches of land; they are the lungs of our city, the gathering places of our community and the legacy we leave behind for future generations. It is not just about one golf course; it is about the future of urban green spaces in Sydney and beyond.

If we allow one vital area to be lost, the messages we send is that green spaces are expendable, that community efforts can be ignored and that our own environmental protections are secondary to cemetery spaces. The community has taken a stand to protect what Landcare has worked so hard to build. We must ensure that Carnarvon Golf Club remains a sanctuary for nature and people alike. The fight for the space is a fight for our future. The trees we plant today will provide for future generations, the habitats will protect and sustain wildlife and the actions we take now will determine the legacy for the future.

#### FLU VACCINATIONS

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping) (19:52):** Today I raise awareness about the importance of flu vaccinations, which is an issue important to me and my constituents. Influenza can affect anyone regardless of age. It can lead to severe illness and hospitalisation, even for those who are young and healthy. In the four weeks leading up to April 2024, over 4,700 individuals in New South Wales were diagnosed with influenza, a 16 per cent increase compared with the same period in the previous year. Data from NSW Health indicates that influenza hospitalised 480 people between January and April 2024, a significant increase from the 284 for the same period in the previous year. This year, as flu season approaches, we have already seen a high surge in influenza cases, underscoring the urgency of addressing this public health issue. Yet flu vaccination rates in New South Wales have declined by 4.9 per cent over the past year, trailing behind other States.

I stand with all pharmacists who are urging Australians to get vaccinated ahead of the 2025 flu season. I know of pharmacies in my own electorate that offer the flu vaccine, like Chemist Warehouse on Rawson Street, Priceline Pharmacy Epping or Rosewood Pharmacy and Beauty on High Street, and Priceline Pharmacy at Beecroft Place Shopping Village, to name a few. The convenience of being able to get a vaccine at a local pharmacy means more people than ever can get vaccinated. I know that anyone who gets their flu vaccine at a community pharmacy will get excellent service, like I did when I recently had a travel vaccine at Carmen Drive Community Pharmacy in Carlingford.

More than just convenience, we must make sure flu vaccines are accessible to everyone. We know that vaccination significantly reduces morbidity and preventable mortality from influenza. I acknowledge the work of the previous Liberal Government to make flu vaccines free at pharmacies, which improved access and increased vaccination uptake—a program that unfortunately has not been continued by the current Government. I also support calls, like those from the Opposition, for improved access to flu vaccinations for this flu season, and to make flu vaccines free for everyone. Given the warnings of a potentially severe outbreak, making vaccines freely available could help address declining vaccination rates and provide support to families during a cost-of-living crisis. I encourage all Australians to get vaccinated this 2025 flu season to protect themselves and their communities.

#### BLUE MOUNTAINS ELECTORATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (19:55):** At the fabulous International Women's Day events held at the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre on Saturday 8 March I had the privilege of opening a vibrant community art exhibition art exhibition called "The Art of Persistence: Celebrating 50 Years of International Women's Day". There were workshops and a grand parade with music, drumming, and dancing, including performances from Wagana Aboriginal Dancers and Hands, Heart and Feet. They brought lots of energy and colour on a rainy day.



The spirit of the International Women's Day event honoured the persistence and ongoing efforts of women in driving social and cultural change.

The event was brought to life by the Blue Mountains Women's Health and Resource Centre, Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, MWA Arts Collective and local Ngadjuri artist Anastasia Vickers. They all came together to present an exciting new community arts project. What I loved seeing most was a number of younger women engaging not only in a spirit of togetherness but also recognising the women who walked before them. There was a recognition of the persistence of women throughout history challenging the social norms, sometimes being labelled "the bad girls". I think I might have been labelled as one of those during my university days. The arts project highlights the previously untold story of the Blue Mountains Reclaim the Night Banners, a powerful symbol of the community's commitment to end gender-based violence. Cherie Brandon from the Blue Mountains Women's Health and Resource Centre shared:

What many may not realise is that anti-violence material, like our Reclaim the Night banners, are often subject to high levels of vandalism. Just last year, we faced multiple acts of aggression towards these banners.

The exhibition focuses on the restoration and reimagining of those banners. What was once damaged is now transformed into a new and thought-provoking display of resilience, capturing the enduring spirit of persistence and protest in the ongoing fight for social change. Ms Brandon further explained:

While we often repair and restore these banners quietly behind the scenes, this exhibition gives us the chance to showcase them as reimagined art pieces, celebrating their continued presence as symbols of strength and solidarity.

The exhibition offered the community the opportunity to engage in two workshops: Re-Story, Re-Envisage, Repair with the MWA Arts Collective, and a women's weaving workshop. The event was also an opportunity to reflect on the progress made in the fight for gender equality, to celebrate women's contributions, and to acknowledge the ongoing persistence needed for meaningful change.

On a rainy day after a big week in Parliament and when I am feeling a little exhausted, as most of us do when we head home, there is nothing like being amongst the people in my community to lift me up, especially if there is a bit of dance and song involved and people who thank us for representing them in this place. The event was one of those moments for me, especially when a young woman called Ailie, whom I find quite an inspiration in our community, gave me a big hug, thanked me for my work and told me, as I was feeling quite exhausted, that it was the women who trod that path before her, like me, who inspired her. She is a powerhouse and one to watch out for—a future member. I wish a Happy International Women's Day to all of my community and thank to those who pulled that event together.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** I also recognise all the inspirational women throughout New South Wales.

#### CLARENCE ELECTORATE EVENTS

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (20:00):** I too wish everyone in my electorate happy International Women's Day, including the members of my staff who are going to the Grafton Chamber of Commerce International Women's Day breakfast this Friday. It was postponed because of Tropical Cyclone Alfred a couple of weeks ago. Tonight I reflect on the two years since the previous State election and my time in Parliament. We are midway through this term of Parliament. When I walked into this Chamber for the first time to represent the great people of the electorate of Clarence, we were recovering from floods, and tonight we are still recovering from floods, albeit from a different event. As I mentioned, Alfred has dished up another flood event in my electorate of Clarence. We are strong, we are focused on recovery and we have always been resilient, but we are getting more resilient by the day because we have to.

I asked people in my electorate of Clarence, "Are you better off today than you were two years ago?" The answer resoundingly in my electorate is that they are not better off. In my electorate, seniors are still lamenting the loss of the regional seniors travel card, which was ripped out of seniors' hands without warning and replaced with a 4¢-a-litre shopper docket that virtually no-one can use. Mums and dads are still looking for cost-of-living support that was available under The Nationals and Liberals and that is no longer available, and they compare the previous Government with this Government when it comes to cost-of-living measures. The kids went back to school just a few weeks ago, and mums and dads were looking for the back-to-school vouchers. They told me they were a great help to get the kids back to school. As we know, the costs are horrendous.

Over the past two years, we have worked hard for the fishing families of the Clarence who, through no fault of their own, saw their small businesses all but wiped out by a white spot outbreak in the Clarence River. I am very heartened that we are just one negative test away from reopening the Clarence River to prawning. That means that those fishing families are back in business. But the problem is they have lost their market, and they are going to need a little bit of a hand to find new markets for their prawns because they have been out of business

for two years. I acknowledge the good things that the Government has done, and every government does good things. I was very pleased with the rescue package that was announced to help those small businesses get over that difficult time in their business.

Our dairy farmers and patients have not forgotten the dumping of Norco milk from public hospitals in the Oxley electorate and my electorate and other hospitals throughout the Mid North Coast and the Northern Rivers. It was a sad day when the Government turned its back on our local produce. But things are progressing. I give credit to the Minister for Health for the continuation of the redevelopment of the Grafton Base Hospital. The project is nearing a cost of \$300 million and has long been championed. It is a scary time for those employed in the timber industry in my part of the world, with an announcement imminent for the Great Koala National Park, a policy that has the potential to rip the guts out of the regional North Coast. That is a very serious issue. Let us not forget the youth crime that is continuing in my electorate almost unabated. Help is on the way. We have some amendments to the Bail Act that I hope this House supports. I am looking forward to the next two years in Parliament so I can make a difference to the people of Clarence. I thank the House.

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (20:05):** I congratulate the member for Clarence on his two years in office since the 2023 election. I note his comments about his constituents. Had the Liberal-Nationals Government not left the State with the biggest debt in history, we could have kept some of those vouchers, which were not funded under the previous administration. As kids head back to school, parents might say to the member for Clarence, "Gee, it would be nice to have a voucher," but I bet they also say, "Gee, it is nice to have a teacher in our classroom to make sure our kids are not spending their time on the playground instead." That is what people are saying to me in the electorate of Monaro. I have not had anyone say to me recently that they would prefer to have the voucher over the teacher, but each to their own. Those things really matter. Labor governments concentrate on delivering services and, as the member for Clarence acknowledged, concentrate on working with members, like him, on some of those important issues in their local areas.

#### **MAITLAND ELECTORATE HEALTH SERVICES**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport) (20:06):** Tonight I talk about the Maitland Hospital and health generally in the electorate of Maitland. I remember the very first question I asked in this House, which was to the then Minister for Health Jillian Skinner. I asked her when patients would be seen in the new Maitland Hospital, which had been promised four years before I entered Parliament, and she said, "When it's built." I think that was the first and last time I spoke to her because I could not get a briefing with her. Things improved very much with the member for Wakehurst, former Minister Hazzard, who was a very good Minister to work with and someone who I have modelled myself on. It was interesting to hear the bleating from the member for Clarence, as Minister Whan acknowledged, on some of the things that are not really important in the scheme of things. I have been to Clarence a number of times, met with the member and his council and got some things done for him, but I did not hear any thanks for that tonight. I guess that is where we are.

In 2022 the Maitland community welcomed the opening of the new Maitland Hospital in Metford, a mere 11 years after it was promised under those opposite. That followed a seven-year campaign to ensure that the significant health investment remained in public hands. I update the community on what is happening with our health services because a lot of things have changed and continue to improve under the Minns Labor Government. We are still experiencing difficulties. The former Government left our health system in a complete state due to underfunding and understaffing. At one stage the emergency department at Maitland Hospital had the highest walkout rate in the State. It did not matter whether it was at the old hospital, which was at the same site at Campbells Hill for 175 years, or the new hospital at Metford, over the past 10 years of my time in Parliament I have been doing everything I can to improve the hospital's outcomes.

I met with Minister Park this week and I update my community on that. In February 2025 three patient flow officers were announced for the Maitland Hospital emergency department. That includes a whole-of-health program coordinator and a flow navigator to reduce the delays and coordinate escalation and transfer of care. That is helping to reduce ramping. There is a 20 per cent improvement in the transfer of care performance, which is the statistic that tracks if patients who arrive by ambulance are off-loaded within 30 minutes.

I spoke to Adam Hall and his colleague from the Health Services Union today, and they made the point that paramedics will not offload a patient when they do not feel that continuity of care will happen. That is a good outcome.

We also know that patients get home earlier if they are identified as being able to be discharged. That is helping to reduce inpatient stays and hospital readmissions. There is no point sending people home if they will have to come back. The average length of stay for patients in the emergency department has reduced by two hours

since July 2024 and the percentage of presentations classified as category two—to be seen within 10 minutes—has improved by 15 per cent just in the past month, so it is working. In addition the emergency department short stay unit has received funding and is now a 24/7 service. An early treatment zone allows patients to be triaged more quickly because they are assessed by a senior clinician and receive appropriate early care. Efficiencies include surge bed capacity, multidisciplinary coordination of care, and a transit unit.

Most important of all are the people. Since the election Minister Park and I have spoken regularly to our health workers in all parts of the hospital system and they are telling us challenging stories about the difficulties they are having in securing staff. Minister Park reported to me yesterday that the total nursing workforce at Maitland Hospital has increased by 110 nurses in two years—by 20 per cent. As at February 2025, there were 652 nurses. Fourteen of the additional nurses are in the emergency department, bringing the total number in that department to 100. That is a really significant improvement. I thank the new leadership team at Maitland Hospital for driving that change.

We are also working on the old Maitland Hospital site. We are consulting with the Minister for Health and the Minister for Lands and Property, Minister Kamper, to ensure that site is looked after into the future. It is always a terrible experience to have health issues that require a hospital stay, but I can say that there is an overall decrease in the negative experiences people are having. Overall, patients are congratulating the staff, who are such caring and dedicated people.

### ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (20:11):** Recently a tragic event happened in my electorate. On a Friday a young woman had her life upended when her husband suffered a sudden fatal heart attack. His death rocked the community of the small outback town where he lived, and left his wife grieving. She now had to contemplate her future without her spouse. Like most other young couples, they had plans. They already had a child but had been trying for a second child. They wanted to raise their family in the bush community, in the town they called home. But with the husband's death, those plans now seemed to be in tatters. However, there was a glimmer of hope in that the widow could still use her late husband's sperm for an IVF pregnancy. She would be able to bring into the world the child that she and her husband had wanted. In most cases where that happens, the young husband has died suddenly and has never given any thought to a will or any form of written consent for what he wants if he dies. Death seems too far away.

The procedure is relatively rare and the law prohibits extraction without consent from the deceased but, under certain circumstances, approval for the extraction can be given by the coroner. But time was running out. There is only a 72-hour window during which sperm remains viable after death. The extraction needed to take place as soon as possible but one problem was the remoteness of the town. The extraction needed to be done at a place about seven-and-a-half hours drive away. The fact that the husband died on a Friday in a town in the New South Wales outback meant that there were difficulties with getting his body transferred in time to a facility where the sperm could be extracted. With the facility over seven hours away, getting permission from the coroner for his body to be moved and the sperm to be extracted would take up precious time. It required a lot of phone calls going back and forth between the widow's solicitors, the coroner, me, ministerial staff and members of my team, most of which was done on a Sunday, which is when most people are enjoying their weekend. I thank the Attorney General and his staff for speaking to the coroner and helping to facilitate this delicate matter.

Fortunately, that part of the story has a positive ending. I heard word on the Monday after the man's passing that his body had been taken to the facility where the viable sperm was successfully extracted. But there was still another problem. Section 23 of the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act 2007 [ART Act] states:

An ART provider must not provide ART treatment to a woman using a gamete if the ART provider knows or believes on reasonable grounds that the gamete provider is deceased, unless—

- (a) the gamete provider has consented to the use of the gamete after his or her death ...

For those who do not know, a gamete is any male or female cell able to unite with another of the opposite sex to begin reproduction. The widow cannot use the sperm for IVF in New South Wales because there was no written consent from the husband. As I said, most young men are not thinking of death. Many do not have a will, much less would they be thinking about writing down their wishes for what is to be done with their genetic material should they die. It seems unreasonable that the woman could get as far as getting a court order for the extraction procedure and having it done successfully, only to meet the insurmountable hurdle of being unable to use the sperm. It means that she will have to travel to another State where there are no prohibitions on using sperm without consent in such circumstances.

But let us look at the facts. The woman and the man were married; they already had a child and, by all accounts, were trying for another. The marriage contract should be enough to allow the woman to have her husband's child—after all, it was one of the reasons they got married. The law preventing her using the sperm to

conceive through IVF seems contradictory to part of the intent of their union, which was to have a family. The law bars the woman from fulfilling her husband's wishes of creating a sibling for their child. Despite a lack of written consent, there should be no legal barrier to using the deceased's sperm if he indicated his willingness to have children by marrying, by taking part in IVF with his wife, or by joining the Organ Donor Register so there is evidence he was open to donating his organs or tissues after death.

It is my intention to do something about changing that law. I will introduce a bill to amend the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act to allow the spouse of a deceased person to start or continue making a family. It does not seem reasonable that the law should continue to prevent a grieving wife from following through with at least part of the life plan she had with her partner. At such a difficult time, the law needs to have compassion, common sense and agility to permit what a normal person would say should be allowed. I will ask all members of Parliament to agree with that change.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** Before calling the member for East Hills, I welcome to the Chamber the husband of the member for East Hills.

### **RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS VILIFICATION**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (20:16):** Today I speak about the importance of harmony and respect for all cultures and religions in the East Hills electorate and New South Wales. Our community is home to people of many different faiths and backgrounds. There are Christians, Muslims, Maronites, Sikhs, Hindus, Jewish, Buddhists—just to name a few—and those of no faith as well. People from all over the world have made their home in this State and all make valuable contributions to our society. That diversity is one of our greatest strengths, and it is essential that we continue to foster a culture of mutual respect and understanding. The recent threats to our local mosque in Padstow are deeply disturbing and attacks on other ethnic groups within our community are completely unacceptable. No-one should feel unsafe in their place of worship, place of care or in their own community, and no-one should be unwelcome because of their race or faith.

Racial vilification and threats are not tolerated in our society and will be actively investigated by the NSW Police Force. I have spoken to local police, the Padstow mosque and local community leaders to make it clear that I am here to help and support the community. For the Muslim community, those threats are especially painful during Ramadan. It is the holiest month of the Islamic calendar when the community should be able to reflect and celebrate in peace and enjoy sharing their iftars with the wider community. I condemn any form of hate or violence directed at people because of their faith, cultural background or any other difference. Hate speech and acts of violence have no place in our State. Those acts do not reflect the values of respect and unity that most people in our community hold close.

We have marked several days this month to highlight and acknowledge the need to stamp out hatred and embrace diversity. That includes Harmony Day, which is celebrated on 21 March each year. It was fantastic to see local schools coming together to celebrate Harmony Day, with young people demonstrating such a positive spirit of inclusion and respect. We have so many opportunities to embrace a culture of inclusivity, acceptance and mutual respect in East Hills. As president of the Bankstown Jets Touch Football Association for over 20 years, I saw firsthand how people of all backgrounds and faiths came together. We embraced the traditions of our Pacific Islander players, embraced children with disabilities, and ensured that Muslim children were supported during Ramadan. We all played as one team, united by respect and friendship. I am privileged that in my current position I am welcomed to such a diverse range of cultural and religious celebrations.

As the Muslim community approaches the end of Ramadan and prepares to celebrate Eid al-Fitr, I extend my warmest wishes.

At the same time, as Christians observe Lent and prepare for Easter, we are reminded of the strength of our shared diversity. This season of religious reflection highlights how different faiths contribute to the rich and vibrant character of our community. The strength of our community lies in our ability to stand together in times of both celebration and hardship. An attack on one part of our community is an attack on all of us. We must continue to reject division and foster a culture where everyone feels they belong. I will always stand against hate speech and discrimination. I will always highlight positive behaviour and embrace inclusiveness, and I urge others to do the same. Together, we can confront racial hatred and ensure that everyone, regardless of their faith or background, feels safe, respected and valued.

### **GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (20:20):** Yesterday marked the second anniversary of the Minns Labor Government, and people in Castle Hill, Western Sydney and the rest of New South Wales are not seeing the promised benefits of the Government's policies. While the Labor Party campaigned on a fresh start for New South Wales, after two years there are just delays and broken promises, and mounting economic strain for

families and businesses alike. The reality is that the Minns Government has failed to deliver, and families in Castle Hill are bearing the brunt. When I speak to families in my electorate, I hear repeatedly that they are struggling to make ends meet. The cost of living is increasing, rents are skyrocketing, home ownership is slipping out of reach and everyday costs are rising faster than wages. Small businesses are also finding it harder to survive—many businesses have even been forced to close due to financial strain. Instead of the fresh start they were promised, families have been served a helping of stale old Labor.

Beyond its failure to address the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, the Labor Government has also failed to take a positive attitude towards investing in the future of New South Wales. I was shocked to hear about the recent decision to cut funding for the Regional Academies of Sport. The Western Sydney Regional Academy of Sport covers the Castle Hill electorate. The Minns Government decided to reduce funding for the academies from \$5.2 million to \$3.7 million over the next four years. The failure of the Government to continue important programs such as Active Kids vouchers is compounded by cutting funding for the pathway for elite athletes through the Regional Academies of Sport. The Castle Hill electorate has many athletic clubs such as the Hills District Little Athletics club and the Winston Hills Little Athletics Centre. The Government's mean-spirited decision to reduce funding by \$1.5 million is a serious blow to local sports programs.

The Regional Academies of Sport provide an important pathway to elite sport. Yet, under this Government, their future is now uncertain. The cut is especially damaging with the Brisbane 2032 Olympics in mind. The Bound for Brisbane strategy, which supports athletes who are on track to compete at the Brisbane Olympics, is at risk. For many athletes, including those from my electorate, support from the Regional Academies of Sport is the difference between success and failure. The funding cuts will directly affect their training, performance support and access to experienced coaches.

The Minns Government is failing parents by not building schools, hospitals and roads where they are needed. In September 2023 the Government removed the dwelling cap in the Castle Hill showground precinct. That cap was put in place by the former Liberal-Nationals Government until appropriate infrastructure was constructed. The Minns Government, without consideration of the consequences, has failed to plan, construct and build new schools in my electorate. Castle Hill High School has 51 demountable buildings. The failure to build schools where needed is just one of many failures by those opposite. The Government has also axed essential cost-of-living support measures such as the back to school voucher, which helped parents with the cost of school supplies, uniforms and technology. Those small but important measures were critical for local families, particularly for those who are feeling the squeeze of rising living expenses.

In addition to cuts to cost-of-living measures that had helped families in my electorate, the Minns Government has failed to take meaningful action on housing affordability. As home prices and rents continue to rise, many young people and families in Castle Hill are being pushed out of the housing market. Under Labor, New South Wales has some of the highest taxes on new homes in the country. In 2024 the Government introduced a new \$12,000 housing tax on every new home built in Greater Sydney, further inflating the costs of both buying and renting a home. Young people feel that their dream of home ownership is fading before their eyes.

The lack of progress on infrastructure is a stark contrast to the previous Government's commitment to investing in Western Sydney. The Coalition Government delivered key projects in my electorate, including the Metro North West line, NorthConnex and other major projects that would never have eventuated under the current Government. Under Labor, progress has come to a halt. Instead of focusing on solutions, there are delays, reviews and announcements of taskforces, with little to show for it. At the half-time whistle of its term in office, the scorecard is clear: The Minns Government is failing the people of my community. After two years of the Minns Government, the people of New South Wales are worse off than they were at the commencement of the term.

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (20:25):** There seems to be a theme from the Opposition tonight. I remind the House that when Labor came to government in 2023, the inflation rate was around 7.8 per cent. It is now under 3 per cent in New South Wales. It is pretty clear that in the last few years of the Coalition Government, the cost of living was galloping out of control. Responsible management by the State and Federal Labor governments has seen the cost of living come down. In the term of this Government, there has been a 1 per cent increase in real wages in New South Wales, compared with a real decrease in wages under the former Government. That is of direct benefit to people trying to live more comfortably. The sod was turned at the Rouse Hill hospital site three times, but there was no planning approval and nothing happened. This Government is actually focused on delivering services to the people of New South Wales. I am sure people in the Castle Hill electorate will benefit from that.

#### **BLACKTOWN HOSPITAL**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:26):** I will talk about Blacktown Hospital. The member for Castle Hill just spoke about various challenges. Allan Green, a Liberal councillor in Blacktown, visited various

community pages on Facebook to solicit problems and concerns. He then said that he cannot sleep at night because of all those problems. I suggest to Councillor Allan Green that he should focus on council issues—there are enough challenges there—rather than talking about State issues. He was a failed State candidate on numerous occasions, running for the Liberal Party, the Christian Democrat Party and as an Independent. He has run for a few different parties.

