

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday 28 May 2025**

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

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

### *Bills*

#### **STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL 2025**

##### **First Reading**

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

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

#### **CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2025**

##### **First Reading**

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

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

#### **VICTIMS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (VICTIMS REGISTERS) BILL 2025**

##### **Returned**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.

### *Notices*

#### **PRESENTATION**

*[During the giving of notices of motions]*

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

### *Bills*

#### **CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIA AMENDMENT BILL 2025**

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

**Debate resumed from 14 May 2025.**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (10:19):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment Bill 2025 and confirm that the Coalition supports the legislation. The bill continues a reform journey that began under the former Coalition Government with the establishment of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013, which provided a comprehensive framework to regulate interment services in New South Wales. With the commencement of part 4 in 2018, the Act replaced inconsistent and outdated burial laws with a new, universal system of interment rights. That foundation was vital. However, our population has grown, family structures have evolved, and the need for further reform has become clear. We need reform that provides clarity to grieving families, respect for those already laid to rest and certainty for those planning for the future.

This is also a deeply personal issue for me. With the indulgence of the House, I will digress briefly from the debate to provide a more fulsome explanation of an aspect of this matter that is rarely spoken about. My mum and dad are funeral directors. This year marks their forty-fifth year of serving small rural communities, including those I have the privilege to represent in this place. They work side by side, with no air gaps. As their eldest living child, it is all I have ever known them to do. Quite literally, they have dedicated their own lives to the service of others. A little over a year ago, Dad experienced a heart attack minutes before he was to lead a funeral service in a tiny, isolated community. The tight-knit congregation of Arian Park were amazing. They took care of Dad until the ambulance arrived. Once he was loaded and en route to Wagga Wagga, my mother remained behind, stepped

up and put her own worry to one side. With grace, strength and dignity Mum delivered the graveside service before later reuniting with Dad in the intensive care unit. Dad recovered.

While I was not there that morning, I have seen firsthand the care they take with grieving families, the quiet dignity with which they do their work, and the enormous personal effort that goes into helping each person navigate the darkness brought on by grief. In rural areas, where everyone knows everyone, it is not just a profession; it is a calling. It is about compassion, community and trust. That perspective stays with me as I contribute to this debate. I want reforms that make a meaningful difference, not just on paper, but on the ground where it matters most to families now and in the future. These are sensitive matters. When people are managing the heartbreak of losing someone they love, they should not be burdened with excessive red tape, problematic registers or regulations that stand in the way of honouring their loved ones or preserving family connections to gravesites. Therefore, it is in that spirit that the Opposition supports the bill, which contains over 50 amendments aimed at making our cemeteries and memorial spaces work better for people in their most vulnerable moments.

One of the most pressing challenges facing the sector, particularly in metropolitan Sydney, is the shortage of burial space. The Minister has noted the growing annual interment demand which is expected to increase by 11,000 per year by 2041. Schedule 1 introduces a new mechanism under part 3 division 8 for renewal exemptions. This will allow cemetery operators to apply for permission to conduct works—such as adding new layers of soil or rationalising space—to increase the capacity of land that has already been used for burials. These renewal works will be carefully regulated. The Act makes it clear that human remains are not to be disturbed. Renewal exemptions must align with the objectives of the Act and include proper consultation with relevant religious and cultural groups. This process will be subject to transparency, ministerial discretion and penalties for noncompliance. This reform acknowledges the reality of finite space while safeguarding community trust. By doing so, it will help to ease the burden on grieving families, reduce uncertainty over the long-term availability of burial plots and ensure that our cemeteries continue to function as sacred, accessible spaces for all.

The loss of a loved one is deeply personal. For many, it is deeply spiritual. That is why schedule 1 [1] amends the objects of the Act to explicitly include not only respect for religious and cultural beliefs but also the need to ensure that no group is disadvantaged and that adequate and proper provision is made for all, including the descendants of those interred. Cemetery operators will be legally required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that interments are conducted in accordance with the relevant religious or cultural practices of the deceased. These reforms reflect a maturing understanding of the diverse needs of our communities. Whether someone is of a particular faith or unaffiliated with any faith, the bill makes clear that their beliefs will be recognised and respected, not only at the moment of burial but across the generations that follow.

Families should never need to navigate a maze of red tape just to maintain a headstone or honour a resting place. Currently, if a descendant wishes to repair a monument or renew a burial right, they may be required to provide documentation that is decades old to prove their status. The bill directly responds to those difficulties. It clarifies and streamlines the inheritance and assignment of interment rights, including those jointly held. Under proposed new section 53A, joint holders must act jointly unless otherwise provided. However, there are now exceptions where that is simply not possible. For instance, the bill enables one joint holder of a renewable interment right to apply for its renewal without needing the others to act jointly, provided appropriate notification procedures are followed. The bill also outlines how cremated remains should be handled when plots are re-used and provides notification processes for all parties. Taken together, these changes remove barriers, allowing descendants to re-establish a connection with gravesites that hold generational significance without being caught in a web of bureaucracy.

A further important reform is the introduction of a mechanism that enables cemetery operators to approve certain memorial works, such as repairs or inscriptions, without requiring the interment right to be transferred to the person carrying out the work. This change acknowledges the reality that extended families or community members often wish to maintain monuments, particularly when the connection to the formal right holder has faded over time. Provided there is no objection from the holder, a respectful and sensible path to maintenance will now be available. This is a compassionate reform. It allows families and communities to honour with dignity those they have lost, even if the original paperwork is gone.

The bill introduces reasonable notification guidelines to replace inflexible statutory requirements for notification. No longer will cemetery operators need to post letters to deceased rights holders or rely on obscure public notices. Instead, Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW [CCNSW] will issue common sense, risk-based guidelines tailored to different circumstances. That will also apply to the renewal of interment rights, applications for recognition as a rights holder, and proposals to re-use plots or modify memorials. These changes will reduce costs for families and cemetery and crematoria operators while improving the likelihood that the right people are reached in a timely and respectful manner. It also introduces stricter standards regarding record keeping, including obligations to maintain updated registers and provide certificates of interment rights that are consistent with the

register. Penalties will apply for noncompliance. These measures reflect a maturing system that balances flexibility and efficiency with the responsibility of preserving our memorial history.

This bill dissolves the four-member board of the Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW and transfers its functions to the chief executive officer. This modern governance structure reflects the evolution of CCNSW, aligning the agency with other similar statutory agencies.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the contributions of current and former members of the Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW board. For more than a decade, across multiple governments, their leadership and service helped guide the agency through its formative years, laying the foundation for the modern, independent regulator we see today. While the governance structure is evolving, the legacy of their work, particularly in shaping and overseeing reform and building trust in the interment sector, deserves recognition and our sincere thanks.

Importantly, the bill provides for two standing advisory groups, a consumer and community group, and an industry group, along with provisions for further advisory input as required. The voices of the sector and the community must continue to be heard, whilst balancing the need for timely decision-making and clearer lines of accountability, particularly as the agency assumes expanded roles in compliance and public engagement. The bill also strengthens the role of Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW. Schedule 1 [9] formally recognises its complaints management function, schedule 1 [7] protects its ability to carry out compliance and enforcement activities independently of ministerial direction, and schedule 1 [48] and new section 139C enable greater transparency through new information-sharing provisions so that families and consumers can make informed decisions when choosing a cemetery operator.

The bill includes technical reforms that bring the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013 into alignment with last year's Catholic Cemeteries and Crematoria Trust Act 2024. These reforms consolidate governance arrangements for Rookwood Cemetery, vest the land in the Crown, and streamline its subdivision in accordance with updated plans and regulations. There are also updates to definitions, liability protections for cemetery operators acting in good faith, and measures to ensure that cemetery status is recorded on land titles for full transparency to future purchasers.

While Opposition members support the bill, we remain vigilant in holding the Government to account to ensure that these and other reforms genuinely deliver for people in times of need. We also remain concerned about the recent introduction of the Interment Services Levy, a measure introduced without parliamentary scrutiny outside the legislative process. The local government sector has criticised it as a cost shift onto councils and, by extension, onto grieving families during a cost-of-living crisis. This so-called "cemetery tax", introduced by regulation, is being passed through to the very people this bill is supposed to help. Families already burdened by grief are now also burdened by higher fees.

The Opposition urges the Government to work constructively with councils, communities and the sector to ensure fair, affordable and compassionate access to interment services across New South Wales. In every electorate across New South Wales, people and families experience grief. They want dignity and clarity. They want to honour their loved ones without jumping through excessive hoops or being told they have lost the chance to do so. The bill, while technical in nature, is anchored in that human experience. It builds on the work started under the Coalition, with reforms that respond to the needs of today and anticipate the challenges of tomorrow. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (10:33):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment Bill 2025. This is a practical bill that delivers real improvements for people, especially when they are at their most vulnerable. Losing a loved one is never easy, and for most families it is one of the toughest moments they will ever face. During that time they should not have to worry about the fine print, outdated processes or getting the run-around from service providers. The last thing anyone needs is extra stress at a time of immense grief.

The bill strengthens consumer protections in the interment services sector, an area that is often overlooked but deeply important, and ensures that people can trust the system, get fair treatment and have clear pathways for resolving any issues. Let us be honest: When families are arranging a burial or cremation, they are not thinking like customers. They are thinking about their loved ones and just trying to get through the grieving process day by day, hour by hour. That is why it is our job to make sure the system is fair, transparent and easy to navigate, and this bill does just that.