In the end, what is the story of Blacktown Hospital? A T2 patient needs to be seen urgently, within 10 minutes of presentation and triage. When Labor lost office in 2011, some 85 per cent of patients were seen on time. In the 12 years of the Liberal Government, that figure fell to a low of 10.6 per cent. The Liberal Government gave us a shiny new hospital for \$700 million, plus a new car park—thanks very much—but a hospital needs staff and resources to operate. One in 10 patients—

**Mr Mark Hodges:** COVID—definitely COVID.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** In COVID, you could not go to the hospital. The figure bounced from 10.6 per cent to 16 per cent. Well done to the Libs! They took 85 per cent down to 16 per cent. The problems are still there. We are now at about 33 per cent and moving up. What has Labor done? Since being in office, we have looked at ways of improving the system. I thank the staff in the Western Sydney Local Health District. Under the leadership of Brad Ceely, numerous things have been happening. The Labor Government has implementing safe staffing ratios. At the moment, 24 full-time nurses are being recruited to work in the Blacktown emergency department.

A lot of patients are moving from GP clinics to emergency departments because there has been a drop in bulk billing. The Government has introduced a payroll tax threshold. If GP clinics bulk-bill 80 per cent of patients through Medicare, they get a payroll tax exemption.

Labor is encouraging GP clinics to maintain bulk-billing. Federal Labor is also introducing urgent care clinics. One is in Rooty Hill and the member for Greenway, Michelle Rowland, has just announced one in her electorate. Labor has also introduced a telehealth GP call clinic at Blacktown Hospital, a Hospital in the Home program and a ward of five to eight beds to take emergency patients coming via ambulance from nursing homes or aged-care clinics. Those patients can receive emergency treatment in that clinic next to the emergency department so as not to hold up other patients going through emergency.

The previous Liberal Government wanted to cut the COVID surge workforce of 1,100 nurses. It wanted to sack them all, but Labor has kept them permanently employed. Labor's \$700 million hospital at Rouse Hill will take more pressure off Blacktown once it is built. Labor has invested \$200 million in elective surgery and has seen the numbers cut. Under the previous Liberal Government, 71 per cent of patients had elective surgery performed on time. Under Labor, in the last December quarter, that was up to 95.5 per cent. There is a lot of work to be done in health across Western Sydney. Labor has been introducing great initiatives that are having real outcomes and making improvements for the residents of Western Sydney, and Blacktown in particular.

#### NORTHERN TABLELANDS ELECTORATE PARAMEDICS

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands) (20:31):** The introduction of crickets on level 10 really gives this building a bush-like atmosphere, and I am sure the member for Maitland appreciates them.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Crickets?

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN:** You haven't heard them? They are on level 10. The member for Tweed does not know anything about them, I am sure. I address the issue of paramedics in the Northern Tablelands. There are a number of ambulance stations in my electorate. Armidale, Walcha, Guyra, Glen Innes, Inverell, Bingara, Wialda, Ashford, Mungindi and Moree all have ambulance stations. Northern Tablelands ambulance officers, like all ambos across New South Wales, are trusted, well-respected and incredibly hardworking. They make 3.00 a.m. trips across hundreds of kilometres, dealing with roos, pigs, deer and all sorts of other wildlife on the roads. The good news for paramedics in my electorate is that we have received much-welcomed funding for renovations at the Inverell ambulance station, which is fantastic. That station needs a lot of work and, in reality, a new station is possibly needed. But we have received \$300,000 for renovations, which is welcome. Similarly, we have received an additional cohort of paramedics from Moree, which is fantastic. Hopefully some of those paramedics remain in our great town.

When I speak to paramedics, they tell me that the roster is causing them issues. As taxpayers we fund the rostered positions for our paramedics, but a number of those rostered positions in the Northern Tablelands are going unfilled. Health NSW and NSW Ambulance have rightly recognised the need for increased capacity, but the problem in regional New South Wales is that, where that increased capacity has been identified, minimum staffing levels have not been raised to meet those increases. That has resulted in a situation where, for example, if one of our paramedics is on long service or maternity leave then that position is not filled. That causes shortages,

and those shortages make it very difficult for existing paramedics to get time off. I was talking to one ambo in Inverell who put in for his long service leave nearly six months ago. He is still waiting for a decision, and it is very difficult for him to make arrangements for a holiday with his family.

Another issue is that the backfilling of vacant positions is required to ensure that our communities receive the right level of care. It is also causing some of our paramedics to burn out. For example, we had a situation in Inverell last week where a single officer had no other crew with him for a full shift. The service made no attempt to gain a second paramedic to form a crew on the basis that there were full crews in Tamworth. Inverell to Tamworth is a few hundred kilometres, and it simply cannot be the case in 2025 that we cannot put someone else on in Inverell because there are full crews in Tamworth. Some of our existing paramedics heard about that and gave up their weekends to assist that ambulance officer so that he had a crew to work with.

There was another example of a very young paramedic whose partner had been on back-to-back shifts and needed some downtime. That young paramedic in her early 20s worked a shift by herself and had probably the worst experience one could have as a paramedic when she had to attend to a baby who had a heart attack. Unfortunately, that baby did not survive. She did not have a partner with her and had to deal with that by herself. She is still suffering the consequences from that and is seeking professional help through the service. When I hear those stories and look at the fantastic job that our paramedics do, and I look at the money the Government is putting into renovating stations such as Inverell, I pause and wonder if we could do something with the rosters to ensure that our paramedics are paired up and working safely in a crew.

I am sure that if we all put our heads together, members could come up with some ideas as to how we can backfill those vacant positions, particularly in regional New South Wales. I know that a number of representatives from the Health Services Union and a number of paramedics will be here in Parliament tomorrow. I encourage all members, particularly regional members, to have a chat to them and see what we can do together, because this issue should cross the divide.

### BONNYRIGG GARDEN CENTRE

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (20:36):** Like many other millennials, I am a proud house plant enthusiast. There is something deeply satisfying about nurturing a small piece of nature indoors, watching a new leaf unfurl or a once-struggling plant bounce back with a little care and attention. In Liverpool many people are living in increasingly dense city centres or in suburbs where land sizes have been steadily shrinking and houses are being replaced by townhouses or other multi-dwelling developments, squeezing out the capacity for people to enjoy their backyards in the same way as previous generations did. It is no surprise that house plants and gardening have enjoyed a real boom over the past five years. What began as a hobby during the pandemic has grown into a lasting passion for many. In a time when we were all seeking comfort, connection and a sense of calm, caring for house plants offered just that. Their popularity has endured, especially amongst those living in apartments, where access to private green space is limited.

House plants provide not only a splash of green but also an opportunity to engage with nature in a simple, tangible way. The growing love of plants and gardening has naturally driven more people to their local nurseries and garden centres—places where expert advice, quality plants and a sense of community meet. Located in Bonnyrigg Heights, the Bonnyrigg Garden Centre has been an icon of south-west Sydney for over five decades. It is not just a nursery but a community hub. That is because Bonnyrigg has been able to offer an expanded range of services. The garden centre is not simply a nursery; it contains Cafe Harvest, a beautiful meeting spot for many to gather with family or friends for coffee or a weekend lunch, or a great place to hold a more professional meeting, as I have done.

However, the garden centre and the nursery industry have also experienced evolution and change, like many others. Cost-of-living issues, competition and other factors have led the garden centre and nursery industry to offer a more complete and all-encompassing lifestyle experience. It is attracting customers seeking a one-stop shop for not only plants but also a whole range of other products and services. Over the past few months, I have met with Bonnyrigg Garden Centre and a range of stakeholders in the nursery industry to discuss their ambitions and the unfortunate limitations that exist in our current planning system. The definition of a "garden centre" in the standard instrument is currently as follows:

*garden centre* means a building or place the principal purpose of which is the retail sale of plants and landscaping and gardening supplies and equipment. It may include a restaurant or cafe and the sale of any of the following—

- (a) outdoor furniture and furnishings, barbecues, shading and awnings, pools, spas and associated supplies, and items associated with the construction and maintenance of outdoor areas,
- (b) pets and pet supplies,
- (c) fresh produce.

As it currently stands, the definition does not reflect the broader nature of uses offered by the industry and restricts the ability to offer the range of services and the user experience that customers expect.

Certain readings of the definition may result in capping the number of restaurants or cafes on site at one. The industry has been asking for an amended definition that allows for a broader offering at garden centres. Ideas include educational training centres, health and fitness studios, floristry and much more.

Unfortunately, the industry faces a narrow and ambiguous definition that has been left to the interpretation of local council areas. Take the well-known retail brand Flower Power, for example. Flower Power at Milperra is a local hub, an industry leader in modern garden centre retail that provides a complete lifestyle experience and is a very popular local fixture for people across south-west Sydney. By contrast, at other Flower Power locations more restrictive applications of the definition are preventing them from providing a holistic offering for other communities. I understand that the changes sought by the industry will also require the buy-in of local government. However, I understand their frustrations, as they have been seeking clarity on and a resolution to this issue for over seven years.

I thank the industry for coming to me with its concerns, especially John Pavasovic of Bonnyrigg Garden Centre, Michael Spiteri of Flower Power, and Mike Mehigan from the New South Wales Nursery and Gardening Industry Association. I also thank the planning Minister and his staff for meeting with me and stakeholders to talk through the challenges facing the industry and the way that government can make it better. I acknowledge that these processes take time and require work by the department, as it intersects with other work currently taking place. I am committed to advocating for this very important part of our broader economy that will help us meet some of the future challenges facing my region, such as tackling the urban heat island effect. I look forward to a timely resolution that brings certainty and more clarity to the industry and local government, resulting in better outcomes for consumers.

## WATER MANAGEMENT

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (20:41):** American singer/songwriter Bob Dylan is having a bit of a resurgence in popular culture of late. Baby boomers who know who Dylan is and the millennials who do not are all flocking to see his biopic *A Complete Unknown*. But I am not here to give a movie review. I am here to talk about water. The trouble with talking about water is that every time I speak about water in this place, I run the risk of people tuning out. But I cannot let people tune out because the ongoing water crisis we face in New South Wales and Australia is serious and devastating. Until this crisis is over, I will keep pushing for solutions, which is how I found myself in an alleyway with a handful of handwritten signs recreating Bob Dylan's film clip for the song *Subterranean Homesick Blues*.

The film clip worked out well, and I encourage people to check it out online. Bob Dylan loved a good protest and, when it comes to water policies in New South Wales, there is a lot to protest about. If people check out my video, they will notice that the cards I hold up detail 45 different State and Federal government inquiries that farmers have recently been asked to make submissions to. Forty-five inquiries requiring submissions is something farmers definitely need to protest about. How the hell are any of us meant to run our farms and feed the nation and the world while writing 45 submissions at the same time?

Rural New South Wales communities are drowning in submissions. It is death by a thousand submissions. Rural New South Wales is falling victim to bureaucratic abuse as we are told to submit submissions to whatever inquiry a bored bureaucracy can dream up. Why do bureaucrats do this? I believe they do it for a number of reasons. I believe they hold inquiry after inquiry to justify themselves and to perpetuate their existence. Officially, bureaucrats exist to solve problems. But if they solve those problems they can render themselves redundant. So their existence relies on either not solving problems or creating more problems so they still have more work to justify themselves.

Then the bureaucracy has to pay for itself. This is the source of more problems because not only is the bureaucracy killing rural New South Wales, but also it is effectively stealing our water to pay for our destruction. Here is what happens. First, the bureaucrats dream up different ways to cut water allocations to farmers, which we pay for in full. The bureaucrats take this water and sell it and then they use the profits to pay for their departments, which they use to hurt farmers even more. It is like being forced to pay for the knives that Jack the Ripper uses to cut you up. It is madness, but that is what is happening.

Why are the bureaucrats allowed to run amok and leave rural New South Wales in rack and ruin? Put simply, it is because they are allowed to be a law unto themselves, especially when their Minister is drowning in portfolios. Rose Jackson is the Minister for Water. She is also the Minister for Housing, the Minister for Homelessness, and the Minister for Mental Health. Finally, on top of that, she is the Minister for Youth. Put simply, we do not need one Rose. We need a giant bunch of Roses. Quick, someone call a florist! Of course we



have only one Rose, and poor Rose cannot possibly be in control of all her departments in the way she must be. So the bureaucrats run amok, and rural New South Wales continues to suffer from death by a thousand inquiries. Let us never forget that, ultimately, the buck stops somewhere, and that is with Premier Chris Minns. Bureaucrats are unelected. They are meant to do what the Government tells them. They are not there to control governments or tell Premiers what to do. New South Wales voted for Chris Minns. Ultimately, this is his mess to sort out.

So what would Bob Dylan say about all this? Despite my best efforts, I could not get Bob Dylan's number so I could not ask him. But, luckily, Bob has given us a lot of lyrics over the years. In his song *Up To Me*, Dylan sings the line, "I was just too stubborn to ever be governed by enforced insanity." Believe me, that is how we feel in rural New South Wales. We are sick of the insanity that is being enforced by self-justifying bureaucrats, which is being allowed by overworked and distracted Ministers. Rural New South Wales will continue to fight and, if governments do not listen, they will lose. That is because, believe me, in rural New South Wales the times they are a changing.

### AVENEL PARK

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (20:46):** Tonight I speak about the upgrade to transform Avenel Park into a super park. In terms of background as to why this is pretty cool and important, I remember growing up in Cabramatta about 800 metres away from the park. As a kid in the Cabramatta CBD back in the 1990s, the playgrounds had swings and metal slippery dips that used to be super hot in summer. You would take your chances and probably get some burns from it, but it still got me and my friends absolutely excited. If we were really lucky, we would get to go to Fairfield McDonald's. It had a pretty simple playground, but us kids really enjoyed it. It was a big deal for us, and we would spend hours having fun there. What I am trying to say is that when you compare the playgrounds of today with those playgrounds, they are absolutely mind blowing and amazing.

Before the transformation, Avenel Park was effectively a bunch of green space. The Government provided funding of around \$4.2 million to Fairfield City Council for the delivery of the project, which is absolutely amazing. It opened in December, in the middle of summer when it is really hot out west, and it is used regularly. When I drive past I see people using it, which is absolutely amazing. I highlight that this park and open spaces like it and the work the State Government does, particularly in collaboration with councils, really change lives. Heaps of kids use the park, creating lifelong memories, just as I did in the playgrounds I used at Cabravale park.

The park upgrade includes a multitude of features. I have a cool quote from the council website, which states that it is a dynamic "multi-dimensional sport and exercise space for all ages". That is a pretty fancy description for a park. The upgraded park includes a skate park. I remember I used to rollerblade with my friends when we were seven, eight, nine, 10, 11 and 12. Given that there were not many places to rollerblade, we used to do it on the footpaths. We all grew up in a bunch of units, so we used to also find things we could do there. It is great that this skate park is there because it provides a safe space for kids to skateboard and rollerblade uninterrupted by traffic or anything like that, which is pretty cool.

There is also a multi-sport court. I grew up in the Cabramatta PCYC, which had a basketball court. There used to be heaps of people who wanted to shoot hoops. We all had our own balls and would shoot hoops together. It is great to see a whole bunch of basketball courts opening up across the area. I was driving home from the gym last night, and passed Prairiewood, which has two basketball courts, at around 9.58 p.m. I saw the courts fully used until 10.00 p.m., which is when the council shuts off lights. The multi-sports court will be a great addition. There is a kickabout lawn and inclusive fitness equipment. This is important because gyms are quite expensive, and Fairfield is the most socio-economically disadvantaged electorate in the State. People are struggling to pay for gym fees, and this is something I need to look at. At least there is now some outdoor equipment so people can get fit.

The park also has a 25-metre sprint track so people can practise their sprints. That is particularly important for young people. When I was young, I used to try and do the beep test. At least there is now an avenue for people to run on and enjoy. There is also a walking circuit path, cooling stations with bubblers and a turf seating area. In addition to these facilities, a ninja obstacle course is also under construction and will open up soon. I am keen to see what it will look like. As a sidenote, Cabravale Memorial Park now has a flying fox. I am spewing that, 20 years later, the playground I went to as a kid is now a pretty cool park. Even I have used this swing at night. When I go there for a walk, I always give it a crack. I cannot wait to see what this ninja course has to offer. I am probably going to give it a go when I am there, but I will do it at night so no-one can see me stack it. Stuff like this is life changing. It is critical social infrastructure, which allows people to come together and for families to have some fun. I am proud of it. It goes to show that we can do great things when the State Government, Federal Government and local government all work together.

## ENERGY FROM WASTE INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (20:51):** Tonight I speak out against waste-to-energy facilities and the incineration of Sydney's rubbish in my electorate of Goulburn. I urge the people of regional New South Wales to ensure that their voices heard in the review of the New South Wales Energy from Waste Infrastructure Plan. The New South Wales Government has recently released an options paper outlining proposed changes to where and how waste-to-energy facilities operate. Despite its own Minister's opposition to waste incineration in Sydney, and despite Labor moving a motion at its New South Wales country conference to ban waste incineration, the Government is pressing forward and forcing waste-to-energy facilities on regional New South Wales against significant community opposition.

New South Wales waste volumes are projected to swell to 27 million tonnes annually over the next 20 years. Greater Sydney's landfill space is expected to run out by 2030. This is a serious challenge that deserves serious consideration to find a solution. The New South Wales Government's response has been to press on. Instead of discussing it sensibly, it is continuing its rapid-fire blame of the former Government. The shadow of the former Minister for Energy continues to darken the skies of regional New South Wales. We are continuing to force regional communities to bear the burden of Sydney's waste problem. In budget estimates, Minister Penny Sharpe said that "the challenge of waste is something that we all have to deal with." She was also very quick to say "It wasn't me" in reference to which government identified waste-to-energy as a viable option for the waste problem facing the State.

I concede that that may be the case, but as Minister, she is now responsible for the policy direction. I have fought against this policy every step of the way, from the moment when five companies were proposing to build five incinerators in my electorate. Even when I was a backbencher in Government and when the powers that be selected precincts, I fought to stop these insidious plants from popping up all over the State. I have never wanted a waste-to-energy plant in my electorate, and the community and council I represent do not want it either. The fact remains that the Minister for Energy is responsible for both energy and waste. The Labor Government has achieved little towards the management of energy and prevention of waste.

The Government should start with a plastics plan that mandates a minimum amount of recycled content in plastic packaging. The Minister is adamant to abide by the former Government's plans, and this plan was set to be implemented by 2025. What about phasing out problematic and unnecessary single-use packaging or mandating the use of recycled content for packaging? What about ensuring that all packaging is recyclable, compostable or reusable? No. Labor is instead pressing on with waste-to-energy facilities as its solution. I disagree. If it is a solution, then the members of the Government who want it should host it in their communities. Better yet, it should be located in Sydney where the majority of waste is generated, but there no precinct in the Sydney Basin has been identified.

If this technology is as safe and beneficial as the Government claims, why is it not located where the waste is generated? Why is my community expected to bear the consequences of Sydney failing to deal with its own waste? Why are communities in places like Lithgow and Tomago expected to absorb Sydney's waste? The answer is clearly that the Government knows these facilities bring risks, environmental concerns and potential health impacts. They are off-loading these burdens onto regional areas where there is less people power to oppose a choice that is clearly wrong. These regional areas produce Australia's food. They have clean air, clean water and healthy soil. Waste-to-energy facilities will threaten all of this. The proposed facility is in the Sydney water catchment. If people from Sydney think that PFAS in drinking water is a problem, then they should brace themselves.

The Government is seeking feedback on what should change in the Energy from Waste Infrastructure Plan. It has already identified and implemented adjustments to where these facilities can be built without any community consultation. I encourage every person to participate in this consultation process because decisions should not be made without genuine community input. The consultation is open until 5.00 p.m. on Tuesday 8 April 2025. I urge every resident of Goulburn to take part and make it clear that we will not stand by while decisions that affect our health, environment and future are made without us. If the Government truly believes in the safety and efficacy of energy-from-waste technology, then it should prove it by locating the facilities where the waste is produced: in the heart of Sydney.

## PENRITH ELECTORATE EVENTS

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (20:56):** My electorate of Penrith has some very unique experiences and places. I am sure that every member would say the same regarding their own patch. I take this opportunity to tell the House about what people may enjoy on an upcoming visit to Penrith. I will of course extol the virtues of Penrith Beach, which is a free venue for locals. People should head to Penrith Beach over the next couple of weeks

for a unique parents group experience. They should bring along picnic blankets and beach towels to enjoy the iconic surrounds of Penrith Beach in the company of new friends.

At 12.30 p.m. on 1 April and 8 April, Penrith City Council staff will be running a story time and activities. People must remember to pack water bottles, beach umbrellas and sunscreen. They can welcome the weekend with Twilight at Lewers, and enjoy art, music and tapas at Penrith Regional Gallery, which is located on the banks of the iconic Nepean River. Guests can experience local live music in the picturesque heritage garden while catching up with friends over delicious drinks and tapas from Cafe at Lewers. This free event is on Friday 28 March, from 5.00 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. Bookings are not required and walk-ins are welcome. Guests of the event can also take in the Penrith Regional Gallery exhibition, *Living with the River*, which explores the power, beauty and rich stories of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River, also known as the Dyarubbin, through the lens of our community.

This captivating exhibition features a selection of images from the NSW Reconstruction Authority's Living with the River competition, which invited local residents to capture what the river means to them. Each photo tells a unique story and celebrates the deep community connection with the river, from tranquil scenes of kayakers gliding through the water to images of majestic bridges spanning the river and diverse wildlife coexisting with us in nature. The exhibition includes images from Wallacia in the south to Brooklyn in the north. It highlights the changing face of the river, the wide range of ways that people experience it and the challenges of living on a flood plain. This photo competition is a key part of the Reconstruction Authority's work to raise flood risk awareness, promote emergency preparedness and gather community input for the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Disaster Adaptation Plan.

By bringing together a collection of images that captures the beauty, challenges and everyday interactions with the river, we see how the community values and interacts with that vital waterway. I urge people to not miss this opportunity to connect with the heart of our Penrith community and the lifeblood of our region. I invite people to visit our gallery and become immersed in the stories of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River. The exhibition is in partnership with the NSW Reconstruction Authority, supported by Penrith City Council, Penrith Performing and Visual Arts and the New South Wales Government.

For a change of pace, on 6 April from 8.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. will be the fifty-first annual General Motors Display Day. Cars and commercial displays to delight any automobile lover are on display at the Penrith Museum of Fire. Car fanatics need look no further. There is free entry to spectators to the display presented by the GM Display Day Committee of NSW. The display includes Buick, Oldsmobile, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Oakland, Pontiac, Vauxhall, Opel, Bedford and Holden, 48 and FJ only. A gold coin donation for spectator admission is encouraged, as any funds raised go to Legacy's Anzac Day Appeal. While there, visitors may take in the Museum of Fire, one of the most popular family attractions in Penrith. A small entry fee will reveal an impressive collection of firefighting vehicles and memorabilia.

Penrith has something for everyone. On 12 and 13 April 2025 the amazing Collectors' Plant Fair Autumn Sydney will be held at a brand-new venue at the Penrith Showground. It is described as Disneyland for plant lovers. Autumn is the perfect season to add new treasures to the garden. This April weekend offers the best opportunity to discover rare and fascinating plants that are often forgotten or never available in nurseries. I invite people to join us in welcoming the Collectors' Plant Fair to its new location and become immersed in a world of plants and plant-related paraphernalia. That is but a small glimpse of what is on in Penrith over coming weeks. We also have activities for those more adventurous, including iFLY Indoor Skydiving, Penrith whitewater rafting, Cables Wake Park, Jetpack Adventures, Sydney Helicopters and Tru Ninja. There is something for everyone in Penrith.

### **SGT MATTHEW LOCKE MG MEMORIAL RUGBY LEAGUE CHARITY MATCH**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (21:01):** For the seventeenth year, the Bellingen community gathered to honour the life and sacrifice of Sergeant Matthew Locke, a man who gave everything for his country. The Sgt Matthew Locke MG Memorial Rugby League Charity Match stands as a powerful reminder of his courage, loyalty and deep commitment to helping others. Footy teams from around New South Wales and Queensland came together. The Army Thunder, the Sawtell Panthers, the Bellingen Magpies and the Brisbane Jackals took the field, from junior league matches in the morning to the highly anticipated main game in the evening. The day was about camaraderie, respect and carrying forward the values Matthew held dear—and, of course, footy.

Matthew was everything we would expect of an Australian soldier. He was brave, dedicated and fiercely loyal to his mates. Enlisting in the army at just 17, Matthew served in some of the most challenging environments, including East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2006 he was awarded the Medal for Gallantry for extraordinary courage in battle. Under heavy enemy fire in Afghanistan, Matthew disregarded his own safety to neutralise an

advancing Taliban force, saving the lives of his fellow soldiers. It was just one moment of valour in a career defined by selflessness and service.

Tragically, in 2007, while serving with the Special Air Service Regiment in Uruzgan Province, Matthew was fatally wounded in combat. His loss was deeply felt not just by his family and comrades but also by an entire community that continues to honour his memory. His sister, Debbie Locke, founded the charity match to ensure that Matthew's legacy endures. Seventeen years on, the event has grown into something extraordinary that defines the community. Before the match, I had the chance to talk with players from the Army Thunder. The story of Timothy Muhamad stood out to me, as I know that it resonates with my community.

Originally from the Torres Strait, Timothy moved to Cairns at 15 and attended St Augustine's College. There he developed a passion for rugby league, using sport to build up his confidence and find his place. Tim worked hard to balance academics and athletics, earning a spot on the school's first 13 rugby league team. After graduating he began an apprenticeship in carpentry, but soon realised his true calling was elsewhere. Inspired by the discipline and respect of those in uniform, he joined the Australian Army in 2012, becoming an artilleryman and later a bombardier. He spent seven years stationed in Darwin, earning trade qualifications along the way. Throughout his life, sport remained a guiding force to Tim. It gave him structure, mentorship and a sense of belonging.

Tim has played in many of the charity matches and returns because, in his words, "As the bus from Coffs turns the corner onto Bello straight, they see the flags and they are reminded of exactly why they're here." Now, as captain of the Army Thunder, he leads by example. He is not one for grand speeches; instead, he believes in the power of action. His greatest impact is on young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, encouraging them to embrace their identity, take pride in who they are and use sport as a driver for growth and opportunity. Tim now captains the national army rugby league side. What a way to set the example.

Tim's story resonated with me because so many young people in our communities grow up without strong support systems. Without role models, they fall into cycles that are difficult to break. Tim is exceptional, just like Matt was. That is why events like these matter. They show what leadership and resilience look like. For some, it is in the memory of a fallen soldier; for others, it is in the mentorship of an experienced player or the engagement of a coach. The match is about inspiring the next generation to carry forward the values that defined Matthew Locke's life. Sport is more than just a game; it is an outlet, a means of growth and a source of resilience. Rugby league, like the military, demands teamwork, discipline and perseverance. It provides young people with structure, guidance and a sense of belonging—most of what our youth need desperately. I thank Tim for sharing his story on such an important day.

Seventeen years on, the Sgt Matthew Locke MG Memorial Rugby League Charity Match continues to grow, ensuring that Matthew's legacy is never forgotten. But beyond honouring the past, it is about investing in our future. The funds raised from Saturday's match will go towards supporting veterans in our region and providing educational opportunities for children in Timor-Leste, a cause close to Matthew's heart. An event like that does not happen without the dedication of countless volunteers, from those who marked the fields and managed the crowds to those who cooked meals, sold tickets and worked tirelessly behind the scenes, especially Debbie, Adam and Stephen. I thank everyone who played, volunteered and supported the incredible event. Their efforts ensure that Matthew's legacy lives on, inspiring future generations. Lest we forget.

## SHARK NETS

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (21:06):** Shark nets were first deployed in New South Wales in 1937. The pristine electorate of Heathcote, taking in Australia's oldest national park with a picturesque coastline that is nestled by the beautiful Illawarra Escarpment, has many stunning beaches. Beneath the waves lie some vulnerable and threatened species who are unnecessarily being caught in the shark nets. There are five shark nets in the Heathcote electorate, and they have resulted in the unintended bycatch of a significant amount of important and vital marine wildlife. According to the SharkSmart 2023-24 performance report, from September 2023 to April 2024, 65 per cent of the catches in my electorate were not sharks. Sixty-eight per cent of those animals caught in the nets were killed. They included vulnerable species such as the green turtle and endangered species such as the hawksbill turtle, leatherback turtle and grey nurse shark. Those defenceless animals are helpless and attract sharks when they are entangled in the nets.

I am thankful to be a part of a government that wants to see the end of shark nets in New South Wales. I know my constituents, and they do not want to see the unnecessary killing of wildlife because of outdated or ineffective equipment. The Minns Labor Government is committed to both protecting our special and unique wildlife and ensuring the safety of everyone in New South Wales. We have heard the concerns of the community about protecting wildlife. We are removing shark nets one month early, on 31 March 2025, to respond to increased turtle activity in April.

But the New South Wales Government understands that we need to do more to protect our marine life. That is why we are increasing the frequency of net inspections by contractors during February and March from within 72 hours to within 48 hours; conducting surf lifesaving drone surveillance over nets during March on the days contractors are not inspecting, effectively providing daily net inspections; and conducting trials of lights on nets to deter attracting turtles and preventing their entanglement.

I started this speech by saying when nets were introduced, which was in 1937. In 2025, we are trialling better and safer technology. As we map the future of this program, I will continue to listen to local communities and consider the best available evidence to ensure we are striking the right balance at our beaches. I continue to work with the Minister for Agriculture, Tara Moriarty, in the other place. She is well aware of my passion on this issue. I thank her team for their hard work, too. In closing, I wish to thank all the stakeholders, especially Humane Society International, particularly Lauren and Lawrence, for all their work with the New South Wales Government.

### WOLLONDILLY SHIRE

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (21:10):** As everybody knows, the Wollondilly electorate covers the two council areas of Wollondilly and Wingecarribee. Tonight I particularly want to talk about the Wollondilly shire. The current population of Wollondilly shire is about 60,000, and that number continues to grow every year. We are set to almost double the population to over 98,000 by 2041. As more families move into the area, they are looking for a place to live and work but, most importantly, a place to educate their children. Yet when we look at the educational infrastructure in Wollondilly, it is clear that we are falling short. Let's take a step back and consider the Greater Sydney metropolitan area, which covers around 12,500 square kilometres and is made up of 33 local government areas. Within this region 207 public high schools are providing education to thousands of students across this metropolitan area.

Now focus in on one of those 33 local government areas in that Sydney metro area—Wollondilly shire in my electorate of Wollondilly. It is an area of over 2,500 square kilometres. That means that Wollondilly shire alone makes up one-fifth of the entire area of the Greater Sydney metro. Out of those 207 public high schools, guess how many are located in Wollondilly? For those who have not heard me speak on this matter before, it may surprise them—or, indeed, astound them—to hear there is only one. Those other 206 high schools are distributed between the remaining 80 per cent of the Sydney metro land area. The Wollondilly council area gets only one, the Picton High School. The population will be heading towards 100,000 by 2041 and yet no second high school is planned. It does not seem logical, does it? How can a region the size of Wollondilly, with a growing population, have just one high school? Sadly, that is the reality we face. For decades Wollondilly has been neglected politically. It has been pushed to the bottom of the list when it comes to the delivery of essential infrastructure and services, including education. We have seen it time again, and education is no exception.

The Picton Bypass is an essential road bypass that has been promised for over 30 years, and it was only last year that the Government finally began to deliver on that promise. Education—particularly high schools—have suffered the same neglect and delay. Twenty years ago a high school was promised as part of the master planning for Wilton, a new development in Wollondilly that is set to house over 10,000 new homes. Wollondilly is undeniably delivering on the State Government's promise for housing, and is doing the heavy lifting by providing homes that help relieve the housing crisis. New suburbs like Wilton are filling up with young families, whose children will need education. Since this promise, students who were then in kindergarten are now finishing year 12, and still there is no second high school in sight. I really hope their children finally get what their parents were promised. We have primary schools in all these new areas, but when it comes to public high schools, there is silence. We have a development full of young families, but no high school in sight. Families are being forced to send their children outside the area for education, creating unnecessary travel burdens and stress.

This problem has been building for years, and it is only going to get worse as the population continues to increase. We are included in the Sydney metro area, but we are not prioritised as much as other areas due to weak representation of the past. As an independent, I am here to change that for the betterment of the residents who live in Wollondilly, or those who are choosing to move to Wollondilly and hoping to raise families there. It is time to stop letting Wollondilly be an afterthought. The State Government needs to recognise we are not just an area for housing development. We are a community that deserves the same level of educational infrastructure as any other part of Sydney. It is simply not good enough for our students to be left behind and to have to travel long distances for a high school education that should be available to them right in their own backyard. Building another high school in Wollondilly is not just a matter of convenience. It is about recognising the growing needs of the areas on the fringe of the metropolitan area that are growing, changing and crying out for infrastructure—the equal of which is delivered to our neighbouring electorates.

While the lack of a second high school is currently a major concern, if action is not taken soon the population growth will result in the issue snowballing into a public education emergency. We cannot keep up with the housing demand without investing in our schools and the future of the next generation.

#### MEMBER FOR KELLYVILLE COMMENTS

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (21:15):** Tonight I address allegations made by the member for Kellyville during the Legislative Council's inquiry into the integrity, efficacy, and value for money of the Local Small Commitments Allocation process about my nomination for the Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre to receive a \$50,000 grant for a resilience bus in the lead-up to the 2023 election. Those allegations were made not because of concerns about integrity but merely to tarnish my reputation. Mr Williams's testimony contained misleading claims and outright falsehoods. His outrageous claims have harmed the reputation of a vital social support agency serving Sydney's north-west and abused the parliamentary privilege afforded to members of this Parliament. His testimony contained the demonstrably false claim that my trusted friend Sue Lawrence, whom I appointed as my CEO after the election, is head of Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre, which is now known as North West Community Services. He further alleged that during a meeting with the neighbourhood centre's CEO, Angela Van Dyke, and Ms Lawrence in her capacity as President of the North West Business Chamber, a request was made for \$50,000 in grant funding.

Ms Lawrence is not now, nor has she ever been, in Mr Williams's words the "head of that charity". Founded in 1977, North West Community Services receives Federal and State funding to deliver social support programs and must meet the highest governance standards to remain eligible. As CEO, Angela Van Dyke is the sole leader of the organisation. Despite Mr Williams's disgraceful and offensive slurs against them, the neighbourhood centre and the business chamber are strong advocates for the region, regularly collaborating to deliver positive community outcomes. I served as vice-president of both organisations on a volunteer basis until 2022, stepping down at their respective annual general meetings before my nomination as the candidate for Riverstone in the lead-up to the 2023 State election. My friendship with Ms Lawrence was forged through our shared commitment as president and vice-president of the business chamber.

A key example of collaboration between the neighbourhood centre and the business chamber occurred during the March 2022 floods. What began as efforts to hose out homes quickly evolved into a "flood shop", providing affected families with furniture and essential household items, along with guidance on available support to aid their recovery. Since the neighbourhood centre does not receive funding for emergency relief, the recovery efforts were entirely supported by local businesses and community donations. Later that year, the business chamber and the neighbourhood centre began advocating for State Government funding through the Department of Communities and Justice Targeted Earlier Intervention program, reaching out to local MPs in flood-affected areas, including the member for Kellyville. Following the meeting at the centre of Mr Williams's allegations, Ms Van Dyke wrote in a letter to him:

I write to request support for Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre

In summary:

A: Review our current DCJ TEI contract to include specialist/intensive support.

B: Provide additional funds to enable service delivery for the growing population of our North West Growth Area, including the suburbs in the North West of the Hills LGA.

There was no mention of a \$50,000 grant. This request was followed up by Mr. Williams and, in correspondence back to Ms Van Dyke from then Minister for Families and Communities, the Minister wrote:

Thank you for your letter of December 6, 2022 about additional funding for Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre. Unfortunately, no additional funding for the Targeted Earlier Intervention Program is available; should funding become available, an expression of interest from suitable services will be sought and a procurement process followed.

There is not a shred of evidence to support the allegation that Ms Lawrence requested \$50,000 and at least two letters directly refute this claim. The allegations made by the member for Kellyville are false and unfounded. As a sitting member of this Chamber, shielded by parliamentary privilege, he publicly distorted a private meeting with community advocates who were merely advocating for their community. To make matters worse, Mr Williams is so singularly focused on smearing my reputation that he was unable in his recent inquiry appearance to name a single project in his electorate. Mr Williams's misrepresentations of Ms Lawrence's role, and of the private meeting he held with her, show that the member for Kellyville has as much contempt for this Parliament as he does for the people he supposedly represents.

They are good and decent people who are merely advocating for their community. What right does the member for Kellyville have to defame them under the guise of parliamentary privilege?

The member for Kellyville also claims that I failed to declare a conflict of interest regarding the grant. That is yet another false allegation. The member for Kellyville further sought to damage my reputation with a motion questioning why I had not accepted an invitation to testify at the Legislative Council inquiry. The answer is simple: Why would I do so when the claims that form the foundation of the request have been proven to be false? I add that the member for Kellyville misled the committee when he said that he had not been contacted by anyone about the program. The Premier's Department documents showed that of course he had been, because all MPs were. Again, the member for Kellyville abused parliamentary privilege to insinuate misconduct. There is no doubt that an MP has engaged in behaviour lacking integrity, but it was not my behaviour; it was the shameful actions of the member for Kellyville. I call on the Government, the Clerk, the Speaker and the President to investigate the reprehensible and craven abuse of parliamentary privilege by the member for Kellyville.

### NEWTOWN ELECTORATE

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (21:20):** This week marks 10 years since the 2015 election that saw The Greens win the newly created electorate of Newtown. The Newtown electorate had previously existed many years earlier. The last local member for Newtown was Lillian Fowler, who served from 1944 through to 1950 when the electorate was then abolished. Between Newtown and Erskineville, in the heart of our electorate, there is a park named after Lillian Fowler. Indeed, it was in that park that we kicked off our "Greens for Newtown" campaign over a decade ago. At my core, politically and personally, I never would have seen myself in this Chamber as a politician. But having been given the opportunity by our community, I speak about our focus over the past decade.

From the very beginning our focus has always been to mobilise collective power for progressive social change: to bring people together, to create stronger communities, to contribute to collective action, to inspire a sense of hope, to insert a bit of optimism, to expect a bit more, to demand better, and indeed to try to change the world. While we certainly have not always won, we have always put in our all. I am also pleased to say we have not sold out, left people behind or given up. It started with resourcing, supporting, empowering and organising with residents impacted by WestConnex. It expanded to connect locals, musos, creatives, hospo venues, activists, councils, State agencies and others to co-host the Newtown Vibe Roundtables to stop the expansion of the lockouts into Newtown.

On both WestConnex and Keep Sydney Open we tabled 10,000-strong hand-signed petitions to trigger debates in this Chamber. They were not the only petitions we brought to the Chamber. Over the past decade, as the member for Newtown, I have also proudly sponsored petitions that were signed by tens of thousands of people, including one on holistic sex education started by Chanel Contos in October 2021, a petition to support international student travel concessions and just last week a petition demanding fair pay and conditions for nurses and midwives. I estimate that is about 80,000 signatures. It has been a pleasure to bring the voices and views of tens of thousands of people into this Chamber. Our democracy is stronger when people are connected and engaged and when people are able to exercise their rights to protest, freedom of expression and assembly.

While I have certainly contributed inside the Chamber over the past decade, having made many speeches, moved countless amendments, introduced private member's bills and participated in the passage of significant reforms including an apology to the 78ers, affirmative consent law reform and the decriminalisation of abortion in New South Wales, I have also spent quite a lot of time outside the Chamber. Unfortunately, there is no official record or *Hansard* equivalent for the words spoken into megaphones and microphones on Macquarie Street or out the back in The Domain, but I think it is probably safe to say that I have spoken at more rallies over the past decade than any other member in this place.

I see that as a critical part of my role as the member for Newtown: to make sure that the people gathered outside rallying for action—to protect our environment, improve our public services, pay workers more, repeal draconian laws, protect reproductive rights, protect tenants' rights, protect trans rights, demand First Nations justice, deliver housing justice, and get successive governments are held to account—are heard in this place. Sometimes I or The Greens are the lone voice of opposition, but I never feel lonely because I know that I am making a stand supported by the movements of people gathered on the streets. The day-to-day priorities in our electorate office include listening to people's concerns, treating them with respect when they often have not received it from others, and advocating for their situation whether it is a new kitchen, a fixed sewerage pipe, a transfer to different public housing or an improved pedestrian crossing. One of our team noted the other day that we love practical solidarity, and that is true.

Whether it is dropping trestle tables and buying gelato for activists protesting for a free Palestine, ordering an Uber for a First Nations Elder who was struggling to walk home with his guitar, purchasing and distributing shopping vouchers and sometimes packets of smokes to locals during COVID, paying for flyers and posters for activists and community, we like to perform acts of practical solidarity for our community. In the current state of the world, with ever-growing inequality, a climate emergency and a genocide being streamed to the world in real

time, there is so much to dread. With the growing rather than closing gap in our State, we must not let ourselves feel overwhelmed. We must be surrounded by our local community, activists, students, Elders and volunteers. I offer my immense thanks to the people of Newtown who have given me this opportunity over the past decade.

### LEPPINGTON ELECTORATE FIRE SERVICES

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (21:25):** As we have just seen with Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred, Australia's professional and volunteer emergency services personnel are the backbone of the nation's disaster response efforts. From bushfires and floods to cyclones, Fire and Rescue, the RFS, SES, paramedics, police and defence personnel work side by side in times of crisis to protect lives, homes and communities. Those brave men and women demonstrate extraordinary dedication and resilience in times of crisis. Volunteers leave their homes and families at a moment's notice to help those in need, working alongside professionals who put themselves in harm's way each and every day. That cooperation must continue beyond times of crisis. I have spoken in this House many times about the lack of services and infrastructure in my electorate.

In just two years, this Government has made significant progress in addressing 12 years of neglect under the previous Liberal-Nationals Government, and I am immensely proud of that work. Much has been achieved but there is still more to do. In under a decade, parts of my electorate have transformed from what were peri-urban market gardens into densely populated residential areas. Under current arrangements, fire services for rapidly growing suburbs like Austral remain the responsibility of the Rural Fire Service. On the ground, both the RFS and Fire and Rescue work together effectively. Every week, there are countless examples of this cooperation saving lives and protecting property. At a leadership level, Fire and Rescue NSW and the RFS negotiate their responsibilities based on legislation, mutual agreements and operational guidelines, with Fire and Rescue covering urban areas and the RFS responsible for rural and peri-urban zones.

While both agencies have worked hard to improve coordination and clarify their responsibilities, Sydney's rapid growth has created challenges. A prime example is the Western Sydney International Airport, where landside fire services currently fall under the RFS. I commend the Minister for last year's budget announcement of a Fire and Rescue NSW station at Badgerys Creek, and I am confident those negotiations will be addressed very shortly. In my own community, recent house fires have highlighted the challenges with the current system. While Fire and Rescue NSW crews arrived quickly, nearby RFS stations faced delays due to crew availability. Those incidents underscore the need for a response model that reflects the realities of a growing city. The victims of those fires have lost irreplaceable possessions and will carry the trauma for years to come. But they, like I, are forever grateful of the extraordinary dedication of the men and women of Fire and Rescue and the RFS.

No-one in this Chamber doubts that the men and women of our fire services are heroes. Every day, they put on their uniforms and run toward danger so the rest of us can stay safe. Their courage and sacrifice do not go unnoticed, and we are forever grateful. There will always be a place for the RFS in New South Wales. As long as parts of my electorate remain peri-urban and farmland, their presence will be essential in protecting my community. The RFS is an incredible organisation that does outstanding work, and they will always have my very strong support. As a councillor, I moved for Liverpool City Council to honour their vital role in the Black Summer bushfires. In this place, I continue to recognise their incredible work. Fire and Rescue is the fourth-largest urban fire and rescue service in the world and is a critical pillar of emergency management in New South Wales. But, like so many public sector workers, Fire and Rescue staff were subjected to cuts and a wages cap under the previous Government.

I welcome this Government's ongoing work to address that neglect and ensure Fire and Rescue continues to take on the roles that the RFS cannot, such as specialist urban firefighting and hazardous materials response.

After a decade of underinvestment by those opposite, the 2024-25 budget includes \$204.1 million for Fire and Rescue NSW. That will ensure the positions of 286 existing firefighters whose roles did not previously have ongoing funding, including those at the Oran Park Fire Station. That funding is in addition to the Government's commitment to recruit 600 additional firefighters over eight years. Make no mistake, this is not a call for a Dan Andrews-style overhaul of fire services in this State. It is a heartfelt plea on behalf of my community for two organisations we deeply respect, support and rely on. They must come to the table and resolve the negotiations sooner rather than later.

### DAVIDSON ELECTORATE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (21:30):** As I said in my inaugural speech to this House, I hold dear the values of faith, compassion, liberalism, community mindedness and friendship. Tonight I speak about the importance of community-mindedness. I strongly believe power comes from the community up and not from the top down. The local community should be able to have input into decisions that affect them most, and not outsourced and centralised decision-making that lacks local input. Since the election of the New South Wales



Labor Government, we have seen a decline of community-mindedness, which has impacted the electorate of Davidson.

Firstly, in planning, transport oriented development and low- to mid-rise housing are snap rezonings with little to no community consultation. I note that Ku-ring-gai Council has released its housing plan. While I welcome protections for local heritage conservation areas, I am concerned about 28-storey buildings. I call on the community to have their say when Ku-ring-gai Council opens its plans for public exhibition. We need more housing, but we need to put the "plan" back into "planning", and infrastructure investment is required. That leads me to my second point, which is about investment in local education infrastructure. I am pleased that two major projects are currently taking place. The first is the new St Ives indoor sports centre that commenced under the previous Liberal Government. The second is the upgraded hall and toilets for Davidson High School, which is currently underway after the P&C highlighted concerns with me, which were later broadcast on Channel 9 news.

The Department of Education lacked community-mindedness when it conducted little to no consultation on local enrolment areas impacting Killara High School. There should be a local joint enrolment area for Killara High School and Lindfield Learning Village given the schools have different education models. More school infrastructure is required for Killara High School to increase student intake. The Department of Education must adopt more community consultation frameworks in Davidson and across New South Wales. The third point relates to the Northern Beaches Council rate rise, which lacks community-mindedness. As I wrote to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, it needs to reject the 40 per cent rate rise proposed by the Teal-affiliated independent council. Local consultation saw only 11 per cent support for a 40 per cent rate rise, with 51 per cent supporting the rate peg rate. I again call on Northern Beaches Council to take control of its budget, find budget savings, live within its means and adopt community-mindedness.