A major part of this reform is strengthening the role of the regulator, Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW, which will be given clearer authority to share information about its compliance activities so that families can make informed choices. If an operator is not doing the right thing, the regulator can step in and call it out. That provides real transparency and, more importantly, also builds trust. Families deserve to know that the people they are

dealing with in this sector are acting with integrity. If they are not, the bill gives the regulator additional teeth to step in, speak out and hold bad actors to account. The bill also gives the regulator a clear role in resolving complaints so that families have somewhere to turn when things go wrong. It will not just take notes but also ensure that operators respond and do the right thing. This is about accountability and restoring trust. These reforms are not just bureaucratic tweaks or minor amendments; they are changes that will make a meaningful difference to families across the State.

The bill also cuts red tape, especially around memorial maintenance. Currently, if a person is not the official interment right holder and they cannot dig up old paperwork, which is sometimes over a century old, they can be blocked from fixing or caring for a loved one's grave. That is not just frustrating; frankly, it is disrespectful. The bill fixes that by setting clear, fair rules so that family members and descendants can maintain graves without having to jump through hoops. These are not just plots; they are places of memory that deserve care, not additional red tape and bureaucracy. The bill also responds to a large number of complaints the regulator has received over this exact issue. The Government is not making change just for the sake of it. It is responding to real concerns from the community to make it easier for people to do the right thing.

The changes in the bill build on reforms introduced last year under the Interment Industry Scheme that started the job of bringing greater transparency and consistency to the sector. The bill takes another large step towards finishing that job. It also reflects a government that listens, acts, delivers on its promises, and is focused on good governance but also community outcomes. While I am on the topic, I take this opportunity to highlight something I am particularly proud of in my community. A couple of months ago the Premier was in my electorate of Leppington for the official opening of Macarthur Memorial Park at Varroville. This brand new state-of-the-art cemetery represents exactly the kind of forward-thinking infrastructure the Government believes in. It is the first cemetery on Crown land in the Sydney Basin in about seven or eight decades.

While death is a topic we do not like to think about, interment is an important part of the planning process. We often talk about hospitals, schools, housing, roads and transport, but planning for what happens when we pass away is also important. We need to provide cemeteries and crematoria, because they are a part of what happens in a community. For too long, that has been forgotten about, but this Government is stepping in and fixing the issue, and Macarthur Memorial Park is a perfect example of that. Macarthur Memorial Park is more than just a place to bury the dead; it is a long-term investment in dignity, inclusion and access.

Representatives from many different faiths and denominations were present at the opening of the cemetery, which shows that it will be an inclusive place for people of many faiths as well as people of no faith. This is a long-term investment for my electorate—a very diverse, multicultural part of the world—that will provide understanding and compassion when it comes to the interment of people of different cultures.

Different religions and cultures have different procedures and customs for what happens when a loved one passes. Macarthur Memorial Park is aware of that and works with communities and leaders of different faiths and denominations.

Projects like that—and legislation like this bill—demonstrate how seriously this Government takes its responsibility to serve people across every stage of life, including after death. It is important to have a fairer interment industry, stronger protections for families, more responsive oversight, and a system built around not bureaucracy but the needs of people. Every time we debate a bill or propose an amendment, we must keep people front and centre. It is not about what makes things easier for politicians and bureaucrats; it is about what best serves the community. This bill is a perfect example of that principle. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (10:40):** I speak in support of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment Bill 2025, which continues the reform process that began under the former Coalition Government when it enacted the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013 and further reforms, following the 2020 statutory review of the Act and the 11th Hour report. I am pleased that the Government is committed to ensuring that industry experts, consumers and community groups are key stakeholders in the cemeteries and crematoria sector. This sector is a delicate and sensitive government service that must strike the right balance between the practical need for burials or cremation and the religious, cultural and personal beliefs and memorialisation of a passed loved one.

On reading the Government's second reading speech, it was illuminating to gain an insight into the administrative and bureaucratic challenges people sometimes face when trying to gain permission and access to repair their family's gravesite. The Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Counter-terrorism said:

We are making it easier to repair the grave of a loved one. Cemeteries are an important part of our personal and social histories. For too long, complex and archaic rules have prevented families and communities from playing an active role in maintaining these special places. Too often, the connection between graves and interment right holders is lost over generations and monuments are left unattended to. At present, cemetery operators are legally powerless to stop this decline unless there is a safety issue. Worse still, operators are currently obliged to prevent family or community members from maintaining the monuments unless they can produce documents dating back several generations. Clearly this is undesirable. Communities should be able to honour their loved ones without facing burdensome administrative barriers.

I repeat that last sentence: "Communities should be able to honour their loved ones without facing burdensome administrative barriers." That direction was emphasised by the previous speaker, the member for Leppington. The focus of bills should be the community and our constituents, not bureaucracy and rules that are heavy and burdensome. This bill will go a long way to enabling communities and loved ones to honour their deceased relatives in a humane, personal and meaningful way, and I commend the Government for taking this step.

Unfortunately, the bill does not go far enough. The bill outlines how monuments or gravesites that have fallen into disrepair over decades can be attended to and repaired. Sadly, it does not address the current grievous issue of third-party cemetery and crematoria operators, such as InvoCare, removing personal mementos and gravesite memorialisation under the guise of work health and safety. My constituent Chloe Kessell has commenced a petition to change that situation. I am very proud to support Chloe. Her best friend, Aroha Tupaea, died suddenly from a cardiac arrest in 2022, aged only 19. Aroha is buried at Pinegrove Memorial Park in Minchinbury. For Chloe Kessell, devoting time to maintaining the grave of her best friend helps ease her grief. She wrote:

It was kind of therapeutic to come down and spend that time, one on one ... making sure that it—  
that is, her gravesite—  
was how she would have wanted it.

Ms Kessell has taken the responsibility of maintaining her friend's grave for Ms Tupaea's family. However, Pinegrove's policy of banning ornaments has loved ones calling for reform to State laws around the cemetery industry. Pinegrove's owner, InvoCare, has a "fresh flowers only" policy, which restricts clients from decorating graves with ornaments that InvoCare deems unauthorised. Even the use of the word "unauthorised" is brutal when we are speaking of the passing of a loved one or friend.

Ms Tupaea's mother, Nicole Biggar, has had to bury three daughters. Two of them—Ms Tupaea and her baby sister, Brooklyn—are buried at Pinegrove. Ms Biggar said her daughter's once-colourful gravesite was a place to reflect on her memory. Now, it is heartbreaking to see it bare. She said:

Imagine if this was your loved one. That you decorated your loved one in a manner that's not offensive ... and shows exactly who they were.

Then the next day you come and see a bare patch with no pictures, no decorations. Nothing.

Due to the emotional toll, Ms Biggar chooses not to visit the cemetery often. Aroha's gravesite was also personalised through photographs that were attached to a white cross. InvoCare removed the photographs and left a blank cross. I asked InvoCare, "How are photographs attached to a white cross a work health and safety risk?" InvoCare replied, "The ornamentation policy is a long-established policy."

In contrast, cemeteries operated by Penrith City Council allow the personalisation and memorialisation of gravesites. The council simply requests that no glass and porcelain be used. Penrith City Council has been managing its cemeteries since 1967, whereas InvoCare began operations in 2001. I believe there is a way forward for InvoCare, and that is to be more sensitive and empathetic and more modern in how it operates its facilities by allowing the personalisation of gravesites. InvoCare should adopt the sensible and sensitive cemetery policy of Penrith City Council. I encourage everyone to sign Chloe Kessell's e-petition, which can be found on the New South Wales Parliament's website. The petition closes next week on 2 June. I finish my contribution by quoting Chloe Kessell. She said:

I don't believe aesthetics is more important than personalising someone's grave, because that's how it feels. Leave us alone and let us grieve in peace.

I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (10:47):** I contribute to debate in support of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment Bill 2025. It is a Government bill, but I am pleased that the Opposition also supports it. The explanatory note states:

The object of this Bill is to amend the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* (**the Act**) to make provision for the following matters—

(a) the dissolution of the Board of the Cemeteries Agency—

in New South Wales, the cemeteries and crematoria agency is given that bureaucratic title—

- and other matters concerning the governance and functions of the Cemeteries Agency,
- (b) the establishment of a scheme to exempt cemetery operators from the Act, Part 4 in relation to increasing the number of interment sites in parts of cemeteries with existing interment sites,
  - (c) the permission for cemetery operators, and approval of other persons by cemetery operators, to carry out works in relation to memorials at interment sites,
  - (d) the administration of interment rights and other matters concerning interment rights jointly held,
  - (e) the making of guidelines by the Cemeteries Agency in relation to notification requirements and other matters under the Act,
  - (f) matters concerning the land at Rookwood Cemetery—

in short, that is the transfer of Rookwood Cemetery to become part of the Crown land estate—

- (g) other consequential and miscellaneous matters.

One element of the bill is the streamlining of the process that a person follows to become the interment right holder of their predecessor's graves. The Act currently provides for interment rights to be expressly bequeathed or for rights to pass to the beneficiaries of a person's estate through the laws of intestacy. Owing to the practical realities of administering a cemetery, people inheriting rights in that fashion need to notify the cemetery operator to have their ownership of the right recorded on the register.

Unfortunately, that is not always front of mind for families following the passing of a loved one. It is not uncommon for people to forget to have the register updated. If a person then passes, there is no automatic way to pass the right on to their descendants. It may then be many years, or even generations, before the cemetery's register recognises the appropriate right holder.