I end on a positive note regarding strengthening penalties for illegal tree removals. In Ku-ring-gai there has been an 8 per cent decrease in the tree canopy between 2019 and 2022, from 52 per cent to 44 per cent. In the northern beaches, there was a 5 per cent decrease between 2019 and 2022, from 39 per cent to 34 per cent. Those are worrying statistics. I welcome that, after my advocacy to the Minister, the planning department is undertaking a review into strengthening illegal tree removal policies and regulatory frameworks. I look forward to a future public exhibition for public comment. Strengthening and protecting our tree canopy is not just environmental mindedness; it is community-mindedness. Our tree canopy is part of the character of our community.

As we pass the halfway mark of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament, there is much work ahead. I thank my local community for having the confidence in me to serve them. I will stay true to my values, which include embracing, promoting and acting with community mindedness. I also update the House on a personal matter. My wife and I are expecting a little baby boy in the coming weeks. I look forward to meeting and holding him. The work I do in this place is for the betterment of him and his generation.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** I congratulate the member for Davidson.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 21:35 until  
Thursday 27 March 2025 at 10:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

**GREG O'ROURKE**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Greg O'Rourke on being appointed president of Sutherland Sharks Football Club. Greg has a deep and lifelong connection to football in the Shire, having played in the junior and senior ranks with several local clubs, coached men's and women's teams and contributed to the game as a referee and volunteer. Greg brings a wealth of football administration experience having served as president of the Sutherland Shire Football Association and later chairman of Football NSW. As a professional football administrator, Greg held the role as Head of the A-Leagues with Football Australia and later finished his time as Commissioner of the Australian Professional Leagues. The Sharks will also benefit from Greg's two decades of senior executive leadership, including roles on PepsiCo's executive leadership team and currently as Chief Operations Officer of Snackbrands Australia. Football NSW CEO John Tsatsimas said: "Greg's passion for the Sutherland area and its football community is long standing and his appointment here is just another example of his commitment to the area and the sport in general". Sharks FC says Greg is perfectly positioned to lead the nearly 100-year-old club into its exciting next chapter and I wish him and the club success.

**ELSIE SMITH**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate St Aloysius Catholic College Cronulla student Elsie Smith for her success in the annual Sydney Catholic Schools 2025 Portrait Prize Competition. The competition provides a professional platform to celebrate exemplary visual arts students and it serves as a benchmark of excellence for younger emerging talent among school students. The theme is a portrait of a person who is unique to the entrant, who is known to the entrant and who plays a significant role in their life. Elsie won the 16-18 years prize for a portrait of her grandfather. She chose to depict her Pa because his face tells a story and by capturing his features she hopes to honour his influence in her life and convey the depth of his character to others. This year presented a difficult task for the judges, with a record 403 artworks submitted from 43 schools. Sydney Catholic Schools said it was an outstanding achievement for the winners who were chosen from amongst an extraordinary high calibre of submissions. I send Elsie my good wishes as her and other category winners have their work entered into the Young Archie Competition at the Art Gallery of NSW.

**STEVE WILLETT**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I recognise the volunteer service of Caringbah's Steve Willett who was a finalist in the 2025 Cronulla Seniors Awards. Steve was nominated by Lilli Pilli Football Club for his outstanding and dedicated efforts for the club over the past 25 years. He has played a crucial role in the club's success, serving on the executive committee in several key positions, including registrar, treasurer, and secretary. His commitment as long-term treasurer was instrumental in guiding the club's financials through a significant period in the club's history to help ensure its continued growth and stability. Steve has also represented the club as a participant in the Cancer Council 'ShitBox' rally over the past two years, raising valuable funds for cancer research. Steve's leadership has been invaluable to the Lilli Pilli Football Club and he is a highly valued volunteer. I congratulate Steve on his well-deserved recognition as a senior member of our community who is making a difference.

**HANNAH ORR**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise Hannah Orr. Hannah is thirteen years old and has demonstrated an impressive and dedicated determination to serve her community. Hannah was recently nominated and announced winner of the 2025 Australia Day Award, Youth Citizen of the Year in Goulburn Mulwaree. Hannah has been recognised for her active participation on the Goulburn Mulwaree Youth Council, speaking at the Southern Tablelands Women's Breakfast and attended the NSW Youth Conference. Hannah has actively displayed her advocacy skills successfully advocating for a pedestrian crossing at her school to improve safety for the school community, whilst also a member on the Mulwaree High School Social Justice Committee. Her talents also extend to playing the bagpipes in the Goulburn Pipes and Drums, competing in Goulburn Physical Culture Dance. Hannah has also undertaken active roles in the annual Lilac Festival and community bike ride. I congratulate Hannah on her award and acknowledge her community spirit and achievements and wish her continuing success in her future endeavours.

**ISLA STEPHENSON**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise Isla Stephenson. Isla was recently nominated for the 2025 Australia Day Award, Young Citizen of the Year in the Upper Lachlan Shire. Isla has been recognised for her leadership roles at Crookwell High School. Isla has taken on the roles of School Captain, Sport Leader, Peer Support Leader, and Student Representative Council member. She has demonstrated outstanding attributes as a role model for her peers and the rest of the school and broader community. Isla is seen as a very capable and versatile young woman, participating in music, sport, academia, whilst also demonstrating authentic consideration and care of others. I congratulate Isla on her well-earned nomination and recognise her significant contribution as a role model for her peers and the leadership roles that she undertakes within her school and broader community.

**CROOKWELL MEALS ON WHEELS**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise the incredible work of Crookwell Meals on Wheels. On February 19, Crookwell Meals on Wheels celebrated its 50th anniversary, marking half a century since delivering its first meal in 1974. Meals on Wheels began in 1953 in Melbourne, with just one person committed to delivering meals to the elderly. From that simple act of kindness, the service has grown into a vital support system for many communities across Australia. Beyond providing nutritious meals, Meals on Wheels fosters community connection. It brings together selfless volunteers who are dedicated to supporting those in need, ensuring no one in their community feels forgotten. The dedication of Crookwell Meals on Wheels' coordinators and volunteers is evident not only in the longevity of their service but also in the heartfelt gratitude of those they assist. I extend my sincere congratulations to Jodie Charnock, Coordinator, and all the volunteers for their

outstanding commitment to the community. Their work is a testament to the power of generosity, compassion, and community spirit.

### LOCAL PHARMACISTS

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the enormous contributions of our local pharmacists during the recent Thank Your Pharmacist Week. Kiama's local pharmacists are more than simply healthcare providers. It is important to highlight the critical role that our local pharmacists play and to understand how supporting pharmacists means better healthcare access. Many now administer flu and COVID-19 vaccinations, as well as travel immunisations, and provide medication for urgent conditions, ensuring patients receive treatment. Chris Mills from Kiama Destination Pharmacy in the Woolworths Shopping Complex, Siab Mohamed from Blooms Chemist in Terralong Street, and Megan Kelly from Kiama Pharmacy in Manning Street all recognise the importance of accessible healthcare. Kiama Pharmacy collaborates with the Lions Club charity stamp collection program, the Christmas Cake drive, and the ever-popular Apple Drive, where fresh apples sourced directly from farms are sold in local businesses to raise funds for community programs. Pharmacies in Kiama also provide collection points for various recycling and charity programs. Blooms Chemist and Kiama Pharmacy have taken the initiative to privately fund a needle disposal program. A huge 'Thank you' to all of our local pharmacists.

### ZONTA CLUB OF KIAMA-SHELLHARBOUR

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Zonta Club of Kiama-Shellharbour. On Saturday 8th March 2025, I was delighted to join with the ladies at the Zonta Club of Kiama-Shellharbour for a very memorable International Women's Day High Tea event at the Kiama Leagues Club. This special event not only celebrated women's achievements globally but also marked the official chartering of Zonta Kiama-Shellharbour – a new force for women's advocacy in the region. Held on the eve of IWD, the High Tea drew a diverse crowd, including MP for Gilmore Fiona Phillips, Kiama Council's Deputy Mayor Melissa Matters, Councillor Melinda Lawton, and various Zonta dignitaries. Guests enjoyed an elegant afternoon celebrating women's progress and empowerment across our region. Founded by Knicker Boxer's Rita Sullivan with 21 charter members, Zonta Kiama-Shellharbour has rapidly grown into a dynamic organisation. I also acknowledge the President Meredith Bryce. The event embraced the 2025 IWD theme, "Accelerate Action," urging meaningful steps toward gender equity. This aligns with Zonta International's century-long mission of advocating for women's rights, education, and safety. Zonta Kiama-Shellharbour is tackling domestic violence, child marriage and education. I acknowledge everybody in attendance.

### SHINE WOMEN

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Shine Women and the Kiama Anglican Church community. The Supporting Our Young People seminar, hosted by the Shine Women's team, was held on 6th March 2025 at the Kiama Anglican Church Hall, drawing an audience of over 50 women. Attendees were parents of neurodivergent teenagers facing challenges, eager to gain insight into supporting them. Guest speakers included Katherine Gorrie, a Tasmanian speech pathologist specialising in neurodivergence, and Grace Stone, a wellness educator from Sydney. Both experts shared their knowledge and engaged in discussions. A highlight of the seminar was the candid contribution of a local mother and her teenage daughter, who spoke about the complexities of social media and other pressures affecting today's youth. This event marked the 12th seminar hosted by Shine Women, which is now preparing for its next programs. An eight-week course will commence in May on Friday mornings, followed by a four-week evening course in August. If you are a woman and want to find your confidence and improve your relationships, this eight-week course is perfect for you. For more information on upcoming sessions, contact Shine Women.

### WINZERO - WINGECARRIBEE NET ZERO CARBON EMISSIONS

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I speak to recognise - Wingecarribee Net Zero Carbon Emissions on their recent AgriCulture and Regenerative Economy event, discussing innovation and industry-led solutions for emissions reduction. It's inspiring to see experimental projects and pilot programs shaping the future right here in the Southern Highlands. The event brought together landholders, farmers, renewable energy advocates, business leaders, and expert speakers to explore exciting initiatives like the Virtual Power Network Pilot, AgriSolar CRC, with Dr Liz Smith, and a Geothermal Energy Assessment around Mt Gibraltar by Wollongong University Professors and researchers. Thought-provoking questions and insightful discussions made for a highly engaging night. The conversations – and the hard work – will continue! Thank you for inviting me to briefly share some insights about energy in NSW from a recent trip with a NSW Parliament Committee. It was wonderful to catch up with all of you.

### CAMP QUALITY HIGHLANDS CRUISE

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—The inaugural Camp Quality Highlands Cruise occurred on March 15th and was an amazing fundraising event. Highlands Cruise is open to classic vehicles, luxury exotic cars, company-branded cars, members of car clubs, unique vehicles and motorbike lovers. Cars & Coffee Southern Highlands and Picton Cars and Coffee Group joined together to raise money for Camp Quality, with all funds going to this amazing cause that helps bring positivity and laughter back into the lives of children impacted by cancer. The event started in Picton and saw a fleet of cars travel to Berrima and then on to Robertson, where drivers took the opportunity to stop, stretch their legs and grab a coffee and a bite to eat. The day included great live entertainment and a chance to connect over a love of cars - all for a good cause. Camp Quality helps over 60 families in the area who are on a cancer journey, and the contributions raised from the event directly benefit them. Thank you to all involved and I look forward to seeing the total amount raised from this great event.

### WOLLONDILLY WOMAN OF THE YEAR PANIA GREGSON

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Pania Gregson is a well known, highly respected community leader with over 30 years of experience in various areas of business, community networks and groups. As the current President of the Wollondilly Business Chamber Inc, Pania has led the 2024 successful expansion of the Chamber to better represent the entire region of Wollondilly. Her leadership, dedication, and passion for making a positive impact have contributed significantly to the betterment of our community. In addition to her Chamber role, Pania is a conscientious and successful business mentor, supporting entrepreneurs and small business owners throughout Macarthur, Narellan, and Wollondilly. Her tireless dedication to fostering the prosperity of others makes her an extraordinary community leader. A true advocate for women in business, Pania is an active member of the wonderful Wollondilly Women In Business Network. She offers her time and expertise, contributing her knowledge and experience to genuinely empower other women. Her tireless commitment to the community over decades makes her an outstanding candidate for the NSW Local Women of the Year for Wollondilly. A heartfelt thank you and congratulations to Pania!

### CRAIG HARVEY AND JAMAHL ZEGZULA

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I would like to congratulate Craig Harvey and Jamahl Zegzula on being appointed Life Members of the Orange Basketball Association. The pair started their basketball journeys with the OBA as juniors, Craig taking the court as a four-year-old while Jamahl was a 14-year-old when he joined. Since then the pair has dedicated a huge amount of time to developing the sport in Orange, first through playing the game and then through coaching and administration. The pair join eight previous life members of the OBA, which has a long history among Orange's most established sporting codes. Volunteers are the keepers of amateur sport in rural NSW. Their selfless donation of time, expertise and labour ensure the sustainability of sport, including the development of junior players and officials. Simply, without their input, codes would fail to survive. People like Craig and Jamahl, through their own love of the game, ensure kids stay active, make friends and develop team skills. I again congratulate Craig and Jamahl on their achievement and thank them for their continued input into a wonderful sport for kids and adults alike.

### HELEN CORBY

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I would like to shine a light on the amazing work of another one of Orange's fantastic volunteers, CanAssist's Helen Corby. Helen has been at the head of Orange's CanAssist branch since 2020 but before taking the presidency, put in many hours as treasurer and as a committee member. CanAssist is very much a grass roots organisation with local people working to support their neighbours – especially here in Orange. Its approach to raising money is consistent with that grass-roots ethos, ensuring those that need a financial boost at one of the most stressful times in their lives, receive it. One of Helen's achievements was securing a sponsorship deal with greenslips.com.au to help families pay for their greenslip – a critical piece of paper considering rural residents need their cars to make medical appointments but can sometimes not afford it. Prior to her work with CanAssist, Helen led Orange's Australia Day Committee until stepping down in 2016. She has also been a president of Orange Evening View Club and Duntryleague Ladies Golf Club. I thank Helen for her dedication to CanAssist and the work it does assisting people at their time of need.

### DENISE MILLS AND CERI CAMERON

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I would like to commend Ceri Cameron and Denise Mills of Orange on the creation of Dementia Lens: Orange, an initiative that is helping to raise awareness about dementia care and support. Ceri and Denise run this project on a volunteer basis, dedicating their time and energy to providing vital information about support networks and resources for those affected by dementia in the local community. Using her own experience after a family member was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease, Denise joined forces with Ceri, who also has experiences in the field, to put her growing knowledge to good use. Their

efforts have made a significant impact, helping families and individuals access the information they need in a time of great uncertainty and anxiety. Through Dementia Lens: Orange, Ceri and Denise offer invaluable guidance to those navigating the challenges of dementia, ensuring that no one in the community feels alone or unsupported. I commend and thank Ceri and Denise for the incredible work they are doing, and I wish them all the best in continuing to make a difference in the lives of those affected by dementia.

#### **CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS - HAGOP ZARMENIAN**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Hagop Zarmenian on his nomination for the Ryde Citizen of the Year. Hagop's contributions to our community have been both multifaceted and deeply impactful. As a leader in the Armenian Youth Federation, he has championed awareness for critical issues such as mental health and climate change. Through his role in the Armenian Film Festival, Hagop has brought cultural storytelling to new audiences, fostering a greater appreciation of heritage and identity. His dedication to civic engagement is equally commendable, as he has volunteered tirelessly during elections to encourage participation in our democratic process. Beyond these efforts, Hagop's presence in sports, cultural advocacy, and community events has helped to unite people across Ryde's diverse landscape. His passion and commitment exemplify the very spirit of community service. Hagop should take great pride in his nomination, which reflects the high regard in which he is held by those around him. I thank him for his contributions and look forward to seeing his continued positive influence in Ryde. Congratulations, Hagop!

#### **CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS - KATHRYN FERGUSON**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Kathryn Ferguson on her nomination for Ryde Citizen of the Year. Kathryn's dedication to fostering creativity and strengthening community ties has left a lasting mark on Ryde. Through her music school, Katcha Music, she has inspired countless students through teaching and creating opportunities to showcase their talents. Events like the BACK 2 BACK showcase, which she organised to raise funds for children's cancer research, exemplify her commitment to using music as a force for good. Beyond her school, Kathryn has generously given her time, mentoring young artists and volunteering at local events to cultivate spaces for joy and connection. Her more than 20 years of impact on Ryde's cultural and social life stand as a testament to her passion, talent, and kindness. Being nominated for Ryde Citizen of the Year is a well-earned recognition of Kathryn's service to our community. I thank her for all she has done and have no doubt she will continue to inspire and uplift those around her.

#### **CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS - LINDA HAM**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Linda Ham on being named the Ryde Sportsperson of the Year. Linda has transformed fitness and community engagement in our electorate, leading with passion and innovation as the manager of Teambros Fitness Club. Her dedication to inclusivity and well-being has not only inspired those around her but has also been recognised at a national level. A former teacher, Linda has championed sports programs that empower students of all abilities, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate and thrive. Beyond the gym, she has made an extraordinary impact on our community through initiatives such as Clean Up Australia Day and the Biggest Morning Tea—blending health and fitness with a strong sense of civic duty. Linda's commitment to fostering connection and well-being through sport is a testament to the power of grassroots leadership. Her influence has transformed lives, uniting people through shared goals and a sense of purpose. Because of her efforts, Ryde is undoubtedly a stronger, healthier, and more connected community. Congratulations once again, Linda!

#### **CASTLE HILL HORSE SHOW, 2025**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I would like to recognise the great work of the Castle Hill and District Agricultural Society. This year the annual horse section of the show was held on Sunday, 23 March 2025 at the historic Castle Hill Showground. The Castle Hill Show was originally developed in the 1880s from the Castle Hill sports show day which, by 1886, included agricultural displays and ploughing contests. The horse section of the show provides the opportunity for riders and their horses to qualify to compete at the Sydney Royal Show. This year approximately 120 competitors were competing to qualify for Sydney Royal, 2026. I particularly thank Leanne Boyce for organising another successful Castle Hill Show, Horse Section, competition. The local community is very fortunate to be able to enjoy the Castle Hill Show, to enjoy wonderful competitions, though the dedication of the Castle Hill and District Agricultural Society. Thank you for your service to our community.

#### **ALIVE 90.5 HARMONY DAY, 22 MARCH 2025**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I recognise the wonderful team at Cumberland Community Radio, otherwise known as Alive 90.5. On Saturday, 22 March 2025 with the Federal Member for Mitchell, Alex Hawke MP, the State Member for Epping, Monica Tudehope MP, the Mayor of the Hills Shire Michelle Byrne, and Councillors I attended the Alive 90.5 Harmony Day event held at Stamford Hall, Balcombe Heights in my

electorate. There were many members of the Alive 90.5 radio team enjoying the cultural activities and the delicious cultural delights prepared by the Alive 90.5 team. Ji Pittman, who is the trailblazing host of Alive 90.5's groundbreaking indigenous program 'its Now Time Australia' entertained those attendance with indigenous dancing. The highlight was when at Ji's request the Mayor was asked to dance as an Emu and I was asked to dance as a Kangaroo. As we attend Harmony Day events, such as those hosted by Alive 90.5, we reflect on the importance of embracing diversity and fostering mutual respect and understanding. I acknowledge and commend the Chairman of Cumberland Community Radio, Ansley Dennis as well as the entire board for contributing to the wellbeing of our community through community radio.

#### **COUNCIL OF INDIANS AUSTRALIANS, HOLI, 15 MARCH 2025**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I wisht to inform the house that Castle Hill again hosted another magnificent Holi at the much-loved Castle Hill Showground. This year on 15 March 2025 the Council of Indians Australians again presented the much-loved and important Indian Festival, Holi, at the Showground. I acknowledge the attendance of the Indian Consul General, Dr. S. Janakiraman who attended the festival. I also acknowledge the attendance of the Federal Member for Berowra Julian Leaser, State Members of Parliament and Councillors who also attended. Holi is one of the most attended cultural highlights of each year. The Showground was filled with colours, and it was clear community enjoyed the cultural delights, dancing, and music. Holi is celebrated annually in the month of March and is considered the second biggest festival of our nation after Diwali. I recognise and thank Shail Wadwa, President, and the entire CIA for presenting another a vibrant festival.

#### **JAN WALLACE**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge Jan Wallace, a well-deserving recipient of the 2025 Australia Day Citizen of the Year award. Since relocating to Old Bar in 2018, Jan has been an asset to the community, consistently offering her time and energy to support others. Jan's contributions include organising fundraising efforts for farmers in Trundle during the drought, providing aid during bushfires, and offering support to those affected by the floods in Lismore. She also creates charity baskets for families during Christmas and has assisted with fundraising for a group traveling to Cambodia. Jan introduced the Rookie Rollers at Club Old Bar. This program, designed to teach young people how to play bowls, has seen great success, with up to 40 participants enjoying the sessions. Jan is a generous, community-minded individual who consistently thinks of others and takes action to make a difference. I commend her for her ongoing efforts to improve the lives of those around her.

#### **KAY GOON**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge the outstanding contributions of Kay Goon, who has been named a joint recipient of the 2025 Australia Day Citizen of the Year award for Taree. Kay has played a significant role in our community through her work with various organisations. She has been a volunteer with Riding for the Disabled, Can Assist, the Manning Education Centre, Taree Lions, and the Manning Regional Art Gallery. She has also supported the Rainbow Warriors, bringing the group together. In addition to these contributions, Kay saw an opportunity to promote Can Assist during the Mother's Day Classic and has offered her time and support at the MEC for years, helping to ensure events run smoothly. Kay is always willing to step up and offer her support whenever there is a need. It is a privilege to recognise her, and I congratulate her on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **MANY RIVERS SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge Many Rivers Support Services, a new NDIS provider in the Manning Valley, which opened its doors last year. Located in Pulteney Street, Taree, this organisation takes a client-driven approach, ensuring services and spaces reflect the needs of those they support. Among their initiatives is a weekly anime and Japanese culture group, where participants engage in discussions, cultural activities, and future plans for murals in the office. Many Rivers Support Services also provides home care through a brokerage model and is currently expanding its team of support workers and registered nurses. I welcome this new provider to the Manning Valley and commend their focus on creating a service shaped by the people who use it.

#### **ROTARY GOLF DAY HELPS NARRANDERA COMMUNITY**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—The Narrandera Golf Course recently hosted over 20 groups who attended the Rotary Club of Narrandera's Golf Day. Special mention must go to Jason Haines and Craig Hartin who took on the organising of the day with the help of John Foster in charge of sponsors and merchandise and Robert Norrie was the chief co-ordinator on the day. The day was an outstanding success and started with a performance from the Clontarf Group who then joined the golfers in the Ambrose competition. Club members all helped with the many and varied tasks on the day and thanks must go to past member Jason Hopwood who manned

the drinks cart. Major Sponsors, Iberdrola Australia and Bendigo Bank helped make the day special as did Mark Robertson, Gary Hoshin and Tammy Weymouth from the Golf Club. An enormous \$22,000 was raised for Lill Mill's Youth Projects, Ronald McDonald House, Wagga and Narrandera Can Assist. Lill Mill's focus for this year is to provide Driver Education Training, TAFE Sponsorships and assisting with Local High School Projects. Well done to all on a great community event.

#### **GRENFELL GOANNAS POKER RUN**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—A heartfelt thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Grenfell Goanna's Poker Run. Now in its 11th year, this wonderful community event continues to raise valuable funds for our small country town. This year, all proceeds will support the Grenfell Rugby League Club. Held on February 28, 2025, the Poker Run attracted over 220 riders from across NSW, and even some from other states. Participants set off from the Grenfell Bowling Club, enjoying a scenic ride through the towns of Eugowra and Gooloogong. Thanks to the incredible support from riders and the community, the event raised thousands of dollars for the Grenfell Rugby League Club, reinforcing the strong bond between the event and the organisation. The influx of motorcyclists brought vibrant energy to the region, benefiting local businesses and residents who saw increased tourism and patronage. The Poker Run has become a key annual event, strengthening community spirit and supporting local sports initiatives. Congratulations to everyone involved, and we're already looking forward to next year!

#### **TEMORA YOUTH TAKING THE LEAD**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Congratulations to the four outstanding graduates of the 2025 Take the Lead Temora Youth Leadership Program, Bailey Lowes, Amelia Murphy, Lillian Oliver, and Jesiah Soliman. The Take the Lead program, launched in 2022, continues to inspire and empower 16-to-24-year-olds in Temora Shire by fostering leadership, social responsibility, communication skills, and teamwork. This year's graduates have shown remarkable growth through their dedication to developing these skills and making a positive impact on their community. The program's success is driven by local mentors who guide and inspire participants to reflect on their potential and take active roles in community development. The evening was made even more special by guest speaker Daniel Bartholomaeus, the 2025 ACT Young Australian of the Year, who shared his journey of overcoming challenges and embracing his abilities. His message of resilience and self-belief resonated deeply with the graduates and attendees, highlighting the importance of mentorship and community support. The Take the Lead program continues to shape the future of Temora's youth, and these graduates represent the bright potential and leadership that will carry the community forward. Congratulations once again to Bailey, Amelia, Lillian, and Jesiah!

#### **FURIO MICHELLI – ENGADINE RURAL FIRE BRIGADE**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—Furio Michelli, an Engadine Rural Fire Brigadier, has been awarded a lifetime membership and a National Medal, in recognition of his 25 years of service. Mr. Michelli began serving the Engadine Rural Fire Brigade in 2000. Being a firefighter is no typical job. The work is demanding, unpredictable, and often unfolds in life-threatening situations. Mr. Michelli has persisted with great dedication for 25-years in this admirable field, serving and protecting his community. The awards recognise Furio's dedicated service to the brigade, and commendable standing in which he is held by his colleagues and community. Mr. Michelli has demonstrated an exceptional level of commitment and sacrifice to his community, and his award is a proud acknowledgement of his efforts. His knowledge, experience, and firefighting skills have been an invaluable asset to the local community and beyond. On behalf of the Heathcote electorate, I thank Mr. Michelli for his dedicated public service and wish him and his family a reposeful retirement.

#### **TALEI WILLIAMS - NURSE**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—I would like to acknowledge, Talei Williams, a Waterfall local and nurse. Talei has been a nurse since she started a school-based traineeship at St George Hospital. She has worked in aged care and supported the community during the COVID pandemic while working at Wollongong Hospital. She is currently studying for her registered nurse certification. Talei was the first on the scene after a multi-vehicle crash recently on the Princes Highway in Waterfall. She utilised her skills as a medical professional to assist all seven people who were involved in the crash and assisted NSW Police with appropriate aid, triage and response. Talei was getting ready for work in the morning when she heard the crash outside her window. She immediately leapt into action in her scrubs and only socks on her feet. I commend Talei for her bravery and first aid skills during a time of crisis. On behalf of the Heathcote electorate, I thank Talei Williams for her dedication to serving the community, especially those that need it most, and wish her luck in her studies.

### **RIVERSTONE DOLPHINS SWIMMING CLUB**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—I would like to congratulate the Riverstone Dolphins for another outstanding season and extend special recognition to the awardees of the inaugural Swimming NSW scholarship: Bailey Lathlean, Toby and Levi Said, Matilda Keating, Caiden Miller, Kaiden McFarlane, Riaan Sandar, Brooklyn Field, Eva and Anna Philips, Olivia Torrensan, Blake and Leah Read. The skill, passion, and dedication these swimmers have demonstrated throughout the season is inspiring. Founded in 1994, the Riverstone Dolphins are now celebrating 30 years of serving the community with "the community at heart." The club continues to grow stronger each year, and with over 200 members, it remains a vital hub for local swimmers of all ages and abilities. We also extend our gratitude to the volunteers and local supporters who give their time and energy to ensure the club's ongoing success. As the Dolphins prepare for their 31st season, we wish them all the best and encourage local swimmers to join in. I look forward to seeing what the future holds for this incredible club.

### **VIETNAMESE AUSTRALIAN MUTUAL SUPPORT ASSOCIATION END OF YEAR 2024 PARTY**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—The Vietnamese Australian Mutual Support Association is a vital organisation in my electorate, fostering friendship, mutual support, and respect among its members and the wider community. Deeply rooted in our local community, the association has provided invaluable assistance to hundreds – if not thousands – of people each year, strengthening social connections and offering essential support to those in need. I had the pleasure of attending their end-of-year 2024 celebration, where I was able to meet and acknowledge the remarkable contributions of both their dedicated members and hardworking executive team. This special occasion also marked an important milestone, as Mr Andrew Nguyen has recently been appointed as the President of the Association. I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Mr Nguyen and wish him and his newly appointed Executive team all the best in their new roles. I have no doubt they will continue the outstanding work of this organisation, building on its legacy of community service and support.

### **CHINESE ASSOCIATION IN WESTERN SYDNEY - AUSTRALIA DAY AND THE LUNAR NEW YEAR 2025**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 24 January 2025, I had the pleasure of attending a special event organized by the Chinese Association in Western Sydney to celebrate both Australia Day and the Lunar New Year. It was an unforgettable evening, beautifully blending two significant cultural celebrations. The event brought together the local community, with a warm atmosphere that truly showcased the spirit of unity and diversity. The festivities kicked off with captivating performances, including traditional lion dances and cultural music that added an extra layer of excitement to the evening. The energy in the room was infectious as people of all ages gathered to enjoy the entertainment and celebrate both Australia's heritage and the Lunar New Year. The event was a beautiful reminder of how our shared values and cultural traditions can bring us together. It was inspiring to see how the Chinese community in Western Sydney has contributed to the rich multicultural tapestry of Australia. I felt privileged to be part of such meaningful celebrations, and it left me with a deep sense of gratitude for the diverse community that I represent.

### **THE LUNAR NEW YEAR CHINATOWN STREET WALK 2025**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 1 February 2025, I had the privilege of joining the NSW Premier Chris Minns, many State MPs and the local representatives in the Lunar New Year Chinatown Street Walk. The lion dances were incredible—colourful costumes and energetic performers moving to the beat of the drums. It was such a lively experience, and everyone around me seemed to be enjoying every moment. The streets of Chinatown were already buzzing with excitement as we made our way through, taking in all the sights, sounds, and smells that made the celebration so special. The vibrant red lanterns hung from every corner, and the air was filled with the scent of delicious food from the local shops. Many different people from the local community were there to greet the Premier and our team. It felt like the whole neighbourhood and community had come together to celebrate, and I was grateful to be part of it. The event was filled with joy, culture, and community spirit, and I left feeling so happy to have experienced such a meaningful and fun tradition. I wish everyone a happy, healthy and prosperous year of the Wood Snake.

### **KEEVER ROSEBROCK**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Kever Rosebrock, from Dapto Public School, for writing about his life story for a school public speaking competition and shared it recently on International Day of People with a Disability. In his speech, Kever explains that people with autism are neurodivergent, meaning his brain works differently to everyone else. Others may perceive living with autism to be a 'difficult journey' in life, but to Kever he has accepted that things will always be a little different – and perhaps more challenging for him – than for his peers. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Kever on this wonderful achievement.



### WARILLA BARRACK POINT SURF LIFESAVING CLUB

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the amazing achievement of the Warilla Barrack Point SLSC's NSW Country Championships' domination. They continued unabated in 2025 leading from start to finish to record a three-peat of overall point score titles. The three-day 2025 Championships were held at Warilla Beach in January with the home club declared winners for a third-straight year. The Open Mixed Taplin victory on Sunday sealed the result for Warilla. The home club leapt to the top of the point score on day one and never really looked back, steadily increasing the lead over Cudgen Headland SLSC across the weekend and into the finals. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate the Warilla Barrack Point Surf Lifesaving Club on this wonderful achievement.

### KYE COOPER – (KILLA KYE)

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Kye Cooper, a Shellharbour wrestler who wrestles under the name of "Killa Kye", who will be travelling to Texas to train under WWE legend Booker T. Overcoming childhood shyness and social stigma, the 24-year-old wrestler and disability worker has found confidence, community, and a stage in Wollongong's Rock 'n' Roll Wrestling Australia, and now he's ready to chase his dream of making it big in a major US wrestling promotion. Kye's taking his talents to the next level, securing a training opportunity with WWE Hall of Famer Booker T's Reality of Wrestling company in Texas from mid-March for one month. It's what he hopes will be the first of many trips. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Kye Cooper on this amazing achievement.

### MRS MAVIS STOKES TURNS 100

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Mrs Mavis Stokes, a true Albury treasure, who recently celebrated her 100th birthday at the beautiful La Maison Restaurant on Gateway Island. This milestone is a testament to Mrs Stokes enduring spirit for her long life. Her secret to longevity, "to always behave", is a simple statement that has guided her through her lifetime of experiences. From her primary school days, where treats were affordable for just a few cents, to living through the Great Depression, Mrs Stokes has witnessed and adopted to many immense changes throughout her life. Mrs Stokes' past was filled with dancing around maypoles, singing in church, excelling as an athlete, and excelling as a top-performing Tupperware consultant. Mavis, I thank you for your many contributions to our community and wish you happiness and good health as you enjoy the next chapter of your life.

### RILEY'S DREAM A REALITY

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Riley Bice, who has been selected to play for the Sydney Swans AFL team, marking an inspiring rise from country football to the elite level in Sydney. Following an impressive stint with the Albury Tigers in the Ovens & Murray Football League, where he won the Best and Fairest award in 2023, Riley joined the VFL's Werribee Football Club in 2024. He played a crucial role in their premiership victory, averaging 21.1 disposals per game and securing a place in the VFL Team of the Year as a rebounding half-back. Riley's perseverance was rewarded when the Swans selected him with pick 41 in the 2024 AFL Draft. A lifelong Sydney fan, he made an impactful AFL debut in Round 1 of the 2025 season against Brisbane at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG), where he displayed his speed, skill, and relentless determination. I commend Riley for his remarkable achievements and wish him a long and successful career in the AFL. "What was once a young boy's dream has now become a reality".

### TARGA CLASSICA 2025 – ALBURY

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge the organisers of this year's 2025 Targa Classica: Linda, Andrew, Paul & James Lawson, Ian Swan & Phil Bernadou. This premier car event was officially launched in Albury March 10-13 at Noreuil Park. The four-day event is a celebration of rare automotive excellence - Porsche, Bugatti, Ferrari, and Lamborghini. Since 2017, this event, often hailed as "a living, moving museum of automotive history," offers a rare and captivating opportunity for the local community to experience and engage with extraordinary vehicles up close. The event is inspired by the world's oldest race the "Targa Florio" a motor event in Sicily since 1906. In 2017, the Australian event became the first event outside Italy to run under the Targa Florio's historic marque. It brings together an open-road friendly competition on a meticulously curated route, showcasing breathtaking landscapes. A ride through historic towns from Albury to Melbourne, culminating just before the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne. Well done to the organisers who have brought together the beauty of classic cars, the history of great races and the gathering of adoring fans.

### JIMMY TANNER

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Armidale local Jimmy Tanner on his long standing service and dedication to his community and to the Armidale Rams Rugby League Football Club.

Jimmy started out as a player in 1947 and since this time has supported the club as a life member, coach, groundsman, BBQ chef and fundraiser. I congratulate Jimmy on his immeasurable support to the Rams, sport of Rugby League and to the many players who have benefited from his expertise, skills and experience. I applaud Jimmy on his previous achievements, being named Volunteer of the year in 2019 for the Greater Northern Region of NSW Rugby League and this year receiving the NSW Seniors Festival Local Achievement Award. In 2023 Jimmy and his extended family received the ultimate honour, with the Tanner Stand at Rugby League Park named in tribute of their support over generations to Armidale Rugby League. I commend Jimmy for his hard work and commitment to the Rams and the many junior players coming through. Jimmy Tanner is synonymous with Rugby League, and we say thank you for your unwavering community spirit.

#### **RECOGNITION OF MATT FOSTER**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Armidale local Matt Foster, for being named Armidale Sporting Citizen of the Year, with this honour received at the 2025 Australia Day celebrations. I congratulate Matt on his many accomplishments, among these being Captain of the Armidale Rifle Club and having built an impressive list of accolades, competing in majors such as the Queen's shoot in Sydney and King's shoot in Victoria. The latter shoot leading to Matt's selection to play for Australia, in the Australia and New Zealand trans-Tasman Test in 2024. Topping off such achievements, Matt has been named in the international team for the F-Open class World Championships to be held at Bisley in the United Kingdom in August. I commend Matt for his hard work and commitment to the sport of shooting and to the Armidale Rifle Club, giving of his time and expertise to others. We wish Matt well in the upcoming World Championships.

#### **GLEN INNES MASONIC LODGE CELEBRATES 150 YEARS**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the Glen Innes Masonic Lodge on their 150 year anniversary, which was celebrated recently. In commemoration of its Masonic heritage, a rededication ceremony was also held, coinciding with its 150th installation. I congratulate all involved in the Glen Innes branch of the Masonic Lodge, both past and present, on this wonderful milestone. The celebration commenced with Most Worshipful Grand Master Kris Albano reading the original dedication and presenting the original charter. The Grand Director of Ceremonies, the Right Worshipful Brother Jay Tayag led the re-enactment, which showcased the rich history of the lodge. During this event the Worshipful Master Peter Filewood was installed as the Master of the Lodge, with 100 attendees present from across NSW and the ACT. I commend all involved in the longevity of the Masonic Lodge in Glen Innes, which over the years has significantly contributed to the development and support of its members, improving both people and the local Glen Innes communities.

#### **ROBERT WALKER**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Robert Walker was recently awarded joint recipient of the Narrabri Shire Senior of the year, sharing the award with Fay Kirk. Robert has been a dedicated member of the rotary club of Narrabri since 1993, being part of significant fundraising and service projects. Robert has also been a member of the Narrabri Parkinson's support group for the last 15 years, serving as the treasurer, whilst contributing with raising awareness and fundraising for the disease. I would like to congratulate Robert on receiving this award and I thank him for the many years of commitment to his local community. Your community has recognised your dedication, and you are clearly appreciated.

#### **FAY KIRK**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Fay Kirk was recently awarded joint recipient of the Narrabri Shire Senior of the year, sharing the honour with Robert Walker. Fay has volunteered at the local radio station for more than 25 years, hosting 2 sessions a week. She also acts as vice president of Narrabri's Parkinson's Support Group and has been an active member for 15 years. It is the only Parkinson's support group in Barwon. Fay also dedicates her time to being a member of the Whiddon Ladies Auxiliary. I would like to congratulate Fay on receiving this award and I thank her for the many years of commitment to her local community. Your community has recognised your dedication, and you are clearly appreciated.

#### **MULTIPLE BIRTH AWARENESS WEEK**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Dear Speaker, March 16 to 23 marked Multiple Birth Awareness Week and in the Hunter we have the amazing Newcastle Multiple Birth Club. The Newcastle Multiple Birth Club is the oldest club for multiples in Australia and began in 1969 by Lyndy Booth OAM. Since the Australian Multiple Birth Association was founded, there are now over 40 local clubs across Australia. The Clubs are voluntary non-profit organisations, providing friendship as well as advice and information on the experience of raising multiple children. Newcastle Multiple Birth Club provides advice and support to parents of multiple births. The Club also hosts social events and

fortnightly playgroups so parents can support one another. Thank you to all those who support the Newcastle Multiple Birth Club for the work you do.

#### **CAMBELL CONNOLLY**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Cambell Connolly for their remarkable performance at the 2025 NSW Surf Life Saving Championships. This year, the Northern Beaches hosted the State's premier Surf Life Saving Competition, where thousands of dedicated competitors, spectators and volunteers gathered to take part in a wide range of surf lifesaving activities. It was a true celebration of skill, teamwork, and community, showcasing the incredible talent and commitment of all involved. Cambell was awarded State Champion in U17 2x1km Beach Run and U17 Ski Relay and received a silver medal in the U19 Mixed Relay alongside Emi Leadbeatter, Phoebe Doran, Will Griffiths, Darcy Masia and Billy Foran. This remarkable achievement demonstrates is a testament to their exceptional skill, determination, and relentless commitment to excellence in surf lifesaving. It reflects not only the high level of performance but also the value of discipline and perseverance that are so integral to the surf lifesaving community. Congratulations Cambell on your exceptional effort, you are asset to the surf lifesaving community, and your dedication and hard work are inspiration to us all. I look forward to your continued contributions to and excellence in the surf lifesaving.

#### **DARCY MASIA**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Darcy Masia for their remarkable performance at the 2025 NSW Surf Life Saving Championships. This year, the Northern Beaches hosted the State's premier Surf Life Saving Competition, where thousands of dedicated competitors, spectators and volunteers gathered to take part in a wide range of surf lifesaving activities. It was a true celebration of skill, teamwork, and community, showcasing the incredible talent and commitment of all involved. Darcy placed 2nd in the U17 Male Ski Race and was awarded State Champion in the U17 Ski Relay alongside Cambell Connolly and Billy Foran. This remarkable achievement demonstrates is a testament to their exceptional skill, determination, and relentless commitment to excellence in surf lifesaving. It reflects not only the high level of performance but also the value of discipline and perseverance that are so integral to the surf lifesaving community. Congratulations Darcy on your exceptional effort, you are asset to the surf lifesaving community, and your dedication and hard work are inspiration to us all. I look forward to your continued contributions to and excellence in the surf lifesaving.

#### **NORTHERN RIVERS CONSERVATORIUM'S FIRST NATIONS MUSIC PROGRAM**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Recovery, and Minister for the North Coast)**—I Share the Northern Rivers Conservatorium's excitement in announcing the launch of its new First Nations Music Program, a groundbreaking initiative led by highly acclaimed Bundjalung artist Blake Rhodes. The Lismore App reported that the program is designed to provide First Nations artists with a dedicated platform to share their rich cultural heritage, stories and music with the broader community. The Conservatorium's Executive Director Anita Bellman told The Lismore App, Blake's deep connection to both music and his community, combined with his experience as a respected artist and mentor, will ensure that this program is culturally authentic, impactful, and inspiring for all involved. For his part, Blake Rhodes said: "Music is a powerful tool for connection and storytelling. I hope this program will empower and uplift the next generation of First Nations musicians and creators, especially those from the Bundjalung nation." The First Nations Music Program launches next month with three days of dynamic songwriting and music production workshops for Aboriginal youth aged 14-21, held at the Northern Rivers Conservatorium. The program will feature a diverse range of classes and workshops, covering everything from music production and songwriting toe storytelling and creative expression.

#### **RESILIENT LISMORE'S 'STRONGER TOGETHER' COMMUNITY EVENT**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Recovery, and Minister for the North Coast)**—I WISH to congratulate Resilient Lismore on the success of its recent 'Stronger Together' community event held in The Quad in Lismore's Central Business District earlier this month. Resilient Lismore's Events Coordinator Emma Newman emailed me recently: "Sending you a massive thanks for your contribution to a wonderful afternoon in The Quad, now that our cyclone emergency has passed. "There were conversations, dancing, singing, playing, are, eating and happy faces. "Uncle Gilbert Laurie reminded us of our connect to jagun (land) and we practiced some Bunjalung words, including bugelbee (thank you). The weather also shined upon us, which added a glorious layer. "... Thank you to Lismore Quadrangle, Lismore Regional Gallery and Lismore City Council, for having us there. "We were bolstered by the support of major sponsors Southern Cross University and NORCO, as well as Social Futures, Headspace, Givit, St Vincent's Hospital, Simply Clean, Greg Clark Building, Northern Rivers Tiles & Mosaics and Lismore City Bowling Club. Salvation Army, Lismore City Lions

and Social Futures provided free food, which was a fabulous treat for our community. Thank you all." About 500 people attended the event. Resilient Lismore has returned to the CBD Hub.

#### **NORTH COAST SHINES IN 2024 QANTAS AUSTRALIAN TOURISM AWARDS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Recovery, and Minister for the North Coast)**—I WISH to add my congratulations as NSW Minister for Recovery, Small Business and the North Coast to five North Coast businesses who have taken out major awards at the 2024 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards last weekend. They include The Tweed Tourism Company which claimed gold in the Tourism Marketing & Campaigns category; Northern Rivers Rail Trail and Love Lord Howe silver winners in the Tourist Attractions and Excellence in Food Tourism categories respectively; and Tweed-based Potager – A Kitchen Garden restaurant and Port Macquarie Museum bronze winners in the Tourism Restaurants & Catering Services and Cultural Tourism categories respectively. It was great to also see Bluesfest Byron Bay recognised as a finalist in the Major Festivals & Events category. Hosted by the Australian Tourism Industry Council, these awards showcase the outstanding achievements of businesses and individuals across the visitor economy. They are a benchmark of excellence, recognising those who demonstrate innovation, commitment, and leadership in delivering exceptional visitor experiences. With the Northern Rivers, Mid-North Coast and Northern Tablelands regions still recovering from the impacts of Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred, this national recognition will lift spirits and boost confidence across our local communities.

#### **MINARAH COLLEGE 2025 STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—The difference between a good school and a great school is the presence of an empowered student voice. I recently had the pleasure of joining the Minarah College school community to induct the 2025 leadership team with a special badging ceremony. It was a joy to see the pride in the faces of parents and school staff in the achievements of these young leaders. Minarah is a school that values leadership qualities. I was so proud to be able to welcome last year's school leaders to the NSW Parliament and see firsthand the way they look out for their peers and represent their school. If my initial impressions are anything to go by, this new leadership team are poised to make a fantastic and positive impact at Minarah and in our community more broadly. Special congratulations are in order for the Minarah College 2025 Captains, Gabriel El Haddad and Quraisha Aiyas. Gabriel and Quraisha lead a bright and enthusiastic team of the student leaders that strive to make an impact in their school and across our community, and I wish them the very best!

#### **GANDANGARA LIVING WELL URBAN PRECINCT**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council has had a visible presence in Liverpool throughout its history. I recently sat down with Gandangara's CEO, Dr Melissa Williams, to learn about their exciting vision for Liverpool's future – the Living Well Urban Precinct. Living well is about much more than good health—it's about achieving balance, connection, and fulfilment in every aspect of life. For First Peoples, true wellbeing is holistic, deeply rooted in connection to Country, culture, community, identity, and place. It's about having access to the right support, opportunities, and environments that nurture physical, social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. The Gandangara Living Well Urban Precinct is being designed with these very principles at its core—a place where healing, cultural connection, and community care come together. Located at 105 Moore Street, Liverpool, this new precinct will work alongside the Gandangara Cultural Connection Hub, creating an integrated service ecosystem that supports the diverse needs of the community. A huge congratulations to the fantastic team at Gandangara for bringing this vision to life. I can't wait to see the impact this important precinct will have on the community!