The current system is cumbersome for all parties in those situations. It requires extensive documentation from decades or even centuries ago, which is often both costly and distressing for families who simply want to re-establish a connection with a significant site. Meanwhile, operators are required to play detective to determine whether the application should be successful. Cemetery operators do their best to provide services to customers in their time of need, but the complexity of the current process takes limited resources away from the other important work operators need to do. The current system often results in delays and additional cost, causing distress and frustration for families.

Updating interment rights is an essential aspect of cemetery management because it ensures that families can continue to honour their loved ones and maintain their family plots. That is a significant cost issue for many families. The Government is taking decisive action to make the process smoother. As an aside, I note that my family came across this very issue many years ago on the passing of my dear grandmother. We discovered that the Mehan family has a family plot in the Catholic section of Sandgate Cemetery in Newcastle, right down the back near the swamp. When we discovered that we had a family plot, we also discovered that there were several members of my family interred there. My lovely grandmother Ivy Mehan is now interred there with my grandfather.

We are now aware of that cemetery plot, and we have done the work to update the register at that cemetery. But it was not a simple process, and I am really pleased that the bill makes it a whole bunch easier for members of the community. The bill improves the steps required to perform that necessary work, addressing the existing issues by providing a simple and transparent process for updating interment rights. The bill replaces the convoluted process that operators and the public are currently required to follow with clear guidelines, making it easier and more straightforward for everyone involved by taking a commonsense approach. By reducing unnecessary administrative burdens, we are cutting costs and ensuring a smoother and better experience for the people of New South Wales.

That change is crucial in helping families maintain their connection to their ancestors' graves without facing undue hardship or bureaucratic delays. Many provisions in the Act require an operator to attempt to contact a right holder before taking an action. As it stands, the steps they are required to take are often expensive, redundant or ineffective. For example, there are instances where the operators are obliged to send multiple letters by registered mail to somebody they know to be deceased. That is not an effective use of the operator's resources. It can be very time consuming for a customer and distressing for the family of the deceased. The bill will instead allow for flexibility, depending on the circumstances, with notification requirements guided by reasonable notification guidelines that are well established and publicly available. The guidelines will be published by the regulator, Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW, and will include a commonsense approach to attempting to notify interested parties of relevant actions.

By providing a straightforward and accessible system for updating interment rights and by setting clear notice requirements, we are ensuring that all families can maintain their connection to their ancestors' graves. As I said in my opening remarks, I am pleased to speak in support of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment

Bill 2025. This vital piece of legislation addresses the complexities and challenges of updating interment rights. It provides a clear and transparent process, and reduces costs and administrative burdens both for the public and for operators. I urge my colleagues to support the bill and ensure that all families can maintain their connection to their ancestors' graves without facing undue hardship. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (10:53):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment Bill 2025. The bill is a historic step forward for families and communities wishing to maintain and honour the graves of their loved ones. Members of the public and families of those who have passed away are critical to maintaining the ongoing connection with the past through monuments and memorialisation. The ability to maintain a memorial for a loved one or to preserve cultural heritage and history is an essential part of continuing the narrative of a community, from its past into its present and future. The bill recognises the importance of the role of families and community groups and makes it easier for them to care for monuments.

Monument maintenance is the responsibility of the interment right holder, and operators are not permitted to repair or maintain monuments unless there are safety concerns. That means that operators are also not permitted to let anyone other than the interment right holder carry out maintenance work. That can be a real problem because living family members who maintain a personal connection to graves are not always the interment right holders. Administrative connections to graves can be lost over time for a whole multitude of reasons. It is not always simple for family members, several generations later, to demonstrate that they should be the interment right holder. It can involve sourcing generations-old documents to trace the inheritance of the interment right. It also means that interested parties like local history groups cannot maintain memorials despite having relevant community interest.

For too long, operators have been obliged to prevent families from repairing and preserving monuments due to bureaucratic obstacles. The bill empowers cemetery operators to allow descendants, community members and other interested parties to apply to maintain and repair monuments without needing to transfer interment rights. That simplifies the process by cutting through red tape to ensure that the maintenance of those special places is accessible to all. By facilitating repairs, we not only preserve our personal and social histories but also enhance the customer experience by ensuring that people can show their respect by tending to monuments.

Moreover, this legislation supports local communities by allowing them to take an active role in maintaining their cemeteries. Empowering individuals and community groups to carry out maintenance and repairs can foster a sense of ownership and pride in those spaces. That communal effort not only preserves the physical monuments but also strengthens the bonds within our communities. Additionally, the bill addresses the financial burden that often accompanies the maintenance and repair of monuments. We are making it more affordable for families to maintain the graves of their loved ones by streamlining the process and removing the requirement to source generations of birth, death and marriage certificates. That ensures that everyone, regardless of their financial situation, can honour and preserve their family history.

The Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment Bill 2025 is a significant step forward in ensuring the preservation and maintenance of our monuments and memorials. It empowers communities, reduces financial burdens and enhances the customer experience. I am sure all members will agree that is particularly important in such vital spaces as cemeteries. I acknowledge the previous speakers who have contributed to this debate. In particular, I acknowledge the member for Cootamundra, who spoke of her personal experience in the care for the deceased. I have referred to the responsibility of health, which extends from before birth to the end of life. Medical practitioners and nurses know that the deceased are still their patients until they leave the hospital. It is admirable to see the respect provided to the deceased in our local communities.

There are very significant historical burial sites in rural areas like my own, from Batemans Bay all the way to Eden, which have suffered the consequences of neglect. That neglect is not intentional but occurs simply due to the passage of time and the loss of family connection to the area.

It is interesting to look at the expansion of burial types occurring in our area. I acknowledge the development of an area called Walawaani Way at Bodalla. That will be our first natural burial site where, without the need for monuments, people can be interred and undergo natural decomposition with the possibility of tree planting on that site in the future. There is also the ability to make expressions of interest for other methods of human remains disposal, including water dissolution. I commend the bill to the House.

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

*Members***MEMBER FOR SHELLHARBOUR**

**The SPEAKER:** I am sure all members will join me in wishing the member for Shellharbour a happy birthday.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome everybody to question time in Australia's first Parliament. I welcome Ruby Riethmuller, CEO of Womn-Kind, accompanied by youth advisors and work experience students, guests of the member for Charlestown. I also welcome North Shore State Electoral Conference members, guests of the member for North Shore. I welcome various groups from the Camden electorate, guests of the member for Camden. I acknowledge Casey and Deborah Palmer, guests of the member for Wollondilly. I acknowledge Jai McEwen, project officer of the Barang Regional Alliance, guest of the member for Gosford. I welcome, Geoff, Helen and Andrew Sharrock, guests of the member for Upper Hunter. I welcome Warren Mundine, AO, guest of the member for Lane Cove. I also welcome students and teachers from Riverstone High School, Colo High School and Alexandria Park Community School who are participating in the Legal Studies and Legislature Program, conducted by the parliamentary education team. Finally, I welcome members of Southlakes U3A, guests of the member for Lake Macquarie.

*Members***REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTION TIME**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** On behalf of Mr Chris Minns: I advise the House that the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces will answer questions this day in the absence of the Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport.

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

*Question Time***HOUSING SUPPLY**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:06):** My question is directed to the Premier. Now that his personal Rosehill plan has fallen through, will the Government urgently implement rezoning so that the Camellia-Rosehill Place Strategy that was finalised in 2022 can deliver 10,000 new homes?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:06):** This is where the New South Wales Opposition pretends that it had a plan for housing over 12 years: "We had this Camellia plan."

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Nothing better sums up the Leader of the Opposition's luck than the day he endorsed Rosehill being the day it was defeated. He finally came out from the shadows and said that Rosehill was a good idea on the day it was defeated. If only we had had that kind of advocacy the day prior, perhaps it would have got up. I do not think anyone in this House is going to be fooled into thinking that the Liberal Party and The Nationals did anything about planning or housing over a prolonged period of time. I am all ears.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The member for Lane Cove knows this. Every time Rob Stokes came back from Oxford he would create another committee. Remember the Western Sydney Parklands Authority? At one point, the member for Wollongong and I got so sick of running into people who were chairs of Government committees we had never heard of that we commissioned a flowchart.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** This flowchart was the Coalition plan for housing.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will resume his seat. The Leader of the Opposition rises on a point of order.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** It is Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The Premier must directly answer the question he is asked, not the question he wants to be asked and not a thought bubble like his Rosehill strategy.

**The SPEAKER:** Members on both sides of the Chamber will come to order. There is no point of order.



**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** If we look at the so-called Camellia-Rosehill finalised strategy, was it a development application? No. Was it a rezoning? No. Was it a development control plan that had been signed off by the Minister? Nothing was done. It was a couple of lines. If people want lines, we have lines. For too long, the previous Government, with the exception of the member for Lane Cove—I think he tried to do something—did absolutely nothing when it comes to housing in New South Wales. It did not even try to fail.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Nothing was done. We need to take more risks, not fewer, when it comes to housing, and that is exactly what the Government wants to do.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Coffs Harbour to order for the first time. I call the member for Miranda to order for the first time. That was the first question today. The Premier gave a bit of an opening in his answer for the Opposition to comment, but I will not tolerate interjections such as that. Members will come to order or they will be removed from the Chamber.

### HOUSING SUPPLY

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (11:10):** The nimbys did not give him an extension. My question is addressed to the Premier—

*[Interruption]*

**The SPEAKER:** I do not need assistance from the member for Miranda. Members will come to order. I call the member for Manly to order for the first time. The member for Mount Druitt will ask his question without the prologue.

**Mr Mark Coure:** Read it from the top.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Oatley to remove himself from the Chamber under Standing Order 249A for the remainder of question time.

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

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA:** Will the Premier please update the House on the Government's plan to address the housing crisis facing New South Wales?

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. I remind members that one member has already been directed to remove himself from the Chamber.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:12):** For 12 years under a Liberal-Nationals Government absolutely nothing happened for planning or housing in New South Wales. Of course we are disappointed by the Rosehill vote. We wanted it to get up. I want to hear whether members were supportive of or opposed to the proposal. In any event, we would have liked it to get up. There is no point in pretending otherwise. We think it would have been good for Sydney, for housing and for racing. But, at the end of the day, it was for members of the Australian Turf Club to make their call, and we respect their decision.

One of the more outlandish allegations by the Opposition this morning was that this has held up the metro. I report to the House that the metro has already tunnelled past Rosehill. There we have it: nothing but inaccurate information, half-done housing plans and more Government committees from the Liberals and The Nationals in New South Wales, with Government committee members floating around like seaweed in Sydney. In every committee meeting, there is someone who chaired a government advisory panel on housing. We are getting on with it. As a result of the largest reforms to planning in the history of New South Wales, planning approvals are now 15 per cent faster than under the previous Government.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Hornsby to remove himself from the Chamber under Standing Order 249A for the remainder of question time.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Hornsby left the Chamber at 11:14.]*

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The number of applications lodged is up nearly 30 per cent compared with under the previous Government. Members opposite ask, "Where?" What about the Housing Delivery Authority, under which 116 major housing developments have been declared State significant development, the equivalent of 45,000 new homes for New South Wales? Apparently the transport oriented developments do not exist. Members opposite spent two years bagging them out and saying they were an overreach, and now they "do not exist". There are 39 transport hubs in Sydney.

Low- and mid-rise housing developments and rezonings are the missing middle Sydney. They were promised for 12 years by the Coalition but never implemented. They are persistently criticised by those opposite

but have been implemented by Labor. The Pattern Book Design Competition has been implemented by Labor. As a result of the land audit, roundly criticised by those opposite, 30,000 homes have been delivered by Labor. This is the largest investment in social housing in the history of New South Wales, including 8,400 dwellings and money allocated in the budget to roll out to towns and high streets right across Sydney. But when they do pop up, particularly in Coalition electorates, they are persistently criticised. [*Extension of time*]

Where is it? Reform after reform over the past 18 months has been opposed by those opposite. We would like to codify it in a bill. We would like them to be standard operating procedure in New South Wales when it comes to planning and housing. But it requires bipartisanship, because The Greens in the upper House are unlikely to vote for it. We will see whether the Opposition can put its money where its mouth is. If it is genuinely interested in housing and development, and uplift and urban consolidation in Sydney, it will support the bill, even though it has opposed every single regulation or initiative brought to this House. Members opposite cannot have their cake and eat it too.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I have been waiting for a housing policy from the Liberals and The Nationals for a long time, certainly for the past two years.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** To their credit, I saw one. It says, "Liberals and Nationals to abolish stamp duty for first home buyers." It says that the Liberals and The Nationals will reduce or abolish stamp duty for first home buyers for properties up to a million dollars. I thought, "That's an innovative policy. It is very similar to the one initiated by NSW Labor." Then I looked closely, and it is from the Victorian Liberal Party. After two years of bagging out our tax-cutting plan for New South Wales first home buyers and insisting that we should introduce land tax, the Victorian Liberals adopt the same policy. We have achieved urban consolidation and housing reform. We are disappointed about Rosehill, but there will be more opportunities for members opposite to step up and back planning reform and housing in New South Wales. We are all ears to see whether they will do it.

#### HOUSING SUPPLY

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (11:17):** My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Now that the Rosehill racecourse purchase has fallen through, when will the Minister urgently implement a place strategy to deliver thousands of new homes on the perimeter of Canterbury Park Racecourse?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:17):** It is testing my memory a little, but I think this is the first time I have had a question from members opposite about housing, this year at least.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** It is interesting that the question is not from a frontbencher. Someone from the backbench has got up the gumption to ask about housing.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Underlying this challenge is the sheer glee of members opposite when the Rosehill vote went down yesterday. I can see it now in the Leader of the Opposition. They said, "Yes, it went down. We won't have houses to deal with there. We can take some more opportunity away from young people in New South Wales. It's a great win for the Liberal Party." That is what members opposite were saying in the corridors. And, yes, of course we are absolutely disappointed in that.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** The member for Goulburn should have been listening more closely to the Premier when he was outlining some of the things the Government is dealing with. While today the Leader of the Opposition has been crowing about a place strategy that was sort of done maybe towards the end of the term of the former Government, that is not a rezoning. It is not a development application. It is not a construction certificate. It is not a completion. It has nothing to do with that.

**Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. We are a minute and a half into the question, and I have not heard the Minister talk about the Canterbury racecourse. I ask the Minister to be relevant.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The Minister was being generally relevant. I draw the attention of the Minister to that component of the question. The Minister will continue his answer and be directly relevant.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Canterbury racecourse is part of the Bankstown transport oriented development accelerated precinct, which was recently done. It was done last week. We sorted that out—all is done. What we are talking about here is whether members opposite are genuine in their line of questioning about housing, or whether they are trying to make cheap political points out of a decision that would have been great for Sydney.

**Ms Eleni Petinos:** Oh!

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I hear the moans and groans of the member for Miranda. If anyone is out for cheap political points, it is her. She gave notice of a motion criticising the Liberal-run Sutherland Shire Council. The Labor mayor is working with the State Government to try to fix the planning system. If Opposition members want to talk about lines on a map, these are lines on a map that the former Government left to the planning system. The Minns Labor Government is fixing it and will deliver more homes, more jobs and better renewable energy than the Opposition ever could, or would.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. Two Opposition members have already been removed from the Chamber. Government members have also been somewhat unhelpful. I will not tolerate that behaviour to continue for the rest of question time.

#### NORTH-WEST SYDNEY SCHOOLS

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (11:21):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to deliver world-class education opportunities for families in north-western Sydney?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:21):** I am more than happy to answer the question of the member for Riverstone about his favourite topic. I know that because, like many people in north-western Sydney, I first came to know the member for Riverstone when he was leading the local chamber of commerce and arguing strongly that there was a lack of education infrastructure in north-western Sydney. Every single school in his electorate, which he went on to win and become the member for, was over capacity. The reason for that was an explosion in population that was not met with the delivery of school infrastructure. It is the member's favourite topic for a good reason. The Government is investing in school infrastructure in north-western Sydney like never seen before, but it is catch-up work because suburbs in north-western Sydney exploded.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** We built 180 new schools.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The member for Hawkesbury has absolutely no ground on which to stand for saying anything to do with this subject.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** When the member representing the suburb of Box Hill was asked why schools were not delivered under the previous Government, her answer was—let's all remember what it was—"I just don't have an answer."

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Hawkesbury that she has been called to order. The member should not be so easily baited.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** When it comes to the delivery of long-overdue infrastructure in north-western Sydney, the Minns Labor Government, which the people of New South Wales elected, is delivering. The latest delivery that I am able to update the House on is the new school we have announced at Grantham Farm. For the information of members opposite, Grantham Farm is between Riverstone and Box Hill. It is a new community, and this Government is pleased to announce delivery of a brand-new school for Grantham Farm as part of the Government's investment in north-western Sydney of 600 new classrooms. There will be 24 new permanent classrooms at Grantham Farm, three support learning rooms and 60 places in a public preschool. That has happened since the Labor Government was elected and after the previous Government did not build one public preschool at all in New South Wales.

The new growing community of Grantham Farm will have a brand-new school with a brand-new public preschool. Sarah Webster, the Vineyard Public School P&C president, said it best when she was reported in *The Daily Telegraph* as saying, "It's more than I was expecting." That is exciting—but, you know what, Sarah? Your kids deserve it. That is why this Government is doing it. She went on to say, "The community has been crying out

for new schools." What a novel idea that a government would actually build them. She went on to state: "A bigger school opens up bigger opportunities." [*Extension of time*]

In addition, at nearby Box Hill, the Government is delivering three new schools and two public preschools. It is clearly only a Labor government that is delivering for that community. That is probably why the Federal Labor member for that area experienced a 23 per cent swing to her from Box Hill. When I was campaigning with Michelle Rowland, local residents were saying they knew that the Liberals had forgotten Box Hill. Clearly, the New South Wales Labor Government is delivering where the Liberals completely neglected communities in north-western Sydney.

The Government is also upgrading and building a range of schools in the Hills area in places such as Castle Hill and Kellyville. The former member for Castle Hill likes to crow about how he fought for his electorate with the previous Government, but he did absolutely nothing on this issue. At least at Rouse Hill Hospital, he showed up with a shovel, but he did not even show up with a shovel for Castle Hill Public School.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for North Shore will come to order. The former member for Castle Hill can defend himself.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That is why the people of north-western Sydney elected a new Government to deliver for them: because their children deserve quality public education. We know that because our enrolment growth audit showed that the top areas of need were all in Western Sydney. While we deal with that, we hear the member for Willoughby crow about the previous Government upgrading every school in his electorate. The same enrolment growth audit showed that Willoughby ranked—wait for it—359th. Student enrolments actually declined there, so saying "Don't build the schools that we need in Western Sydney" is a slap in the face for all Western Sydney families, whom this Government is now delivering for.