#### **ST PATRICK'S DAY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—Monday 17th March 2025 marked St Patrick's Day, an important day for many people across my electorate of Badgerys Creek and beyond, particularly those of the Catholic faith and Irish ancestry. St Patrick's Day commemorates the day of the Patron Saint of Ireland and the arrival of Christianity in Ireland. It has also become a celebration of Irish culture and heritage, of which is significant in the history and present time of our state and nation. I commend all who observe St Patrick's Day for enjoying a wonderful day of celebration and commemoration.

#### **GLENMORE PARK HIGH SCHOOL DANCERS**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—Congratulations to the 16 students from Glenmore Park High School who joined 3,000 students from across NSW on stage at the PULSE Alive show, which was held at Ken Rosewall Arena in Sydney Olympic Park on the evening of 20 March 2025. Our local students put on an outstanding performance after 2 days of intense rehearsals. It takes extraordinary bravery and talent to perform with such quality in front of a large crowd. I commend the staff for the role they played in the students' training

and performance. On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I congratulate the students from Glenmore Park High School and wish them the very best with their educational and dance journey.

#### **GLENMORE PARK HIGH SCHOOL - WORLD'S GREATEST SHAVE**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I rise to congratulate and commend Glenmore Park High School students and staff for taking part and raising funds through the World's Greatest Shave. The students and staff braved the clippers, the hairspray, and the buzz cuts to raise funds and awareness for the Leukaemia Foundation, which has been helping people with blood cancer for 50 years. I'm so thrilled that the school community got behind such an important initiative. Special mention to Taher Safadi and John Weeks, who volunteered to have their hair cut for this vital cause. The commitment of the students in supporting the Leukaemia Foundation and the lives of people impacted by any kind of blood cancer is an inspiration. On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I thank the Glenmore Park High School community for working towards raising funds and awareness for the Leukaemia Foundation through the World's Greatest Shave.

#### **THE NAMBUCCA HEADS UNITING CHURCH**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—The Nambucca Heads Uniting Church has shown incredible support for local carers in our area. Through a generous monetary donation, the Uniting Church has helped facilitate much-needed respite for those who care for family members, friends, or clients with various conditions such as disability, mental illness, chronic conditions, or age-related frailty. Many carers take on a 24/7 role, often with little opportunity for respite or self-care, and this donation is a crucial step in offering them a much-needed break. The Nambucca Heads Uniting Church cares deeply about the wellbeing of carers in the community and is committed to supporting them in every way possible. The church's giving spirit is truly remarkable, as their support extends far beyond a financial donation. It reflects their deep compassion and understanding of the challenges faced by carers. This donation benefits more people than they may realise, offering carers a chance to rest and rejuvenate, which ultimately improves the care they are able to provide to their loved ones. The Uniting Church's continued generosity is making a lasting impact on the lives of carers in our area, and it is truly commendable.

#### **PICKLEBALL SUCCESS**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Pickleball is a sport that has picked up in popularity, and the Macleay Pickleball Club members have proudly represented the Macleay Valley at recent competitions, showcasing their skills and passion for the rapidly growing sport. The club's dedicated members competed in the Spirit Competition in Sydney, where they showcased their impressive skills and sportsmanship. Not resting on their laurels, the Macleay Picklers are now preparing for the Big Chill tournament in Canberra, a major event attracting top players from across the state. The team is excited to test their skills against some of the best in the sport and is determined to bring home silverware, continuing to represent the Macleay Valley with pride. The club's commitment to fostering talent extends beyond just competition. With qualified coaches and referees, they offer training and ensure fair play for all players, from beginners to more competitive participants. The club's outreach also includes introducing pickleball to local schools, ensuring the sport's growth and providing young people with opportunities for social and athletic development. The Macleay Pickleball Club is a great example of community dedication and achievement.

#### **LOCAL KEMPSEY TALENT TRAVELS ACROSS COUNTRY**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Wilton Townsend, a Kempsey local, has once again proven that local talent can compete at the highest level, securing silver in the 800m at the NSW Junior Championships at Sydney Olympic Park. The 15-year-old St Paul's College student ran a personal best of 1:59.20 in a thrilling photo finish, missing gold by just 0.05 seconds. Townsend's road to the podium was anything but easy. Leading up to the competition, he was helping his family move flood-affected cattle while battling a cold. But his determination and resilience shone through as he stepped onto the track, pushing past the challenges to deliver a stunning performance. His silver medal finish has secured him a place in the NSW team for the Australian Athletics Championships in Perth. This achievement comes on the back of an already outstanding season, winning gold in the 800m and bronze in the 1500m at the NSW Country Championships in January, followed by his international debut in New Zealand. Townsend's dedication and grit make him a true inspiration for young athletes across the Mid North Coast. Well done!

#### **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – PLEASANT HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I would like to acknowledge Indiana Preece, James Anderson, Sophie O'Malley and Kai McClatchie who have been named as the 2025 Pleasant Heights Public School leadership team. Through hard work and dedication, they have earned their leadership positions. These students have consistently demonstrated exceptional commitment and involvement within their school community and should feel very

proud of themselves for having the opportunity to represent the student body. Their efforts have not only set an example but have inspired others to strive for excellence. I am confident that they will do great things throughout their school years, excelling in both their studies and extracurricular activities. Each will spend 2025 acting as role models for their peers, and I have full confidence that they will carry out their new leadership roles exceptionally. I congratulate them on their achievement and wish them all the best for their final year at primary school.

#### **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – RUSSELL VALE PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I would like to acknowledge Emily Mandranis, Eli Brooks, Nash Jones, Ella Sheldon, Ruben Marsden, Eliza Knight, Ashton Moore and Grace Timmins who have been named as the 2025 Russell Vale Public School leadership team. Through hard work and dedication, they have earned their leadership positions. These students have consistently demonstrated exceptional commitment and involvement within their school community and should feel very proud of themselves for having the opportunity to represent the student body. Their efforts have not only set an example but have inspired others to strive for excellence. I am confident that they will do great things throughout their school years, excelling in both their studies and extracurricular activities. Each will spend 2025 acting as role models for their peers, and I have full confidence that they will carry out their new leadership roles exceptionally. I congratulate them on their achievement and wish them all the best for their final year at primary school.

#### **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – NAREENA HILLS PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I would like to acknowledge Sofia Villela, Asher Barlow, Mia Brsakovski, Ashton Weeks, Hannah Corlett, Harriet Hounslow, Ava Bogdanovski and Flynn Brown who have been named as the 2025 Nareena Hills Public School leadership team. Through hard work and dedication, they have earned their leadership positions. These students have consistently demonstrated exceptional commitment and involvement within their school community and should feel very proud of themselves for having the opportunity to represent the student body. Their efforts have not only set an example but have inspired others to strive for excellence. I am confident that they will do great things throughout their school years, excelling in both their studies and extracurricular activities. Each will spend 2025 acting as role models for their peers, and I have full confidence that they will carry out their new leadership roles exceptionally. I congratulate them on their achievement and wish them all the best for their final year at primary school.

#### **WILLOUGHBY'S NSW SENIORS FESTIVAL LOCAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I acknowledge the exceptional recipients of the 2025 Willoughby Seniors Local Achievement Awards as part of the NSW Seniors Festival. These awards which I was proud to confer recently in Northbridge, recognise the outstanding contributions of senior members of our community who have dedicated their time and energy to making a meaningful difference. This year's awardees include Ross Alexander, Peter Doyle, Jill Nash, Susan Mitchell, Bruce Wilson, Janet Hunter, Fan Ng, Ian Burt, and Charles and Elva Alma. Each of these individuals has demonstrated a deep commitment to community service, whether through volunteering, environmental stewardship, advocacy, or supporting local organisations. Their efforts have enriched the lives of many and helped build a stronger, more generous and connected Willoughby.

#### **THORACIC SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA AND NZ**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I acknowledge the important work of the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand, based in Chatswood, in advancing lung health through research, policy, and clinical practice. Their focus on lung cancer screening, smoking and vaping, and occupational and environmental lung disease is critical to public health. I appreciate the opportunity recently to meet with CEO Vincent So, Professor Matthew Peters, and Professor Deborah Yates, alongside my colleague Kellie Sloane, to discuss these pressing issues. Their expertise in health policy and workplace safety is invaluable as we work towards better outcomes for our communities. With concerns around vaping among children and the impact of dust diseases on workers, TSANZ continues to be a leading voice in advocating for stronger protections. I thank them for their dedication and look forward to further discussions on how we can support their vital work.

#### **GUIDE DOG GRADUATION**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I recognise the outstanding work of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT in providing life-changing support to people with vision impairment. Their commitment to training and placing guide dogs enables individuals to live with greater independence and confidence, making a profound impact on their daily lives. I was honoured to attend a special event at Norths Cammeray to celebrate the graduation of a new cohort of Guide Dogs as they embark on their working careers. It was an insightful experience, highlighting the

dedication of the Puppy Development and Guide Dog Training teams. The event also brought together donors and supporters whose generosity makes these programs possible. Guide Dogs NSW/ACT has been a pillar of support in our community for decades, offering essential services that empower people to navigate the world safely. I commend their ongoing work and thank the dedicated trainers, volunteers, and staff who contribute to this invaluable organisation. Their efforts ensure that more individuals can access the freedom and support that a Guide Dog provides.

#### **ELIH BROOKS, TOBIAS DAY AND ALLESHIA BETTERRIDGE**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to recognise Elih Brooks, Tobias Day and Alleshia Betteridge for their prompt response to assist a gentleman needing medical attention at the Yamba Marina recently. My office received a phone call from Mr Jo Brooks of Yamba to inform me of this good deed that had occurred. Elih, Tobias and Alleshia were working with the trawlers at the Yamba Marina and noticed a gentleman stumble and fall to the ground, they quickly jumped from the boats and ran to his aid. Realising that he was having a seizure after hitting the ground quite hard, they got him onto his side, keeping his back and neck straight and ensured he was able to keep his airways open. Elih and Alleshia's first aid training were put to good use during this event. A call to 000 was made and the paramedics arrived in a matter of minutes. Thanks to Elih, Tobias and Alleshia the gentleman had remained in a stable enough condition for the paramedics to then take over care of this patient. A wonderful story to hear and much gratitude from myself and the community for your prompt and thoughtful efforts.

#### **SCOTT WRIGHT WINS WILLIAM R GALVIN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to offer my congratulations to Grafton TAFE Commercial Cookery graduate Scott Wright, who has been awarded the William R Galvin Memorial Scholarship. This \$5,000 TAFE NSW scholarship honours outstanding students that have demonstrated a strong commitment to the tourism and hospitality industry. This year the applicants were so strong that a joint prize was awarded, with Scott being recognised alongside Mia Barclay, a TAFE NSW Hamilton graduating student. Scott began his career washing dishes in a restaurant in his hometown of Yamba, and currently works as a Chef at the Blaxland Inn in Pokolbin. In addition to the Scholarship, Scott's skills have seen him compete in the TAFE WorldSkills competition and the Nestle Golden Chef Hat Cookery Competition, become a finalist in the Fonterra Proud to be a Chef Mentoring Program, and win the TAFE NSW Apprentice of the Year Excellence Award. Scott plans to use his Scholarship to travel to London and learn under the Head Chefs at a restaurant called Fallow, with a long-term vision to move home to Yamba and open his own restaurant. Well done Scott, and all the best for the future.

#### **TIM TILSE - 200 GAMES**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—My congratulations go to Tim Tilse on his 200th grade game in the CRCA. Tim began his senior cricket journey with Coutts Crossing in the 2001/02 season, and 23 seasons later, he remains a one-club man, a true testament to his loyalty, passion, and dedication to the game and his club. With the bat, Tim has been a consistent performer, amassing 3,530 runs, including 2 centuries and 14 fifties, with a top score of 122 not out. He's also chipped in with the ball, taking 30 wickets, with a best bowling return of 3/1. Since the rebirth of the Coutts Crossing club in 1979/80, Tim becomes only the 8th player to reach the 200-game milestone, joining a select group led by club legend Murray Spry with an incredible 368 games. Tim's contribution to the club over more than two decades is something truly special. His commitment, sportsmanship, and team-first attitude are an inspiration to teammates past and present. Tim is well supported by his family, with his parents, wife, and children, attending matches to cheer him on. Congratulations, Tim, on this incredible achievement! Best of luck for game 200 and beyond!

#### **LAMBTON RESIDENTS GROUP**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Twenty-five volunteers joined the Lambton Residents Group for Clean Up Australia Day at Lambton Park on the morning Sunday 2 March. Lambton Park is a large 27.8 acres in size and, somewhat surprisingly, usually very clean, so that one has to look hard to find rubbish. In all, three full sacks of rubbish were collected – and the park looked pristine. The attendees who engaged in the clean-up, including newcomers and several who contribute at this time every year, were: Margaret Jupp; Richard Smith; Carylyn Lightfoot; Patrick Lightfoot; Adriano Iakin; Subanu Thiyakesan; Eleanor Hayes; Ana Cupitt; Rita Bhattacharya; Shreya Choudhury; Minh Le; Janine Lombard; Janiv Gupta; Annie Williams; Paul Steinhour; Sandie Rufo; Watson Sou; Jenny Moyle; Rebecca Hall; Georgia Fallis; Claudia Pepper; Tess Nguyen. Special thanks go to Councillor Mark Brooker for coordinating the event and to Councillor Sinead Francis-Coan for attending. Thank you all for your continuing contributions to our environment and our community. I look forward to seeing you all again next year and to Lambton Park remaining beautiful!

**MARK BROOKER**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Newly elected Newcastle Independent Ward 3 Councillor Mark Brooker has celebrated five years organising a Clean Up Australia Day event at Lambton Park and Lambton Ker-rai Creek. Living opposite Lambton Park in 2021, and suffering post-Covid cabin fever, Mark determined to work with the Lambton Residents Group. He said that the beautiful park, 27.8 acres in size, is usually fairly clean and one has to look hard to find rubbish. On Sunday 2 March, he organised 25 volunteers, including yours truly, and three full sacks of rubbish were collected. Mark is looking to branch out to some sort of 6-monthly clean-up of the creek, which has been partly rehabilitated, with a land care group, which I strongly endorse and look forward to seeing it come to fruition. Thank you, Mark, for your continuing contributions to our environment and community.

**MARY BATKOVIC**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Lambton resident Mary Batkovic migrated with her family to Australia from Coatia in 1970 at the age of 13, in search of a better life and job opportunities. Possessing a generous and resilient nature, as well as being tough and hardworking, Mary is a respected community volunteer, mother, sister and grandmother. The Batkovic family arrived in Mayfield West, staying at the old migrant hostel. They did not speak English, so there was a language barrier and no interpreters to help. In 1974, the local Croatian community and the Batkovics bought St Joseph's, the Croatian Catholic Church in Tighes Hill, and completed renovations. Mary married and was determined to stay in Australia. She has had a major involvement in the church, caring for aging members, raising money, organising social events and pilgrimages. Mary volunteers at local aged care facilities and has developed vital health services for migrants speaking different languages. After a long and successful career with Hunter New England Health, including roles of interpreter and multi-cultural welfare worker, Mary retired in 2022. My thanks to you, Mary, for all that you do for our community.

**IRAQI FESTIVAL WHITLAM LEISURE CENTRE**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—On the 10th of November 2024 I attended the Sydney Iraqi Festival at the Whitlam Leisure Centre in Liverpool. It was an honour to partake in the rich Iraqi culture whilst enjoying the lively music, authentic food, and beautiful art. There was a diverse array of traditional Iraqi delicacies including fresh knafeh and coffee on sand. A slide show displaying ancient Iraqi cities reflected deep connections to the motherland and the beauty of Iraqi history. The festival also featured a market, consisting of stalls selling jewellery and other small goods. Events like this show that difference in culture is not a point of division, but rather an opportunity for community and celebration. Witnessing family and friends across our diverse community come together to celebrate culture is a wonderful reminder of the wealth of history and tradition our region enjoys.

**LUNAR NEW YEAR MINGYUE TEMPLE**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—On the 2nd of February, I had the pleasure of attending Lunar New Year celebrations at the Mingyue Lay Temple in Bonnyrigg, marking the start of the Year of the Snake. This wonderful event brought the community together with captivating performances, including traditional dances, live bands, and the iconic lion dances. The Mingyue Lay Temple is one of the largest Chinese Buddhist temples in the Southern Hemisphere, and holds great historical significance with its origins dating back to 1985 when refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos began planning its construction. Built with a 12th-century Chinese design, the temple stands as a testament to the Buddhist Mahayana tradition. Beyond its religious functions, the Temple has long been a hub for humanitarian efforts, contributing to causes like flood and bushfire relief. It was great to see so many people come together in celebration and solidarity this Lunar New Year.

**NETBALL CENTRAL 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY BREAKFAST**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—On the 6th of February, I had the pleasure of attending a special breakfast to celebrate Netball Central's 10-Year Anniversary. This milestone marks a decade of growth, success, and community impact. Netball Central, the headquarters of Netball NSW and home to the NSW Swifts and GIANTS Netball, first opened its doors in 2015. Since then, it has welcomed over two million visitors and become one of the finest multi-purpose sports centres in NSW. The facility serves as a hub for a wide range of activities, with over 250,000 people using it annually for netball, basketball, volleyball, wheelchair rugby, karate and more. It has hosted prestigious events, including the 2015 Netball World Cup and served as a training base for the 2022 FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup. During the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, Netball Central played a key role in supporting the community by becoming a vaccination training centre. Netball Central is not just a venue – it is a vital part of our community's talent, support and camaraderie.



### **MAITLAND SAINTS AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport)**—Congratulations to the Maitland Saints Australian Football Club on a fantastic season launch at Telarah Bowling Club on March 18. It was an inspiring evening that set the tone for an exciting season of change and progress. The club celebrated this milestone by honouring its heritage with the presentation of life membership awards to Foundation President Duane Roy and the dedicated premierships player, president, board member, and tireless volunteer, Colin Carroll. A major highlight of the night was the unveiling of the new club crest—a bold symbol that truly captures the spirit of the Maitland Saints family. This crest represents a fresh start as the club embarks on significant upgrades at Max McMahon Oval. With the demolition of the old change rooms and the commencement of \$3.6 million new facilities, including modern change rooms, toilets, a canteen, and a multi-purpose hall, the Saints are poised for a bright future. Congratulations to the Maitland Saints on an outstanding season launch. Your passion and commitment continue to inspire and unite our community as you step confidently into this new era.

### **ROTARY CLUBS OF MAITLAND GOLF DAY**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport)**—I commend the Rotary Clubs of Maitland for their outstanding collaboration in hosting the Annual Golf Day on Sunday, 23 March 2025, at Easts Leisure & Golf Club. This event exemplifies the spirit of community and dedication that defines our region. This year's Golf Day focused on raising funds for the Maitland HealthStays Accommodation Project, a vital initiative aimed at providing economical, safe, and accessible lodging for outpatients and caregivers at the new Maitland Hospital. This facility will offer a comforting space, similar to the Ronald McDonald House concept in Newcastle, ensuring families can stay close to their loved ones during treatment. The success of this event is a testament to the collective efforts of five Rotary clubs—Maitland, East Maitland, Rutherford Telarah, Greenhills Maitland, and Maitland Sunrise—along with Maitland Rotaract. Their dedication and hard work have significantly contributed to the advancement of the HealthStays project, which addresses the critical need for accessible healthcare accommodation in our region. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all participants, sponsors, and volunteers who made this day possible.

### **THORNTON THUNDER CRICKET CLUB**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport)**—Congratulations to Thornton Thunder on their long-awaited Maitland first-grade cricket premiership, their first in 35 years. Their commanding performance against Eastern Suburbs at Lorn Park showcased skill, teamwork, and perseverance. Thornton's bowlers dominated from the outset, restricting Easts to 163. Cody Flett's brilliant opening spell removed two batters in the first three balls, both caught in slips by Jake Moore. Flett finished with 3-41, while Elliott Thompson (2-29), Jamie Krake (2-40), Jake Moore (1-23), and Daniel Willis (1-12) played key roles. Captain Matt Gabriel's sharp fielding, including a crucial run-out, further stalled Easts' innings. Thornton's chase started strongly, with openers Jono Gabriel (44\*) and Ricky Dent (15\*) guiding their team to 0/68 at stumps on day one. On day two, Gabriel's composed half-century anchored the innings, and Dent's unbeaten 72 rounded out the performance, as Thornton secured a well-earned victory. This victory is a wonderful achievement for the team and the Thornton cricket community, marking a memorable moment in local cricket and setting a strong foundation for future success.

### **NEWBRIDGE WINTER SOLSTICE**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—An important part of regional communities is to take opportunities to highlight and to showcase our outstanding area through special events and I congratulate the Newbridge Winter Solstice on their success and recognition given as the Blayney Shire's Community Event of the Year. As a small community living in the village of Newbridge, it is only through the tireless efforts of hardworking volunteers that ensures the staging of an event such as this. Over sixty market stalls were featured, a banquet for fifty patrons celebrated and a range of new activities and highlights showcased – what an outstanding accomplishment – and a reflection of the extraordinary achievement, dedication and commitment of a small group of people. My congratulations to the organisers of the Newbridge Winter Solstice – the Blayney Shire Event of the Year.

### **RICHARD MARJORAM**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—After 65 years dedicated to the sport of basketball, Richard Marjoram is retiring from his position as Director of Lithgow Basketball Association. Richard began his basketball career at the young age of eight playing on outdoor courts at his primary school in Lithgow, Coerwull Public School. He can recall when the first Lithgow Basketball Stadium opened in 1981. Playing in competitive and social teams until his 40s, Richard also took on roles off the court including refereeing and coaching. Richard has been the Director of the Lithgow Basketball Association for the past 25 years. Some of the highlights of his time included

coaching Coerwull School to win the state title, the state league men coming second in the state, and being awarded 2004 Coach of the Year. It was a pleasure working with Richard to secure a redevelopment of the Lithgow Basketball stadium through state government funding. Richard's passion and dedication to the sport was clearly evident find a way to improve facilities for local players. Moving into retirement, Richard plans include travelling with his wife Jill who has also volunteered with the association and supporting their children including Adam who works at Basketball NSW.

#### **BANKSTOWN ELECTORATE'S HIGH SCHOOL CAPTAINS MORNING TEA**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—On Monday, 24th February 2025, I hosted High School Leaders from our community for a School Captains Morning Tea. We discussed the importance of their leadership roles and the responsibilities they bring. The best part was when the students shared that leadership is about helping your peers, listening and being their voice. Hosting this morning tea is a rewarding way to enhance collaboration among young leaders and make a positive impact on the lives of other students. What I love about my School Captain Leadership gathering is that it brings together students from different backgrounds who are united in leading their peers throughout their HSC year. Thank you to Aiyah and Zulfikar from Al Sadiq College, Homa and Maria from Bankstown Senior College, Pinny and Amelia from Greenacre Christian College, George and Brooklyn from LaSalle Catholic College, Abdullah and Hassan from Punchbowl Boys' High School, Alex and Joyce from St Charbel's College, Adam and Valentina from St Euphemia College, Rida and Zahra from Wiley Park Girls High School, teachers and principals for joining me and showing me that young people in our community are in great hands.

#### **CITY OF CANTERBURY BANKSTOWN'S MAYORAL IFTAR**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—The Islamic holy month of Ramadan is a time in which Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. It is a month of spiritual reflection, empathy with those less fortunate and togetherness as family and friends. The community gather to break their fast at what is known as iftar. On Tuesday 18 March, I joined our community at Canterbury-Bankstown Council's Mayoral Iftar, breaking my fast with over 500 community members. Thank you to Mayor Bilal El-Hayek for welcoming me and many others at his iftar. The food was amazing, the sweets divine and the company even better. I have the pleasure of attending several iftars that celebrate our unity as a community as well as our shared humanity. Regardless of a person's religious background, the coming together of people, rekindling old friendships and making new ones whilst breaking bread, is something that we can all appreciate. We are better as a society when we are together and when we respect and value our differences. May the blessings of Ramadan bring peace, good health, and kindness to all. The thing that makes our community so amazing is nights like this. Ramadan Mubarak.