#### TRAIN MANUFACTURING

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (11:26):** My question is directed to the Premier. In 1994 the smash hit *Love Is All Around* was top of the Australian Recording Industry Association charts and new Endeavour trains were introduced. Now, 30 years later, we are waiting on replacements. Will the Premier let the House know how replacements are going—if there's no beginning and there'll be no end, 'cause on this Parliament my community does depend?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:27):** I feel that love is all around us. It is a serious question that relates to procurement from the New South Wales Government. I draw to the attention of the House to a decision made in 2016 by a fellow named Andrew Constance.

**Mr Paul Scully:** *Ferry McFerryface.*

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** *Ferry McFerryface.* I know he was a candidate in the recent Federal election, but I am not sure how he went. Did he get up in the end?

**Mr Paul Scully:** He came second.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** He did not make it. I have been keeping count: I think that was his sixth attempt since leaving this Parliament—they call him "Offshore Andrew" down there. He decided that we could not build trains in New South Wales and that a public-private partnership [PPP] would be best with the construction taking place offshore. He was not alone. The National Party also was implicated in that decision. I have a quote from a John Barilaro—I do not know what happened to him either. He stated:

We don't build trains in New South Wales and often we will get criticised, but the reality is it's about delivery on time, efficiencies and costs.

He added that a PPP is a balanced approach in getting value for money for the taxpayer, getting the product that we need quicker, and understanding that in Australia, building trains is "not one of our strengths". That is a funny thing for a leader of the National Party to say. Maybe we should send him to New York as our representative. He sounds like a good advocate. Maybe he should be off to New York, helping us out over there.

In any event, I need to reveal to the House that a leaked Infrastructure NSW report from 2022 indicated that the project had blown out by \$826 million and was 35 months late—three years late. The decision in 2016 was that "New South Wales can't build trains. Don't worry about it. We will get it from Spain. It will turn up any day now." We are still waiting in 2025. I can reveal to the House that, of the 29 trains that were ordered, we currently only have four.

That is a salient warning to this and future parliaments that we can build trains in New South Wales and that domestic manufacturing counts. We would have far more leverage and control of the contract, and we would understand how far they were from the tracks. We have over 100 years of history of building trains. I think the

decision is a repudiation of Offshore Andrew, and a repudiation of that failed candidate for the Consul-General's job in New York, John Barilaro. [*Extension of time*]

I point out that none of these were included in the financial costs in the campaign running up to the election. You would assume that, if members opposite had an overrun of \$826 million, ran the risk of losing the next election and would hand over that horrible situation to the incoming Government, they would have given a heads up. "No, why would we do that?" The reason they did not want to do that was because they did not want to let the cat out of the bag. They did not want the public to understand that their years-long project of offshoring Australian manufacturing jobs was not only not delivering products on time, but it was also not on budget. We will get the trains on the tracks as soon as possible. It would have been a hell of a lot easier if they had been built right here in New South Wales.

#### NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (11:31):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health and Regional Health. Will the Minister please update the House on the provision of healthcare services at the Northern Beaches Hospital following the appointment of receivers by its owner, Healthscope?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:31):** Wow, what a great deal members opposite signed us up to. When I attended the northern beaches community forum with the Treasurer—there were probably only 500-odd people packed in the room—and I could hear the cheers for private-public partnerships. Didn't they love them! We are going to make sure that every single person in New South Wales knows that those opposite signed them up to a dud deal on the northern beaches. It has led to poor patient care. It has led to a financial crisis to try to get the community out of it. It has also signalled to the rest of New South Wales, given the intent of those opposite to do this to five other hospitals, that they were hellbent on making sure that was how they would deliver health care.

I say to the people of the northern beaches that they should think long and hard in 2027 because those opposite will come back to Parliament and drive a privatisation agenda in health care the likes of which they have never seen before. And I have proof of that because, in the last 24 hours, the Leader of the Opposition was asked a simple question: "Do you apologise for signing up the community to this deal?" He refused to apologise. This is in their DNA. This is what they believe in. The people of the northern beaches have had enough. Their two local members have been fierce advocates for bringing that hospital back into public hands. Right now, we have teams led by NSW Treasury, the Cabinet Office and NSW Health engaging directly with the receivers who were appointed on Monday to try to unpack this mess. This is a contract—

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** When are we voting on Joe's law, Minister?

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

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** When are we voting on Joe's law?

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

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** Come on, don't be insincere.

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

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** What a load of rubbish!

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

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** You sat there while I spoke with absolute sincerity.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Vacluse from the Chamber under Standing Order 249.

[*The member for Vacluse left the Chamber at 11:34 accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.*]

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time. I call the member for Hawkesbury to order for the second time.

**Dr Michael Holland:** I seek additional information.

**The SPEAKER:** An additional two minutes is granted.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** You heard that, folks. That was the member for Vacluse defending privatisation. Who would have thought?

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Led by Treasury, the Cabinet Office and NSW Health, the Minns Labor Government is trying to unpack a contract that, in the public component, goes out to 2038 but, in the private component, goes out into 2058. Members can see the impact and challenges that we face as we try to get the public off the hook for an absolute disaster caused firstly, secondly and thirdly by members opposite. It is not their first time. We have seen this trainwreck with Port Macquarie and we would have seen it with five other hospitals: Wyong, Goulburn, Bowral, Maitland and Shellharbour. We are now working as closely as we can every single day to ensure three things. Firstly, and most importantly, we want to ensure that services remain at Northern Beaches Hospital and are delivered safely and effectively. That is the top priority for everybody. Secondly, we are trying to unpack the situation and bring the hospital back into public hands without huge windfall gains for a private company. Thirdly, we want to pass a piece of legislation that ensures this will never, ever happen again. I can assure members opposite that I will personally remind every person in New South Wales that they signed them up to the worst healthcare deal the people of this State have ever seen. *[Time expired.]*

#### MOORE PARK GOLF COURSE

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (11:37):** My question is directed to the Minister for Lands and Property. Will the Minister rule out using land occupied by Moore Park Golf Course as part of any plan to address the Government's housing shortfall?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, Minister for Sport, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (11:37):** I thank the member for her question. Of course I will rule it out.

**Mr Chris Minns:** It's scaremongering!

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** It is scaremongering. It is really disgraceful to see the spring in the step of members opposite, and how satisfied they are that potentially—

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** Young people cannot get housing.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** Yes, cannot get housing. It is all about disturbing progress. I am really disappointed. Those opposite are all about scaremongering and interfering with anything positive that is going ahead. They are absolute wreckers. They serve no purpose. They cannot even get along amongst themselves. At a Federal level—I think the Coalition is back together again, but I am not sure how it is going in New South Wales. Members opposite should be supportive of positive things. They should be supportive of housing and look after our youth, who are crying out in need.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Are you going to answer the question?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** I have already answered the question. There is a crying need.

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

#### HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (11:39):** My question is addressed the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, in his capacity representing the Treasurer. Will the wonderful Minister update the House on the work the Minns Labor Government is doing to make it more affordable for young people to enter the property market?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:39):** I thank the member for Blacktown for his question. His electorate is in a part of Sydney that has been doing the heavy lifting on housing for a long time—and it still continues to do so—because it is a great place to live. Almost 3,000 development applications have been approved in the Blacktown local government area this financial year already. Well done!

This Government was elected with a mandate to ensure that first home buyers would pay less or no stamp duty on their first home. That is pretty straightforward. It is so straightforward that, as the Premier just indicated, it has been adopted as policy by the Victorian Liberal Party. Well done to members of the Victorian Liberal Party; they are up here for thinking. Perhaps they can give a lecture to members opposite at some stage. That policy commitment stands in stark contrast to the commitment of the former Liberal-Nationals Government to introduce a forever tax on the family home. They are going to bring back the forever tax on the family home, just like they are going to bring back privatisation and the wages cap.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** That's scaremongering.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I can hear them say, "Yes, we are, " from across the Chamber. I am pleased to inform the House that we have reached an important milestone in our stamp duty reform for first home buyers. As of 13 May, first home buyers have purchased more than 60,000 homes in New South Wales since the Government improved stamp duty concessions on 1 July 2023. That is 60,000 young people and families who have received support to become home owners as a result of this initiative of the Minns Government. This Government is on the side of people buying their first home, and the program is delivering for the people of New South Wales. The Government is on the side of people who are working hard to save to achieve the security of owning their own home.

Potentially as many as 100,000 people will be living in those homes, helped by our stamp duty reform. It was one of the first steps taken by this Government to boost home ownership, so it is great to see that it is working well. On average, first home buyers are saving \$20,539, which they can use for a deposit instead. Let us take a moment to remind ourselves how much the former Government's policy was out of balance. Fifty per cent of the total assistance was going to the 13 per cent of first home buyers who could afford a home costing between \$1 million and \$1½ million. It did far too little for the 84 per cent of people—four in five—buying homes for less than \$1 million. The changes this Government made are helping more people to save more money so that they can buy their home sooner. *[Extension of time]*

The maximum exemption is \$30,529 on an \$800,000 home. More than 43,000 first home buyer households received that full exemption and more than 17,000 people received a concession for a property valued between \$800,000 and \$1 million. If members of the public or members opposite do not believe me, they can look it up for themselves. The First Home Buyers Assistance dashboard was launched by the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance on 12 February. It is a great tool that details suburb by suburb, LGA by LGA—and even on a regional level—what the savings are. In Parramatta 3,761 households saved a total of \$85 million, while more than 2,475 households on the Central Coast saved a total of \$55.1 million. Residents of Western Sydney are also massive beneficiaries with nearly 22,000 householders saving almost half a billion dollars on stamp duty, an average saving of more than \$20,500 per household. In Blacktown, 3,700 households saved \$77 million. In the Illawarra region 2,228 households—more than 1,500 of them in the Wollongong electorate—have saved a total of \$50.4 million on stamp duty.