#### **ST PAUL'S BANKSTOWN URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—St Paul's Anglican Church has been a part of Bankstown for over 100 years, contributing to the fabric of our community and supporting the most vulnerable. The church runs Sunday services and various community activities, including weekly English language classes. I met with the Southwestern Region Anglican congregation who were excited to share their future for Bankstown. St Paul's has been investigating options for around 10 years to make its future in the Bankstown community viable. Now in partnership with Sydney Anglican Property, Anglicare and the Federal Government, a plan has been developed that will ensure the church has a future and deliver significant benefits to the local community. St Paul's Bankstown Urban Renewal Project will provide 184 social and affordable housing units for essential workers, seniors, and women over 55. This project is one of many that are paving the way for affordable housing in Bankstown in collaboration with the NSW Transport Oriented Development Program. The project will also deliver new church facilities, a preschool, commercial and retail space. I appreciate the Anglican Church's vision for our community and look forward to seeing the opening of the project.

#### **HOLI CELEBRATIONS IN GRANVILLE PARK - ASSOCIATION OF NEPAL TERAI IN AUSTRALIA (ANT-AUS)**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—On 15 March at Granville Park I was privileged to attend the Holi Celebrations organised by the Association of Nepal Terai in Australia. ANTA is a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting the rich cultural heritage and community spirit of the Terai region of Nepal within the Australian Diaspora. Led by President Ranjit Sah and General Secretary Bikash Kumar Jha, ANTA strives to foster unity, celebrate diversity, and strengthen bonds among Nepalese Australians, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Through a variety of cultural, social, and educational initiatives, ANTA endeavors to create a sense of belonging and pride among its members while contributing positively to the multicultural landscape of

Australia. ANTA's Holi Hungama is an annual celebration of the vibrant festival of colors, deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of Nepal. This joyous event brings together members of the Nepalese community and friends from diverse backgrounds to revel in the spirit of Holi, participate in traditional festivities, and forge enduring connections. I had an absolute blast and thank the organisers including Ranjit Sah for bringing this beautiful cultural event to life in Granville.

#### **KELLY AND JAMES DROVER**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the incredible dedication and generosity of Kelly and James Drover, who have undertaken various fundraising endeavours and will this year embark on an extraordinary journey to support Feel the Magic. In September Kelly and her son James will take on the Kokoda Trek—an 8-day, 124km challenge—to raise funds for grieving children and teens. This effort is particularly special as 2025 marks the 10-year anniversary of Feel the Magic's signature program, Camp Magic. Their fundraising will help ensure more kids receive the support they need during one of life's toughest challenges—the loss of a loved one. Kelly's commitment to Feel the Magic began in 2016, following the sudden passing of her husband in 2013. James was just two years old at the time. James later found strength through Camp Magic, attending his first camp in 2017 and most recently his fourth. Since 2019, James has been fundraising, even inspiring his peers by speaking at his Terrigal Public School assembly in Year 3. Congratulations James and Kelly, your resilience, kindness, and unwavering support for grieving children and their families are truly inspiring.

#### **KINCUMBER NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITY CENTRE – YOUTH BREKKY PROGRAM**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It is an absolute pleasure to stand here today and acknowledge the Kincumber Neighbourhood Community Centre and the incredible work they do through their Youth Brekky Club. Recently, I had the opportunity to volunteer for this fantastic initiative, which provides free breakfasts to high school students every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday of the school term. I saw firsthand the dedication of the volunteers, the generosity of local businesses, and most importantly, the impact this program has on the lives of young people. With around 90 students per session, the Brekky Club is not just about food—it's about community, support, and connection. It gives students a warm and welcoming environment to start their day while helping to build essential social and life skills. What makes this program even more remarkable is that it relies entirely on donations. The kindness of businesses like Bendigo Bank Kincumber and the selflessness of volunteers keep it running. To the team at Kincumber Neighbourhood Centre, your commitment to fostering a stronger, more connected community is truly inspiring. Thank you for everything you do, and congratulations on this amazing program!

#### **COMMUNITY SERVICE CHAMPION - JENNY MCCULLA**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It is a privilege to stand here today and acknowledge an extraordinary member of our community, Jenny McCulla, former President of the Davistown Progress Association. I had the great honour of nominating Jenny for an NSW Government Community Service Award, recognising her tireless advocacy and dedication to improving Davistown. From securing tens of thousands of dollars for community infrastructure upgrades to leading the charge for \$1.436 million in funding to protect the Davistown Wetlands, Jenny's passion has made a lasting impact. She has also been instrumental in securing \$911,892 for Stage 1 of the Malinya Road missing link, improving safety and accessibility for residents. Jenny's unwavering commitment has truly made Davistown a better place for all. Her work ensures that our community continues to thrive, with better infrastructure, environmental protection, and a strong sense of local pride. I was incredibly proud to recently present Jenny McCulla with her NSW Community Service Award—an honour she has truly earned. Jenny, thank you for your dedication, your leadership, and your passion. Congratulations!

#### **SOPHIE BANNERMAN**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—I extend my congratulations to Sophie Bannerman who has been named as the Blayney Shire Council Australia Day Young Citizen of the Year. Sophie is just 14 years old and has become an inspiring role model for her peers to aspire to through the demonstration of her outstanding kindness, generosity and cheerful nature. Leadership skills have developed through Sophie's participation on the Blayney High School's Representative Council and her involvement with the Blayney Show Society through her willingness to always lend a hand. Sophie is a wonderful example of a young person who contributes and endeavours to make a difference in her community and I wish her every success through her future pathways. I congratulate Sophie Bannerman on being recognised and acknowledged as the Blayney Shire Council Young Citizen of the Year.

#### **SURF LIFE SAVING INCLUSION PROGRAM AT MONA VALE SLSC**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—Mona Vale SLSC volunteers have developed a progressive Surf Life Saving Inclusion Program which is considered a first for any club in Australia. Members thirteen years old

and over living with a disability have the opportunity to train for their modified Surf Rescue Certificate through this program. Once they receive this award, members can help patrol the beach with mentor support which allows them to connect to the community through valuable volunteer work. The modified Surf Rescue Certificate training incorporates CPR, signals and radio use, as well as carrying out rescues. This program significantly benefits people living with a disability in our community and gives everyone the opportunity to use and protect our beaches. Members younger than thirteen also have significant support from Club members, including the Club's younger surf life savers, to participate in the mainstream weekly Sunday Nippers Program. I would like to thank the Mona Vale SLSC volunteers implementing this important program including: Lexie LeBlang, Skye Rose, Michelle Fry, Stephen Rose, Sienna McWhirter, Rob Fry, Aidan D'Silva, Chloe Harris, Zac Fry, Tilly Rose Cooper, Lawrence Ford, Kurtley Rose, Pam Platt, Jamoia Bennett, Kai Cooper, Simon Harper.

#### **HAMMONDCARE NORTHERN BEACHES COMMUNITY PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICES IN PITTWATER**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—I want to acknowledge the incredible volunteers of HammondCare's Northern Beaches Community Palliative Care Service in Pittwater. These dedicated individuals provide compassionate support to patients living with life-limiting illnesses, as well as their families. Their generosity extends from offering crucial transport to medical appointments, to in-home social visits and respite care that allows a much-needed break for carers. A special mention must go to the Life Stories biographers, who spend around 50 hours crafting meaningful and beautiful personal narratives for patients. These stories provide a therapeutic experience for patients and their families as well as a sense of comfort, legacy, and connection. Volunteers also organise and carry out photography sessions to allow families to create lasting memories with their loved ones. The selflessness and kindness of these volunteers make an immeasurable difference to those in need. Their work embodies the true spirit of community; ensuring dignity, care, and companionship are provided in life's most challenging moments. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to these extraordinary individuals for their invaluable service.

#### **LIVING OCEAN**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—I am proud to recognise Living Ocean, a not-for-profit centre for marine studies based in Pittwater. This important organisation was founded in 2010 by Robbi and Carol Newman along with Deon and Kim Hubner. Their work focuses on researching marine animal behaviour, plastic pollution, and marine environmental processes. Living Ocean work to raise awareness about the human impact on our oceans through research, education, and creative activation. The software application Behayve, developed by Bill Fulton and members of Living Ocean is now used by over 3,000 scientists worldwide to track animal behaviour. Living Ocean recently launched their OpenSounds program, a groundbreaking acoustic monitoring system which helps to record marine biodiversity as part of the Whale and Climate research program. This important technology records ocean species audio along the east coast from Byron Bay to Eden and will be entered into a database that is used by scientists from around the world to support first class research. I know that our community deeply values the preservation of our marine environment. I extend my sincere thanks to Living Ocean for their dedication and commitment, and to the individuals and organisations whose support makes this important work possible.

#### **ANGELS ON WHEELS**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, Minister for Sport, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism)**—I wish to recognise the extraordinary work of Angels on Wheels for its deep commitment to supporting people with disability support services. Angels on Wheels is a family-owned, registered NDIS organisation that delivers a wide range of exceptional services that enhance the wellbeing of their participants, promote their independence, and support them in achieving their goals. Under the guidance of the organisation's CEO and Founder Wayne Banoub, the motivated and hardworking team at Angels on Wheels work to create a compassionate and empowering environment for all participants, inspiring them to reach the highest level of physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. In celebration of International Day of People with Disability, which was held on December 3, 2024, Angels on Wheels hosted an open day at Depena Reserve, showcasing their vital services and celebrating the people with disabilities within our community. I would like to extend my most sincere appreciation and thanks to Angels on Wheels for their dedicated contribution to our community.

#### **BEXLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL'S 138 YEAR HISTORY**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, Minister for Sport, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism)**—I would like to recognise the celebration of Bexley Public School's 138 years of history. Bexley Public School was one of five sites to be given a blue plaque in the inaugural Bayside Council Historical Marker's program for 2024, noting its status as a place of historical importance as nominated by members of the community. Initially led by Principal Kendal Hume and

just 103 students, the school quickly grew, necessitating additional teachers and buildings by 1889. Since that time, the school has been used for social activities and has hosted public meetings, athletic competitions and fetes. In 1917, a second building was constructed to address overcrowding, and during World War I, the school supported local soldiers through a Patriotic Flag appeal. The iconic pedestrian bridge, completed in 1953, symbolises the school's commitment to student safety and innovation. Today, its original buildings, now part of the St Mary and St Mina's Coptic Orthodox Church, remain a cherished link to its storied past. I commend Bexley Public School for 138 years of excellence in education and community service, and I congratulate all who have contributed to its enduring legacy.

#### **COSTA VLAMIS – BAYSIDE MEN'S SHED**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, Minister for Sport, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise Mr Costa Vlamis for his incredible contributions to the Bayside Men's Shed. Mr Vlamis is a long-serving member of this group of talented men, taking on a range of important responsibilities as secretary. Among these affairs, Costa manages grant applications, writes Bayside Men's Shed News Magazine, and meticulously organises social outings including a lunchtime cruise along the Georges River that was held last May. Mr Vlamis is also the leading man coordinating a program with Arncliffe Public School whereby a few boys are given the opportunity to work on a woodwork project at the shed. Costa has found his passion in wood turning, demonstrating determination and skill in everything he creates. Costa truly is an invaluable cog in the wheel of the Men's Shed. As a man of humble character, Costa's hard work often remains behind the scenes and so it is my honour to give him the recognition he so rightfully deserves.

#### **YOM HASHOAH 2025**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Monday 28 April 2025, the commemoration for Yom HaShoah, also known as Holocaust Remembrance Day, will take place. I recognise Youth HEAR. For over five years they have undertaken important work in promoting social cohesion for our community. I particular, I recognise Co-Founder and CEO Julia Sussman and the committee Kara Borecki, Romy Berson, Tanna Klevansky, Leah Mitchell, Sidney Melamdowitz, Britt Foetschl, Jake Kurlansky, Timothy Glass, Simone Starikov, Joshua Kirsh and Harrison Rosen. In 2025, the commemoration has been curated and directed by Youth HEAR with the support of the Sydney Jewish Museum, The NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and the Australian Association of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Descendants. Our local community is home to a vibrant Jewish community that I am proud to represent in the Parliament of NSW.

#### **NSW YOUNG LIBERALS MOCK PARLIAMENT 2025**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Thursday 13 March 2025 I attended the annual Mock Parliament debate between the NSW Young Liberals and NSW Young Labor at the NSW Parliament. I was honoured to preside over this robust debate. This highly anticipated event brings together the young wing of the two major parties. I have no doubt many of the participants will go onto high elected office across all three levels of government. I recognise the NSW Young Liberals led by President Georgia Lowden, vice presidents Liam Kiss, Christian Martinazzo, Alex Baird and Laura Middleton, Secretary Cooper Gannon, and executive members Abby Donaldson, Rory Burke, Mikayla Barnes, Jared Wright, Sarah Halnan, Freya Leach, Kaitlyn York, Henry Streamer, Rebecca Lennon, Lachlan Clark, Abby Smith, Damon Hurley and Alena Boian. I recognise organisers and speakers at the Mock Parliament, Nicholas Comino, Francis Bolster, Maia Edge, Tom Cleary, Aryan Ilkhani, Chelsea Burgess Hannon, Reilly Palmer, Priscilla Spalding, Abbey Dawson, Zac Lancaster, Maya Khurana, and Oliver Griffiths. Thank you for all the work you for carrying the torch of Liberalism to our newest generation.

#### **KU-RING-GAI CHASE PROBUS CLUB**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Friday 11 April 2025, I will be attending the Ku-ring-gai Chase Probus Club at Club Turramurra. As guest speaker, I will be discussing the importance of bowel cancer awareness, as well as sharing insights from my work as a member of the Parliament of NSW. The Ku-ring-gai Chase Probus Club is a fantastic organisation that brings together individuals to stay active, engaged, and connected through a variety of activities. It's a place where members can form lasting friendships, enjoy meaningful conversations, and continue learning throughout their retirement. I recognise President Denise McDermott, Vice President Patricia Ball, Secretary Jim Cunningham, Treasurer Joan Dennis, and directors Harry Angus and John Dennis. I'm looking forward to meeting the members, and I am proud to represent this club in the Parliament of NSW.

#### **HAYDEN WILLIAMS**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Hayden Williams, who has turned a health kick and a hobby into a rapidly growing business! While searching for a healthier alternative to chips at the pub, he decided to try jerky. Enjoying the taste, he was inspired to look up recipes online, which

ultimately led to the creation of Dharra Jerky. "Dharra" a Wiradjuri word meaning "eat", pays tribute to the heritage of both he and his partner. Originally making jerky and giving it away, he soon found his hobby becoming expensive. As interest in his product grew, he took the next step, turning his passion into a business registering an ABN and obtaining a Food Certificate. Hayden has recently been awarded a grant aimed at supporting Aboriginal businesses and is set to expand Dharra Jerky. The funding will allow him to upgrade from a domestic dehydrator to a commercial one and invest in packing machinery, eliminating the need to manually weigh and seal each package as he does now. A self-taught jerky maker, Hayden strives to use locally sourced ingredients wherever possible, including Dharra merchandise. Congratulations on all you have achieved so far, I look forward following your Dharra journey!

#### HEATHER RUSHTON

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge Heather Rushton who has been named as the Mid-Western Senior Citizen of the Year for Mudgee. A tireless volunteer for her local community, Heather has dedicated over forty years of service to numerous organisations, generously giving her time and effort to make a lasting impact. Heather was a founding member of the Mudgee Performing Arts Society 40 years ago and has coordinated the Mudgee Shorts program. After retiring from her position at Mudgee High School, Heather joined the U3A Executive Committee, where she has played an instrumental role in the transition of U3A to Kiladallon Education Centre. She has also held several executive positions within the committee, including President and Secretary, demonstrating her dedication to lifelong learning. Several other committees fortunate to benefit from Heathers passion and expertise include the Cudgegong Camera Club, Mudgee Readers Festival, and Mudgee Arts Council. Additionally, Heather is a volunteer for Rotary, assisting the Town Hall Cinema, The Gardens of Mudgee initiative and stage manages the Carols at the showground each year. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition! Thank you for your incredible dedication and all that you do for the community!

#### JO O'BRIEN

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge Jo O'Brien who is celebrating twenty years as an educator at Narromine Preschool Kindergarten. Affectionately known as "Miss Jo", she is a loving, dedicated and caring educator beloved by both the children and their families. Early childhood educators hold a special place in the heart of families, playing a crucial role in shaping the foundation of children's development. Working in a preschool within a small community often means supporting multiple generations of a family through their early education years. Many in the Narromine community have been fortunate to experience Jo's love, guidance, care, and dedication. Jo's experience and passion have earned her the respect of her peers, establishing her as a highly regarded member of the early childhood sector. Congratulations Jo! Thank you for the positive impact you have made and continue to make on so many children and families in the community.

#### PENRITH LOCAL RECOGNISED IN THE 2025 WOMEN CHANGING THE WORLD AWARDS

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)**—I want to celebrate and acknowledge the achievements of Penrith local business owner and legend Gina Field who has been selected as a finalist for the 2025 Women Changing the World Awards. Gina founded Nepean Regional Security in 1998, heading the charge for women in the male-dominated security industry. Over the course of her career, Gina has been awarded many prestigious titles, as well as being featured on TV and other media. Gina refers to herself as a self-proclaimed business misfit and a walking contradiction, however, this is far from the reality. She is a regular keynote speaker at events across the nation where she talks about her courageous journey as a young female security officer in a male dominated industry. Gina Field's nomination in the Women Changing the World Awards celebrates the outstanding achievement of building a small local business into a multi-million-dollar enterprise. These international awards recognise the growing number of women who are leading the way and inspiring other women to answer the call and act. I am proud that Gina and her once small-town local business is such a big part of our Penrith Community.

#### ELECTRONIC WASTE DROP-OFF DAY

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)**—I want to congratulate the tremendous efforts displayed by the Penrith community last weekend, with residents diverting over 20 tonnes of electronic waste at Penrith City Council's annual e-waste drop-off day. It is essential that we recycle e-waste items responsibly because sending them to landfill takes up a huge amount of unnecessary space, and some components can be toxic to the environment if not disposed of correctly. E-waste is responsible for 70% of toxic chemicals found in landfill and 23,000 tonnes of carbon emissions each year. This month many residents lined up in their vehicles to hand over their old, unwanted, and broken electronic waste. Today, e-waste is growing three times faster than any other type of waste and the hazardous elements that it contains are harmful to our community and environment. I am proud to acknowledge Penrith City Council's efforts in educating the Penrith community on responsible recycling of e-

waste items. Thank you, Penrith City Council, for cultivating and advertising such a resourceful event and to the Penrith community for helping protect our environment.

#### **JENNIFER PARRY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate an outstanding St George local, Jennifer Parry, for her remarkable contribution to our community. As an individual living with a disability, Jennifer has been a strong advocate for accessibility and equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Despite being born blind, Jennifer has never let that stand in her way. Her passion for music and sport has enabled her to inspire others and drive change in these fields. Recently, she was recognised for her efforts, receiving Georges River Council's Localability Citizen of the Year Award at the 2025 Australia Day Awards. Jennifer's achievements in music are exceptional. She has written and released original songs on major platforms like Spotify and has even performed internationally, including with the Endeavour Harmony Chorus at the MGM in Las Vegas. Her dedication to sport is equally impressive. In 2023, Jennifer represented Australia at the International Blind Sports Association Games in Birmingham, UK, as part of the first blind and low-vision women's cricket team. Jennifer is an exceptionally talented, generous, kind and caring person, who represents the very best of our community. I again extend my deepest appreciation for her contributions.

#### **SARONI ROY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Saroni Roy, an individual who has turned her experiences as a cancer survivor and her struggles with invisible disabilities into a powerful platform for change. During her time in Australia, Saroni has used strengths to create positive change. She has become an accomplished artist and a passionate advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion. In 2020, Saroni founded the Saroni Roy Foundation, which is committed to social justice not only in New South Wales, but across the globe. She has leveraged a '3 C's approach', using the 'Cultural, Creative and Circular Economy' to drive positive change. Saroni has also hosted several events, including the MAHATMA Peace Symposium in 2024, an Australia-India Cultural Synergies Initiative and Mahatma Gandhi's 155th Birth Anniversary & launch of "Super Naari - A Period Equity Initiative". Saroni has also earned several awards, including the 2018 Ms India Australia Goodwill Ambassador title, 2022 Strathfield Citizen of the Year, she was also named one of the Most Influential Asian Australians of the Year 2023 & 2024. Saroni is an extremely accomplished, talented and hardworking individual. I want to again commend her for all the work she does in New South Wales.

#### **SHARE THE DIGNITY - MARCH DIGNITY DRIVE**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Share the Dignity, a fantastic Australian charity currently running their March Dignity Drive. Period poverty is a harsh reality faced by many women across New South Wales. No woman should ever have to choose between period products and other essentials, yet, sadly, many are forced to go without. Thanks to the incredible work of Share the Dignity, donated period products are distributed directly to women and girls across the country who are experiencing or at risk of domestic violence, homelessness, or poverty. This is a truly outstanding initiative, and one that I have been proud to support for many years, with our Electorate Office being made an official collection point. This year, we have already received a large number of donations and we hope to collect even more before the end of the month. I encourage everyone to take part in this important initiative by finding your nearest collection point and donating any period products in its original packaging. With your help, we can put an end to period poverty once and for all.

#### **ROBERT JAMES DORAN**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—Mr Speaker – Some people leave a mark – even when you don't know them closely. Robert James Doran was one of those people. He was a regular supporter of mine and of many of my colleagues - always eager for a photo—yet never intrusive. Always a gentleman. Always kind. And always, unmistakably, a man of intellect. He was always impeccably dressed in classic suits, yet never without a touch of flair. Bold sneakers. Nails painted. Badges and commemorative emblems that hinted at stories untold. Robert shared with me the devastating news of his terminal illness less than 6 months ago. Robert was a man of faith, and I extend my heartfelt thanks to Sister Eliezer and St. Peter's in Surry Hills for their care, guiding him back to his maker. If this tribute reaches Robert's extended family, please know this: he was respected, appreciated, and he will be missed.

#### **CONSULATE-GENERAL OF JAPAN – EMPEROR'S 65TH BIRTHDAY**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Thank you to the Consul General of Japan in Sydney, Mr Osamu Yamanaka, and Mrs Mamiko Yamanaka, for hosting a special celebration of the 65th Birthday of His Majesty Naruhito, Emperor of Japan, on 27th February 2025, at the Consul-General's Residence. The Consulate-General of Japan, Sydney, has a long history, first established as Consulate in 1897, and upgraded in 1901. This century-old

diplomatic mission is a testament to the strength of the Japan Australia relationship, including strong diplomatic, economic and cultural ties built on the cultivation of mutual understanding and respect. Infrastructure and development in Western Sydney offers a great avenue for potential for collaboration with Japan, with so many opportunities to grow our vibrant region. With Tokyo recognised as a sister city (State) with NSW, the ties between Japan and NSW are strengthened, enabling further expansion of trade, tourism and cultural exchange. I look forward to continuing positive work with Consul General Yamanaka as we strengthen the bond between our two great nations. I thank the Consul General, and dedicated consulate staff for their support for Japanese-Australians in our community. I wish His Majesty, Emperor Naruhito a wonderful celebration on his 65th birthday.