While this Government gets on with the job of expanding housing supply, the members opposite contemplate what taxes to bring back. They are working on bringing back the forever tax and capping wages. More recently they have been contemplating broadening the GST to include fresh food and speculating about the introduction of an income tax in New South Wales. While the Minns Government drives down DA assessment times, the members opposite want to drive up the rate of tax. While this Government oversees an increase in DAs lodged, more homes built and commitments and completions up, they want to drag first home buyers down.

#### GLEBE ISLAND PORT

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (11:45):** My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister rule out closing Glebe Island port as part of any plan to address the Government's housing shortfall?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:45):** Today is the day for the Liberals and The Nationals to ask all the housing questions that failed to get through their tactics committee. They celebrate the failure of the Rosehill racecourse sale by pretending that they are interested in housing. They celebrate the failure of that ambitious plan by trying to scaremonger and generate fear. It is no secret that there will be a new metro station in the Bays precinct by 2030. It is also no secret that that area is one of the transport oriented development accelerated precincts. I have announced that with the Premier multiple times. This Government will undertake a rezoning process, because it makes sense to co-locate housing with jobs and transport.

Members opposite, who consider the metro to be a way for people like police officers, nurses, health workers, teachers and the like to shuttle in and out from the suburbs to provide services, do not want people who need affordable housing to live or work in the communities they serve. Members opposite want those people to be anywhere else but near those areas. It came to my attention the other day that there is a GoFundMe campaign in Ku-ring-gai, backed in by that great person called Anonymous. All the donors are anonymous.

**Mr James Griffin:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. I want to know why the port is closed.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has been directly relevant. He just has not answered the question the way the member wants to hear.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I will say it one more time for the dummies.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** The Bays precinct is part of the transport oriented development accelerated precincts and the Government is currently undertaking the master planning for that site, and I look forward to the member for Manly backing the outcome. He is one of the smart ones of those opposite. He actually understands that young people want housing but many of his colleagues do not.

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

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The Minister will resume his seat. Members will come to order. The member for Swansea will come to order. The member for Keira will come to order. The Premier will come to order.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** My point of order has two parts. Firstly, the Minister was pointing across the Chamber rather than directing his comments through the Chair. Secondly, he has not come close to answering the question of whether he will rule out closing the port at Glebe Island, where important building supplies come into Sydney.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the first part of the point of order. The Minister will not point across the Chamber. I have already ruled on the second part of the point of order, and I do not uphold it.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I inform the member for Wahroonga that building materials come into a lot of ports in New South Wales, including the great port of Port Kembla.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** It's not close to the standard markets.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Oh, it's not close enough to Sydney. Well, Ku-ring-gai is, and they are fundraising there. I bet the member is one of the anonymous donors who opposed affordable housing there.

Most people use the GoFundMe system to actually help people. Over in Ku-ring-gai, the neighbours of the member for Wahroonga—the nimbys in chief—are trying to use GoFundMe to block people.

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

#### CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (11:49):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Families and Communities. Will the Minister please update the house on the Minns Labor Government's work to keep children safe by driving long-overdue reform of the child protection system?

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (11:50):** I thank the member for Granville for her important question and for the opportunity for a bit of a gear change. When we came to government two years ago, the Minns Labor Government inherited a child protection system that was spiralling out of control. We had hundreds of children cycling through hotels and motels. We had child protection caseworkers walking out the door because they had not felt valued in years and had a wages cap slapped on them. We had foster carers giving up because they were not getting the support they needed. We had an \$800 million deficit to deal with, just to keep the out-of-home care system afloat. We had report after report saying that the outsourced system created by the former Government meant that we had no visibility of the services being delivered to vulnerable children, despite them being paid for by taxpayers.

Families were not getting the support they needed, money was being wasted and, worst of all, kids felt unsafe in a system that is meant to protect them. We have been open and honest about those challenges from day one. As Minister, I have never shied away from the truth of it, but we have not just been talking about it. The Government has been doing the hard work of stabilising, redesigning and reforming the broken system it inherited. I am pleased to update the House on our progress so far.

As the Premier highlighted recently in this place, we have worked hard to get every kid out of so-called alternative care arrangements and have banned their use going forward. Under this Government, every vulnerable child in the out-of-home care system is under the care of an accredited agency. That was not the case under those opposite. The system we inherited had hundreds of kids cycling through those placements, like hotels and motels, cared for by for-profit companies that were not accredited and were not subject to the NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care. Kids felt unsafe and unloved. It was an unacceptable situation, and this Government has put an end to it.

When we came to government, foster carer numbers were plummeting. Carers felt they were at the bottom of the barrel. We are changing that. We are making more supports available for carers, and we are working with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to increase foster carer allowances. We have started recruiting foster carers within DCJ again, after the former Government decided to stop. In a short period, we have already



recruited an additional 235 emergency carer households. They have already supported over 1,100 children and young people. On the worker front, like so many of my ministerial colleagues, I inherited a child protection workforce that was walking out the door because of the wages cap. [*Extension of time*]

We have lifted the wages cap, delivered a record pay increase for our caseworkers and increased the starting salary by more than \$8,000. There is a lot more to be done, which is why we are negotiating a new standalone award for child protection workers within the Department of Communities and Justice. But it is about more than just the pay—we are also redesigning the training program and offering a new mentoring program so our workers receive the skills, resilience and support they need to do this incredibly difficult, critically important work.

But we are not just focused on the crisis end of the system. Wherever possible, we want to protect children by keeping families safely together and preventing entries to care. That is why we have recently announced a \$900 million investment in family preservation programs, with a record commitment for Aboriginal community controlled organisations. Sadly, Aboriginal children make up nearly half of the out-of-home care population in this State, so we will be targeting those intensive family preservation services to the families who need it most. Some 40 per cent, or \$350 million, will go into a new Aboriginal designed and Aboriginal delivered family preservation model to keep families safely together.

Catherine Liddle, the CEO of SNAICC, the national peak body for Aboriginal children, labelled the announcement of the program as a turning point that is setting a new national benchmark for reform. AbSec CEO John Leha said, "This approach is more than a policy shift—it is an act of justice." As a government, we hope that investment signals not only our intention to do things differently but also our genuine desire to make the difference we all desperately want to see. We know there is so much more to do when it comes to the child protection system and out-of-home care. We are tackling the difficult issues we inherited. We are doing the work that those opposite did not do and we are seeing progress, which, ultimately, is building better futures for vulnerable kids.

### HOUSING SUPPLY

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:55):** My question is directed to the Premier. After the Premier's Rosehill humiliation yesterday, he said that he had a plan B. What is his plan B?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:55):** We will announce plans for future housing in Sydney in good time. We will get there. I will not announce it today on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, although I know the Leader of the Opposition is desperate for good ideas, so I will feed them through. Obviously, I am disappointed about Rosehill. I would have loved that proposal to get up. As I said earlier in question time, I think it would have been good for Sydney, but I do not regard it as a humiliation.

It is important to test these things, even if the risk is failure, because the task in front of us when it comes to housing in New South Wales is so monumental that we cannot just take the safe option. We cannot just take the sure bet. If we take the sure bet on every housing proposal and only do uncontroversial things that will not make nimbys irate, nothing will move in New South Wales. That is what happened over the past 12 years—every difficult decision was postponed by the previous Government, with the gentle exception of the tenure of the member for Lane Cove. Towards the end of that period he acknowledged that it was an acute crisis. He had to deal with 47 different committees that were established by his predecessor, and he tried to get housing moving. But other than that very specific, obvious exception, I am sorry to say that members opposite do not have any credibility when coming into this House and talking about housing.

### HUNTER AND MID NORTH COAST FLOODS

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (11:56):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on the latest information regarding the flood emergency impacting the Mid North Coast and the Hunter?

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (11:57):** I thank the member for Cessnock for the question. I was waiting on the absolute latest update, and I will get back to the member with the exact numbers from that. The electorate of the member for Cessnock is close to the Mid North Coast region and was also impacted by the recent storms. In many ways his community was spared the worst of it and was quite fortunate.

I reiterate to the House that, whilst it may seem that things are changing, the flood emergency is not yet over. As a reminder of that, in the past 24 hours there have been 343 incidents and nine flood rescues. That is without the rain and with water receding. People are still driving through floodwaters. There are no current emergency warnings, but 20 watch and act notices remain in place. Later this afternoon the Premier and I will head back to the Mid North Coast to spend time in that region and to reaffirm the very clear message that the

Government stands with the community and with the people. We were up there last week, and the Minister for Recovery is still there with some other local MPs.

It reminded of me an Arabic proverb: Ask the person who has tried it, not necessarily the student. Our experiences last week highlighted that. It means that we should talk to the people who are suffering or going through a situation so that we get a better understanding of what they need and how we can best respond. We made several attempts to enter Taree last week but were unable to enter. However, we finally did on Saturday. The Premier made a promise that we would be back, and he is true to his word. We will head up this afternoon to Taree and other areas in that great part of the world.