#### **KENNETH BRINLEY JP**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to Kenneth Brinley for serving our community as a Justice of the Peace for over 58 years. Kenneth is an active member of our Prospect Electorate community. As a JP, Kenneth devotes countless hours to ensure access to free and fair JP services. Entrusted independent and impartial witnesses, Justices of the Peace certify legal documents, like powers of attorney, statutory declarations and affidavits. Justices of the Peace are key to the functions of our legal system, assisting courts and governing bodies to provide timely outcomes. Through his years of service, Kenneth has demonstrated great loyalty and longevity. Kenneth is a true pillar of our community, showing integrity and a genuine passion for helping others. Beyond his JP services, Kenneth is an active volunteer – going above and beyond to keep our community connected. A long-term Pemulwuy resident, Kenneth, his lovely wife Jacqueline and their family are part of the history and future of our Prospect Electorate. His mateship and willingness to always lend a hand, are a great example of the community spirit in Western Sydney. Congratulations again Kenneth on this significant achievement. I thank you for your dedicated, and continued service to our community.

#### **OUR BIG KITCHEN**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Thursday 13th March, I was pleased to meet with Rabbi Dovid Slavin and visit Our Big Kitchen in Bondi, joining in efforts to prepare meals for those in need. Established in 2005, Our Big Kitchen is a community kitchen founded by Rabbi Dovid Slavin and Laya Slavin where people meet regularly to cook healthy, nutritious meals. Today, Our Big Kitchen prepares and distributes more than 250,000 meals a year and supports over 30 charities, including The Salvation Army and the St Vincent De Paul Society. At Our Big Kitchen, everyone has been made to feel welcome, participating in the menu selection, shopping, preparation and cooking. On the day, I was pleased to discuss the broad range of community initiatives and social programs that Rabbi Slavin and his team have helped to foster, addressing issues including trauma, recidivism and social isolation. Our Big Kitchen has harnessed the power of giving to provide both physical and spiritual sustenance. I extend my warmest congratulations to Rabbi Slavin and to all the hardworking contributors, volunteers and supporters for their efforts at Our Big Kitchen. Thank you for your amazing work, preparing meals and giving purpose to community members in need.

#### **YOUTH CHANGEMAKERS**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—We would like to acknowledge the volunteers, teenagers, and founders of Kids Giving Back, a program that gives local teenagers opportunities to contribute to their community in meaningful ways. The Youth Changemakers program provides teens with hands-on volunteering experiences that are impactful, encouraging them to make a difference in their community. Designed to fit into busy schedules, it allows teenagers to engage in service while making a difference. More than just volunteering, The Kids Giving Back YCM program offers teens a choice and flexibility in how they give back, ensuring participants feel empowered and connected to a larger purpose. Teens who engage in the YCM program are also more likely to continue volunteering into adulthood, helping to shape a more engaged and supportive community. I appreciate everyone involved in this initiative. Thank you for your dedication to making our community a better place.

#### **WAVERLEY RUGBY**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—We would like to acknowledge and celebrate the 55th season of Waverley Rugby, a club with a rich history and deep roots in our local community. Founded in 1971 by former students at Waverley College and other local schools, Waverley Rugby has grown into a powerhouse within the NSW Suburban Rugby Union, fostering both athletic excellence and a strong sense of camaraderie. In 2024, the club achieved a remarkable milestone by securing the NSW Suburban Rugby Union First Division Club Championship. This success was further highlighted by the outstanding performances of their second, third, fourth, and fifth grade teams, all of which claimed minor premierships—an achievement that speaks to the club's depth of talent and dedication. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the athletes, coaches, and support staff of Waverley Rugby. Your commitment and perseverance continue to inspire the local community, and I look forward to seeing your continued success in the seasons ahead. Keep up the hard work!



### RANDWICK ART SOCIETY

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—We would like to acknowledge the Randwick Art Society and their first group exhibition in 2025, "A Celebration of Life." The Randwick Art Society was founded in 2009 by Patricia Reid and Margaret Morscheck to promote the local awareness of Art in the community. The society provides a wide variety of activities for members including arts and crafts in a studio group, art demonstrations and workshops, and opportunities to show art in their exhibitions. The exhibition will be held at Bendigo Bank in Clovelly from 6th March – 8th April. All artworks are for sale and the public is welcome to look through the exhibition during the bank's opening hours. I congratulate all the artists hard work and thank the Randwick Art Society for their dedication to the community.

### TALIYAH SUITUPE

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt)**—I wish to recognise Ms Taliyah Suitupe, an alumnus of a school in my electorate, for her Student of the Year award for 2024. Taliyah received this award for her participation in the Students as Lifestyle Activists program, which was developed in partnership with Rooty Hill High school and Western Sydney Local Health District. Taliyah was a co-Master of ceremonies for the recent 20th anniversary of the program, and while a student, she organised sporting events and advocated for cost-effective sports options for young people and families. In today's cost of living and health context, I am delighted to recognise her contribution to our community.

### DANIEL LAWOTHER

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt)**—I wish to recognise Mr Daniel Lawther, who is a resident of my electorate, for receiving the Kindy Gym coach of the year award at the NSW state gymnastics ceremony. While Daniel is only 21, he is already having an enormous impact. Not only does gymnastics alleviate the afterschool burden on hardworking parents, but the sport also improves motor skills, accelerates academic learning, and gives children a foundation for a healthy lifestyle. The Sydney Gymnastics Centre at Rooty Hill has represented Australia on the world stage, and Daniel is furthering this excellence by creating an enthusiastic, supporting environment for our young people. I am delighted to recognise such an outstanding young man.

### ANN-MAREE HUNTER AND CARYL LIGHTFOOT

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Charlestown electorate locals Ann-Maree Hunter and Caryl Lightfoot were among six extraordinary women honoured at the Hunter Wetlands Centre earlier in March for their vital role in establishing the important much-loved site. Ann-Maree and Caryl, alongside fellow trailblazers Jillian Albrecht, Heather Maddock, Teddi McDonald and Peggy Svoboda, were honoured with a Life Membership award by the Shortland-based board. Over the past four decades, these women have made countless selfless contributions to the organisation, a not-for-profit which has worked tirelessly to revitalise the local wetlands—a key environmental asset for the western suburbs of Newcastle. Anne-Maree used her creative talents to design brochures, interpretation signage, merchandise and murals, amongst other services to the organisation. Caryl served in a range of roles, from fundraising, catering, site clean-up, and planting to the more unusual tasks of raising abandoned chicks and chauffeuring endangered ducks. My congratulations to Ann-Maree, Caryl, the other Life Membership recipients, and all of the hard-working volunteers who give so much to our community.

### MATISSE MURRAY

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Congratulations to former Whitebridge High School student Matisse Murray, who has had her Visual Arts HSC Body of Work selected for First Class '24. The Museum of Art and Culture yapang, Lake Macquarie's fantastic art gallery, has a proud tradition of showcasing and celebrating the creative achievements of students from the previous year's HSC Visual Arts cohort from across the Hunter Region. Matisse's work, titled "The sum of its parts", represents the immense pressure faced in elite sports, the relentless feeling of never being good enough, and speaks to giving your entire self to a dream only to lose that dream due to injury. Consisting of thirty textile pieces, hanging in six columns of five, the work measures 2.4 metres by 2.4 metres and depicts parts of the human body in red oil pastel and fabric. It is a striking work of art. Well done, Matisse, on your creative and your selection for First Class '24. I wish you all the best in your future endeavours, and I am sure we will see more from this talented artist.

### DR MELISSA TADROS

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—My congratulations to Dr. Melissa Tadros, a Charlestown electorate local and academic at the University of Newcastle's School of Biomedical Sciences and

Pharmacy, who has been honoured with a prestigious Australian Award for University Teaching. Dr. Tadros received a Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning, an award honouring the diversity of contributions made by individuals and teams to the quality of student learning in higher education. Dr. Tadros' award cites sustained commitment to enhancing student engagement, success and inclusion in biomedical education using digital tools that emphasise a personal teaching style, inspiring diverse cohorts. With research providing new insights into how nerve signals travel from the body to the brain and govern sensory discrimination, Dr. Tadros has contributed to 16 undergraduate and postgraduate human biomedicine courses over the past twelve years. Dr. Tadros is recognised for designing and presenting material in a way that increases student motivation and involvement, facilitating deep understanding of complex content. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition, Dr. Tadros, and I wish you all the best with your future academic career. I'm sure we'll see much more to come from this exceptional researcher.

#### **JAMES RUSE AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping)**—I acknowledge the outstanding academic achievements of James Ruse Agricultural High School in the 2024 NSW Higher School Certificate. James Ruse Agricultural High School had a total of 6 students who had achieved an ATAR of 99.95. Particular recognition is in order for Joshua Dongmin Paik who achieved First in Course for Physics, and Warren Song who achieved First in Course for Mathematic Extension 2. These individual successes are part of the broader excellence demonstrated by James Ruse. The school ranked 2nd among all NSW schools, with an impressive success rate of 62.88%, reflecting the dedication of both students and staff to academic achievement. I highly commend both the school and staff of James Ruse Agricultural High School on another successful year.

#### **EPHING FUTURE LEADERS: CUMBERLAND HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping)**—I proudly acknowledge future leaders within the Epping electorate, particularly Hamza Ali and Vritika Sharma from Cumberland High School, who have been elected as School Captains for 2025 – the highest student privilege at their school. Being a school captain is a significant responsibility. It is a role where students through their words and actions are asked to reflect the values of the school. As representatives of Cumberland High School, where Jeni Klugman, the first female Rhodes Scholar in NSW, once studied, both captains are establishing themselves to be able to contribute meaningfully to society now and in the years to come. I commend Cumberland High School's School Captains Hamza Ali and Vritika Sharma for their commitment to their school community and wish them success in their academic pursuits. I also commend Cumberland High School and Principal Luke Fulwood for fostering such opportunities.

#### **EPHING FUTURE LEADERS: MUIRFIELD HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping)**—I proudly recognise future leaders in the Epping electorate, particularly Remy Ally and Hugo Burness-Cowan from Muirfield High School who were recently elected as school captains in 2025 - the highest student privilege in their school. Being a school captain is an important responsibility where students through their words and actions are asked to reflect the values of the school. As elected representatives of Muirfield High School, Remy and Hugo now represent one of New South Wales' first-ever public technological high schools, a distinguished institution that encourages innovation and prepares students for the challenges of a rapidly evolving world. Through their leadership, they embody the values and spirit that define this pioneering school. I commend both Remy Ally and Hugo Burness-Cowan for their unyielding dedication to their school community and wish them the best on their academic journeys. I also commend Muirfield High School and Principal Jennifer Reeves for facilitating this opportunity.

#### **2025 SURF LIFE SAVING CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, this past month the Northern Beaches played host to the 2025 Surf Life Saving Championships, with events taking place along the pristine shores of Queenscliff and Freshwater Beach. Thousands of competitors, spectators and volunteers descended on the Beaches from the 6th to the 16th March, with clubs from across the state battling it out on the waves over 9 days of intense competition. It has been a privilege for our area to be the host of these Championships over the last 5 years, showcasing the benchmark of surf lifesaving athletes. I wish to give a huge shoutout to Dee Why SLSC, Freshwater SLSC, Queenscliff SLSC and North Steyne SLSC - who collectively not only brought in mountains of silverware between them, but were also instrumental in hosting the event and organising volunteers to ensure the days ran smoothly. Lastly, I thank the Northern Beaches Council for their support and the vital role they played in facilitating such a fantastic tournament which has benefited not only those competing and involved, but also our local tourism industry, showcasing the very best of our beautiful corner of the world.

### **IGA DEE WHY BEACH**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—I acknowledge IGA Dee Why Beach who received a whopping three nominations for this year's IGA Awards of Excellence. I am pleased to inform the House that IGA Dee Why were nominated for Best Small Format Store of the Year and Best Small Format Fresh Department of the Year. In addition, I recognise Krish, a long-standing member of the team who was nominated for IGA Rising Star of the Year. Receiving three nominations is a fantastic achievement, and a true reflection of IGA Dee Why's commitment to quality and customer service. The value of local grocers in facilitating thriving communities cannot be understated, and what Jimmy, Monique and the team at Dee Why have built is no exception. Offering high-quality produce in an aesthetic setting, while supporting other independent businesses and encouraging social connection, IGA Dee Why ticks all the boxes. I congratulate the entire team at IGA Dee Why on their nominations and thank them for their service to our local community.

### **ROWERS OF THE RIVERVIEW 1ST VIII**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr Speaker – I wish to pay tribute and congratulate the Rowers of the Riverview 1st VIII, winners of the AAGPS Major Rennie Trophy, consisting of Harry Kelly, George Field, Angus McGrath, William Bryant, Montague Hyles, Julian Carr, Zac Hyde, Harrison Davis, and coxed by Henry Burton. Their undefeated season showed their true and unshakeable dedication to the Sport.

### **ROWERS OF THE RIVERVIEW 4TH IV**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr Speaker – I wish to pay tribute and congratulate the Rowers of the Riverview 4th IV, winners of the AAGPS Penrith City Council Cup, consisting of Thomas Johnston, Archie Hartman, George Tancred, Henry McRae, and coxed Samuel Keen. Their performance during the season despite numerous injuries, sickness and adversities was commendable.

### **ROWERS OF THE RIVERVIEW 3RD IV**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr Speaker – I wish to pay tribute and congratulate the Rowers of the Riverview 3rd IV, winners of the AAGPS Father Gartlan Trophy, consisting of Noah Coble, Matthew Beaman, Ben Eisenhauser, Boston Kirkby, and coxed by Harry Kelly. A fantastic performance from these young athletes who took the lead in just the last few hundred metres.

### **LOIS MICHEL OAM**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to acknowledge the passing of Lois Michel in late 2024. Lois served for 55 years on the committee of the City of Canada Bay Heritage Society, resigning as the Secretary last year. Over the past 5 decades, Lois was instrumental in some of the Society's most loved projects including the development and management of the City of Canada Bay Museum, and the preservation of Yaralla Estate. Her service to our community has ensured that our local heritage is preserved and that members of our community are educated about our local history which is something that is precious, and she should be acknowledged and commended for. In 2021, Lois was recognised with a Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] for service to the community through heritage societies. It is clear that Lois' passion for history and for our community has meant that future generations can appreciate our history. On behalf of our community, I recognise Lois' lifelong commitment to making our area a better place and I express our sincerest gratitude. Vale Lois Michel OAM.

### **RAINERI'S CONTINENTAL DELICATESSEN**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to acknowledge a quintessential local family business, Raineri's Continental Delicatessen in Five Dock. Husband and wife Peter and Rosaria Raineri first opened the doors of Raineri's in 1981 and have worked so hard over the years to cement their deli as a local icon. Raineri's is now managed and run by their sons Sam and Joseph, with Peter and Rosaria still contributing and helping out in the business. In 2024, Raineri's went viral on viral on TikTok and Instagram. They have been featured in news articles by outlets including the Sydney Morning Herald, and now each day you can expect a line out the door during the lunchtime rush with Sydneysiders near and far lining up to get the best and freshest panino. It is a true privilege that we have outstanding family businesses like Raineri's right here in our beloved Five Dock. On behalf of our local community, I sincerely congratulate Peter, Rosaria, Sam, Joseph and the entire Raineri family and staff on their success and hard work. I wish them all the very best as they continue to serve the best panini in the Inner West for years to come.

### **DR JENIFER MACKNEY**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)**—Congratulations to University of Newcastle researcher and clinical physiotherapist, Dr Jenifer Mackney, on receiving \$798,790 in grant funding to help cancer patients.

Delivered under the Cancer Institute of NSW, the grant funding will allow Dr Mackney and her team to increase access to cancer prehabilitation programs across five NSW rural and regional hospitals. The pre-surgery program developed by Dr Mackney will help cancer patients overcome the risks associated with cancer surgery via exercise, nutrition, and psychological support, which has been shown to dramatically to dramatically improve patients' physical function, reduce complications and time in hospital post-op. Dr Mackney's groundbreaking prehabilitation program will bring much-needed support to thousands of people across NSW, and I thank her for her dedication to our community.

#### **PENNY MCGANN**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)**—Helping our children with their maths homework will now be a walk in the park, thanks to Penny McGann's innovative MathsBites Program. Throughout her three-decade teaching career, Penny noted how the dramatic changes in maths pedagogy in recent years left parents feeling out of their depth. Recognising the gap, Penny designed an online resource to deliver 'bite sized' video tutorials on the NSW k-6 maths curriculum. In addition to explaining how to solve the maths problem, MathsBites also explains why the pedagogy works, giving parents the tools and confidence to help their kids with maths homework. As a parent of four, I know how stressful maths homework can be for both parents and students. This is a wonderful initiative, and I commend Penny for her contribution to our community.

#### **NEWCASTLE FRINGE**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)**—Dubbed 'Australia's biggest little fringe', Newcastle Fringe festival will deliver another sensational line-up from March 20-30. Under direction of Phil Aughey, Newcastle Fringe has grown exponentially since premiering in 2016, and has provided invaluable support to local independent artists. This year's line-up will provide a platform for 612 emerging and established artists across 15 local venues, and includes comedy, theatre, music, dance, cabaret, spoken word, performance art and circus acts. Whether you are retired or still in school, Newcastle Fringe offers something for everyone, and I commend Phil and his team on ensuring Newcastle continues to have a thriving arts sector.

#### **RAYMOND AND REAH RAMIREZ**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to congratulate Bayside residents, Raymond and Reah Ramirez for achieving their Australian citizenship on Australia Day. The journey for Raymond and Reah has been long and arduous. Born in the Philippines and then moving to Singapore in 2010 to pursue job opportunities, Raymond and Reah were searching for some semblance of stability in their lives that they had not been able to find. After visiting Perth and Sydney on a holiday, they fell in love with Australia and dedicated themselves to obtaining Australian citizenship. Eventually after applying for skilled immigrant visas in 2019, they found themselves on Australian soil two weeks before lockdowns were announced. During this tough period they lived off savings and Centrelink support while actively looking for jobs in their area of expertise, both now work in IT in the banking sector. They are very thankful for everything Australia has given them, hoping to one day raise a family, and build a future for themselves in Australia. I would like to thank the Bayside community for accepting Raymond and Reah with open arms, and wish them good luck in their future endeavours.

#### **NATIONAL RESTAURANT AND CATERING AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I voice my congratulations to 'The Kyle Bay on Georges River' venue and its restaurant Jaaks Restaurant and Bar for their achievement in receiving the National Restaurant and Catering Awards for Excellence. This venue is located in Kyle Bay, hosting private events for weddings, businesses, schools and much more within the Georges River area. The Kyle Bay was awarded the Bronze Medal in the Event/Convention Centre category, and its restaurant Jaaks was the recipient of the Gold Medal as the national winner for the Best Greek Restaurant category for the second year in a row. Both the venue and restaurant team hold over forty-five years of experience within the hospitality industry, proving them to be even more deserving of both awards. This achievement is a testament to The Kyle Bay and Jaaks' high quality hospitality service.

#### **WORKSKIL AUSTRALIA – PARENT PATHWAYS**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I voice my full support and thanks to the Workskil Australia organisation for launching an educational centre for parents and carers in Hurstville. Workskil Australia is a not-for-profit employment services provider and registered charity that operates the Parent Pathways initiative. Parent Pathways assists in breaking down literacy and language barriers, offering connections to health services, finding stable housing and directly supports families to pursue education, training and employment opportunities. This program is beneficial to parents and carers who are experiencing difficulty are disadvantaged or living with disability, especially those on government payment programs, early school leavers, First Nations peoples, and those who are aged under 22. The Hurstville Parent Centre is a positive addition to the local Georges River

community in the way it provides a safe space for parents, carers and children to learn, connect and grow. Once again, I would like to give a special thanks to Workskil Australia for their unwavering commitment to building better lives for those undergoing challenges.

### **THE ATHLETIC BUDDHA**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to sincerely congratulate Daniel and Mika Uchino on the 8th anniversary of the opening of their small business, The Athletic Buddha in Concord West. The Athletic Buddha is a local family gym offering classes and individual training for people of all ages. At the core of their business is a commitment to a holistic approach to health, and in all that they do. Daniel and Mika Uchino first opened The Athletic Buddha in 2017 and since then have grown to offer a full family gym focusing on balancing physical health as well as mental wellness. I know that the members of The Athletic Buddha love the community that Daniel and Mika have created. On behalf of our community, I sincerely congratulate Daniel and Mika Uchino, their family and their hardworking staff on this outstanding achievement. Eight years in business is a fantastic milestone! I wish the entire team at The Athletic Buddha all the very best.

### **LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR 2025**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—The NSW Women of the Year Awards on 6 March celebrating inspiring women and girls who are innovating and excelling in their fields throughout the state. I was proud to nominate Parramatta local Dr Felicity Castagna for Local Woman of the Year 2025 for her outstanding work as a national award winning author, in the Western Sydney arts sector, as convenor of the Creative Writing forum and in her role as a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Western Sydney University. Felicity's work 'The Incredible Here and Now' received The Prime Minister's Award and The IBBY. Felicity's most recent work, 'Girls In Boys' Cars' won the Victorian and Queensland Premier's Literary Awards, as well as being named a CBCA Honour Book. Girls In Boys' Cars was adapted for stage by Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta and is on its way to becoming a film. Felicity has run workshops to stoke creativity in places from correctional centres to universities making a profound impact on the arts sector and creative writing empowering writers and amplifying the voices of Western Sydney. My congratulations also go out to all women recognised for their achievements at the ceremony.

### **PARRAMATTA DISTRICT CRICKET CLUB**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—Congratulations to the Parramatta District Cricket Club on their brilliant achievement in winning the NSW Men's Premier Cricket Club Championship for the 2024-2025 season. This historic victory marks a significant milestone for the oldest cricket club in New South Wales as it is the end of a 50-year-long drought, delivering Parramatta's third men's club championship and their first since the 1973/74 season when they were known as Central Cumberland. Finishing on 1,617 points, the club has shown they are truly in a league of their own. To put this into perspective, their triumph was a significant margin ahead of second-place Sydney University with 1,478 points, third-place Northern District with 1,428 points, and the rest of the competition. To top it off, all five of Parramatta's sides have progressed to the finals this weekend as well. To all the players and coaches, Jason Coleman, Paul Sullivan and Allen Turrell, this victory is a true reflection of your outstanding effort. Go Parramatta!

### **INDEPENDENCE DAY OF BANGLADESH**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—On the 26th of March, we come together to honour the bravery, resilience and sacrifices made by the people of Bangladesh in their fight for independence. This day marks the declaration of independence from Pakistan in 1971, a pivotal moment in history that led to the creation of an independent and sovereign Bangladesh. The road to independence was paved with immense hardship, culminating in a liberation war that cost over three million lives. The struggle for freedom was a collective effort of countless men, women and children who stood united as they fought for the right to self-determination. This day is a celebration of victory and also a poignant reminder of the lives lost and the pain endured. I particularly acknowledge those who live and work in the Parramatta Electorate for whom this is an important day of commemoration and reflection. This is not just a day of remembrance, but also a day of pride and reflection. A time to honour the spirit of Bangladeshi resilience and the strength of a nation that continues to grow and thrive along with the enduring hope and determination that continue to shape the future of Bangladesh.

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