Excuse me while I look at my notes for the latest details. Due to the great efforts of the State Emergency Service, I report that 9,203 damage assessments have been carried out. That leaves about 2,000 still to go. Of those, about 1,000 structures have been deemed uninhabitable. Many of those may be uninhabitable for the short term due to flooding over the floorboards or minor damage in a low area. It does not mean that they are completely uninhabitable, but they might need a clean-out. Around 30 homes are potentially at a stage where they either need major repairs or are beyond repair. *[Extension of time]*

Currently, the SES is working with partner agencies to work through those tasks and complete the damage assessments as quickly as possible. Today there are about 150 damage assessment teams in the field, and that is how they are getting through the assessments so quickly. Communities want to get back into their homes as soon as possible, and the SES, the RFS and Fire and Rescue are doing the assessments and clean-outs as quickly as possible. Again, we have seen inspiring stories of communities coming together, emergency services coming together, and people whose homes were not impacted making an effort to support others. We need to get rid of the mud very quickly because it sets like concrete once it dries. We will do the clean-outs and hose-outs as quickly as possible and try to get people back into their homes.

We are de-escalating warnings, but I urge people to follow any instructions from the SES to make sure that they get home safely. There are helicopters and drones in the air again today, and boats and high-clearance vehicles resupplying an estimated 3,500 people who are still isolated in communities such as Crescent Head, Hat Head, Louth Park, Hinton and Duckenfield. While 3,500 is a big number, it has come down from 9,000 last night and from 50,000 at the height of the emergency.

We ask people to remain patient and to continue working with us. The resupply efforts that I spoke about include the delivery of chemotherapy using drones, to make sure that people can get what they need. At the moment there are over 3½ thousand people in the field, including volunteers, agencies and community organisations. I take this opportunity to encourage people who want to provide assistance to join one of the volunteer emergency services. We can all do our bit for our community but, importantly, the community needs us to do our bit to support one another.

### WORKERS COMPENSATION LEGISLATION

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (12:02):** My question is directed to the Premier. The Government claims that workers compensation reforms are about prevention, but the proposed changes will make it almost impossible for workers to claim for psychological injuries. Will the Premier explain how increasing the requisite level of mental impairment to nearly triple that for physical injuries before workers can access support—workers who are predominantly health workers and women—will have any impact on prevention?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:03):** I thank the member for Newtown for her question. She sincerely does not support the reforms that the Government is pursuing. I accept that and respect that decision. However, we do not agree. An essential element of her criticism of the Government's plan is not correct and needs to be corrected: that it would be almost impossible for a worker to claim psychological injury. That is not the case. Under the icare system that the Government is proposing, an individual worker could claim psychosocial stress at work and receive 2½ years of income support or 3½ years of medical benefits as a result of that claim. That is the existing system.

The element that we are changing is whole-of-person impairment, increasing the threshold to receive lifetime financial support from 20 per cent to 30 per cent. I understand the proposal is not supported by some stakeholders that are close to the Government, but we believe it is essential. Many States have had Labor administrations for long periods, but New South Wales is the only jurisdiction that has lifetime income support for psychological injury at work.

**Ms Jenny Leong:** Are you sure about that?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Absolutely. Of course I am.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I have looked at the facts.

**Ms Jenny Leong:** Have you looked at the other legislation?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The member for Newtown has said that there will be no psychological support if someone makes a claim, but that is just not true. Look at the other side of the issue: the costs associated with the scheme. We want it to be in place and operating for decades to come. But at its current rate—and the member for Epping would know this from her time working for the former Treasurer—over the past five years our Government and the previous Government tipped \$6 billion into a scheme that should be self-sustaining. That is money from hospitals, schools, public transport, farmers and flood relief going into a system that should sustain itself. Without the reform, in the three years up until 2029, a business that does not have any psychological injury claims from any employee will pay a 36 per cent increase in premiums. Premiums have already increased by 8 per cent this year and last year, and the costs will escalate by 12 per cent each year for the next three years. That is if we do not reform the system.

**Ms Jenny Leong:** Is it about preventing claims or preventing injury?

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** There has been a 90 per cent increase in claims from people under the age of 40, and the average payment—

**Ms Jenny Leong:** So it is about preventing claims.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Newtown to order for the first time. If the member for Newtown does not cease interjecting, she will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Is this a dialogue? You've asked me a question. I think any objective person would say that I am answering it fairly. Average payments have gone from \$140,000 to nearly \$300,000.

#### NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (12:06):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty. This week marks National Reconciliation Week. Will the Minister inform the House of the importance and meaning of this year's theme, "Bridging Now to Next"?

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast) (12:06):** I sincerely thank the member for Auburn. On the long weekend she will join me at Myall Creek as we do the pilgrimage for the Myall Creek massacre. I also acknowledge the member for Northern Tablelands, and I think the member for North Shore and the member for Newcastle will make the pilgrimage as well. We will have to have a get-together while we are up there.

National Reconciliation Week is an important time in our national calendar. This morning I was very pleased to attend the New South Wales reconciliation breakfast. I spoke about the theme of this year's commemoration and acknowledged the fact that we need to continue to listen carefully to First Nations people. I am a student of Stephen Covey's seven habits, which some members may have been exposed to. Habit number five is an important one when it comes to this area, and it is to seek first to understand, before being understood. As a government, as members of Parliament and as a community, we have to spend the time to sit with and listen to First Nations people.

One of the hardest things to do—and not just with First Nations people, but also with other multicultural communities that have suffered trauma—is to sit and listen to how trauma has affected them. We cannot develop proper solutions until we understand the depth of the issue that we are trying to solve. This morning we heard from a speaker about intergenerational trauma, which can take seven generations to address. Her children are that seventh generation and are starting to move past the stage of trauma, but many have not reached that stage. On Sunday the member for North Shore and I went to the Opera House and spent time sitting and talking with members of the Stolen Generations, the Coota Girls and the Kinchela Boys, including Uncle Michael, a very friendly fellow whom members would know.

Listening to their stories, it was clear how generous they are with their time in wanting to join with the community and move forward. [*Extension of time*]

That message is so important with the theme of this year being Bridging Now to Next. The Stolen Generation groups want to talk about what comes next. They are very generous people, despite what has happened to them. Despite the trauma that has been inflicted on them, they are talking about the future and about their kids and grandkids and the legacy they will leave. There is a general view in the community that the relationship

between First Nations people and the general community is important. I reflect that this is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the historic walk across the Harbour Bridge in 2000, in which 250,000 people participated. I hope that as a government we can keep that energy going in the community to ensure that we keep trying to close the gap and address these problems. It is really important that we continue to do that.

The Government is Closing the Gap in many ways by listening to First Nations people. One of the most important ways is through the Government's advisory committee for business, which helps with First Nations procurement and business structures. Adam Goodes is part of that committee. It does important work advising the Government on priority number five: economic development. New South Wales is the only State that has an advisory committee for business. It was put forward by the former Government and Labor has continued it. Economic development is one of the most important things a government can do. Economic development makes people independent. When people are financially independent, their education, health and all other factors improve. New South Wales must do better in that area.

#### *Petitions*

### **PETITIONS RECEIVED**

**The SPEAKER:** I announce that the following paper petition signed by more than 10,000 persons has been lodged for presentation:

#### **Rural and Regional Health Services**

Petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to reinstate essential drugs and equipment for all non-category A and B NSW Ambulance stations and vehicles, and maintain NSW Health pathology services, including the Cootamundra lab, received from **Ms Steph Cooke**.

**The SPEAKER:** I set down discussion on the petitions as an order of the day for a future day.

#### *Business of the House*

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

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:11):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide for the following routine of business on Thursday 29 May 2025:

- (1) At 10.00 a.m., the Speaker takes the chair.
- (2) Giving of general business notices of motions (general notices) for up to 15 minutes.
- (3) Ministerial statements.
- (4) Giving of notices of motions (Government business, bills, business with precedence under Standing Order 118).
- (5) Papers.
- (6) Committees - tabling of reports and announcements.
- (7) Petitions.
- (8) Placing or disposal of business.
- (9) Business with precedence under Standing Order 118.
- (10) General business notices of motions for bills for up to 20 minutes.
- (11) General business orders of the day for bills for up to 90 minutes.
- (12) General business notices of motions or orders of the day (not being bills) for up to 70 minutes, with the Speaker to then leave the chair.
- (13) At 2.30 p.m., the Speaker resumes the chair.
- (14) Government business for up to 20 minutes, with the Speaker to then leave the chair and the bells rung for 20 seconds.
- (15) Speaker to resume the chair at 3.00 p.m.
- (16) Question time.
- (17) Petition debate.
- (18) Community recognition statements for up to 30 minutes.
- (19) Private members' statements, after which the House shall adjourn without motion until the next sitting day.

Effectively, I propose to move question time from 11.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. and have the routine of business that would generally be before and after question time to take place at 10.15 a.m. Firstly, the Premier is leaving to go to the Mid North Coast and will not be back until 3.00 p.m. tomorrow and does not wish to miss question time.

Secondly, there is a petition debate at 4.00 p.m., so that will not be delayed by any other business. I propose that the petition debate commences after question time.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (12:15):** The Opposition agrees to these changes. It seems almost impossible for the Government to run question time without the Premier to tell Ministers what to say, so we understand and agree that question time should be suspended tomorrow in the Premier's absence.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:15):** I would not normally respond to that sort of childish addition by the member for Wahroonga, but I will say that the Premier takes his accountability to the House very seriously. He has asked whether the House could accommodate his absence so that he, as the Premier, can be accountable. The comments made by the Manager for Opposition Business were inappropriate, disrespectful and contrary to the accountability convention that the Premier is endeavouring to uphold.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

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

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:17):** I move:

That standing orders be suspended to permit the moving forthwith a motion, of which notice has not been given, to adopt an amendment to Sessional Order 97.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Sessional Orders*

#### **ROUTINE OF BUSINESS**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:18):** I move:

That from Tuesday 3 June Sessional Order 97 be amended by:

- (1) On Wednesdays, omit paragraph (3) and insert instead:
  - (3) Government business until 10.50 a.m., with the Speaker to then leave the chair and the bells rung for 20 seconds. At 11.00 a.m., Speaker to resume to chair.
- (2) On Thursdays, insert new paragraph:
  - (5) At 10.50 a.m., Speaker to leave the chair and the bells rung for 20 seconds. At 11.00 a.m., Speaker to resume to chair.

On Wednesdays and Thursdays question time commences when the House is debating either Government business or private members' business. The time it takes for members to enter the Chamber and resume their seats, and for whoever is sitting in the chair to vacate the chair in favour of the Speaker, is disruptive to the proceedings of the House. This change gives the chair the opportunity to leave the Chamber while the House effectively suspends and enables the bells to be rung to inform members that question time will commence in 10 minutes, allowing the House to resume with the business of question time from the appointed time of 11.00 a.m.

It has been unworkable trying to start question time or go into question time whilst the business of the House continues right up to that point. I think 10 minutes is appropriate for the House to settle in order for question time to commence on time at 11 o'clock on Wednesday and Thursday.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (12:19):** The Opposition supports the motion. In the last Parliament question time came immediately after a break, so we did not have this issue of question time starting while the House was still sitting, as we now do on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Regrettably, we do not have question time on Fridays—maybe that is something we can work towards. This change was discussed by the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee. We wanted to let the order of business run for a while to see how it went. There is quite a lot of noise when people are on their feet and talking prior to question time starting at 11 o'clock on Wednesdays and Thursdays. This break is desirable for the orderly nature of proceedings and to ensure fairness for members who are speaking on bills while other members are entering the Chamber prior to 11 o'clock. The change will permit a break and allow the House to have some decorum during those periods. The Opposition supports the change.

**The SPEAKER:** I am pleased that the Leader of the House has moved the motion and that the Opposition has indicated its support. The period before question time is quite disruptive, and it has not been a particularly

good look for the Parliament. It is also very difficult for the members who are trying to transact business or contribute to debate. This change will certainly improve that circumstance.

The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Bills*

## **CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIA AMENDMENT BILL 2025**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (12:22):** I speak in support of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment Bill 2025. Everyone will deal with a cemetery or crematorium operator at some point in their life. The interment industry is a vital part of our society. Customers interact with operators at times of great difficulty and distress, making it all the more important that they are protected from the actions of poor operators. The bill is crucial in enhancing transparency and protecting consumers.

One of the bill's key provisions is to empower Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW [CCNSW] to share information about ongoing and completed regulatory activities. At present, while there are penalties for operators that act poorly, there is no scope for the regulator to proactively communicate that information to the community. That means that customers do not have sufficient access to information about poor practices and bad operators when making their choices. Access to information is a fundamental right for consumers, and this bill ensures that families have the information they need to make the best choices for their loved ones. By ensuring that prospective customers are well-informed, we are fostering a more transparent and accountable interment industry.

Transparency about cemetery operator practices empowers consumers to select services that meet their standards and expectations. Enabling CCNSW to share information about its actions strengthens its role as the regulator and builds trust within the community, ensuring that every person can make informed decisions about their burial and cremation services. Furthermore, these changes will hold cemetery operators accountable for their practices. By allowing CCNSW to share information about poor practices and bad operators, we will encourage operators to adhere to the highest standards of service and conduct. That accountability is crucial in ensuring that all operators provide fair and respectful services to the families and communities they serve.

In addition to protecting consumers, the bill also supports the regulator in carrying out its duties effectively. By enhancing the regulator's ability to share information, we are ensuring that CCNSW can effectively monitor and oversee the interment industry. That oversight is vital in maintaining the integrity and transparency of the industry, ultimately benefiting all stakeholders involved. The bill promotes a culture of continuous improvement and accountability within the interment industry. By making information about poor practices and bad operators public, we are encouraging operators to constantly evaluate and improve their services. That culture of improvement is essential in ensuring that the industry continues to meet the evolving needs and expectations of families and communities.

The bill further provides an opportunity for CCNSW to share examples of good practice. The interment industry in New South Wales is extremely diverse, both geographically and in terms of the scale and nature of operators. We have everything from church cemeteries in remote communities serving a few hundred people to the large Crown operators providing tens of thousands of services each year to the people of Sydney. The bill gives CCNSW the ability to act as a conduit for information-sharing and process improvement between operators that may otherwise never have meaningful contact.

The industry thrives on personal relationships and tailored services, and every operator has something valuable to contribute to ensure every person in New South Wales has a positive experience in saying farewell to their loved ones. This bill demonstrates the New South Wales Government's commitment to ensuring consumers have the best possible experience when dealing with the burial or cremation of a loved one. It is a significant step forward in enhancing transparency and protecting consumers within the interment industry. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (12:27):** I speak in support of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment Bill 2025. It is an important and timely piece of legislation that speaks directly to the needs of our communities—particularly communities like the Riverstone electorate, which I have the honour of representing. The bill is about more than administrative changes to an Act; it is about compassion, respect and planning wisely for the future, ensuring that all families, regardless of background or belief, have access to dignified, respectful and culturally appropriate end-of-life arrangements.

Riverstone is one of the most culturally and religiously diverse communities in the country. It is home to people from all walks of life: young families building their future, older generations who have made Australia home over many decades, and new arrivals who bring with them the rich traditions of their faiths and cultures. That diversity is our strength, and it should be reflected in how we treat people at every stage of life, including when life ends. Our population growth means that future demand for burial and interment services will increase significantly. That is a long-term planning issue that we cannot afford to ignore. The bill addresses that challenge head-on by enabling what is known as cemetery renewal, which is a sensitive, respectful process that allows cemetery operators to remodel older sections of cemeteries, without disturbing remains, to free up additional space. That is a commonsense practice already used elsewhere in Australia and around the world, and it is time that New South Wales modernised its approach.

Beyond the practical need for more space, there is an urgent cultural and spiritual concern that the bill also helps to address. I will speak to that directly. In addition to meeting the needs of Indigenous Australians and people of the Catholic faith, the local cemetery in Riverstone includes a small section dedicated to Muslim burials.

That section is now full. This means that many of the Muslim families who live in Riverstone, Schofields, Marsden Park and surrounding suburbs are having to travel long distances across Sydney to find a final resting place for their loved ones. Many of my Muslim constituents bring this issue up with me. They express concerns about the future, because they want to live close to where their friends and relatives are buried. Families should not be burdened with logistical challenges or made to feel like their religious rites and customs are an afterthought at a time of profound grief.

The amendments in this bill rightly require cemetery operators to take all reasonable steps to meet religious and cultural needs. That sends the powerful message to communities like mine that the Government is listening. The Government understands that one size does not fit all in a multicultural State like New South Wales. Burial practices, beliefs about death and the afterlife and the handling of remains are all deeply important to individuals and families. We must have a system that honours that diversity. This bill strengthens the role of Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW as a proactive and responsive regulator. It gives CCNSW the ability to issue mandatory codes of practice, to manage compliance and to share information with the public.

These are not just technical improvements. These measures will give families peace of mind in knowing that the system is accountable and designed to protect them and their loved ones. I also welcome that the legislation focuses on cutting red tape. It simplifies processes so that families can maintain graves, clarify ownership of interment rights and plan for the future. These practical steps remove unnecessary burdens, particularly for culturally and linguistically diverse communities that may already face challenges navigating complex systems. Importantly, the bill retains the independence of CCNSW while streamlining its governance. It also requires the establishment of consultative bodies, including consumer and community representatives, so that the voices of everyday people are heard in the regulation of this essential service.

It is often left unspoken that death is a personal and emotionally charged experience. It is also a deeply spiritual experience for many. The last thing any family should have to worry about is whether the faith of their loved ones will be respected or whether they can be buried in a way that honours their customs and traditions. That this legislation matters because it shows that we are taking responsibility for ensuring we have a dignified and inclusive system that supports everyone, no matter their background. In Riverstone, mosques sit alongside churches, gurdwaras and temples. This bill will offer comfort to our residents by ensuring that our respect for their way of life will extend to what happens after life. This bill ensures that our systems are modern, sustainable and compassionate. It recognises that burial space is finite, but respect should never be.

The bill balances the need for careful, long-term planning with sensitivity for the emotional and cultural realities faced by families when they are at their most vulnerable. It provides a road map for the future that meets the needs of growing communities, addresses land use concerns and handles end-of-life care not only as a logistical matter but also a deeply human one. This bill reflects the best of what government can do. It is forward thinking, inclusive, fair and compassionate. I commend the Minister for Lands and Property for his leadership on this issue. I am proud to support this legislation on behalf of the people of Riverstone and also in memory of those who have gone before us and those who will come after us. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, Minister for Sport, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (12:33):** In reply: I thank the member for Mount Druitt for his great work delivering the second reading speech when I was ill. I also thank the member for Cootamundra, the member for Leppington, the member for Badgerys Creek, the member for The Entrance, the member for Bega, the member for East Hills and the member for Riverstone for their support of the bill. Members spoke about the opportunity this bill presents to improve outcomes for consumers and to strengthen the regulator. I value their contribution to the debate. Finally, I thank those in the department who

contributed to the preparation of this bill, including Melanie Hawyes, David Raper, Marion Paul, Tom Drury, Rose Pullen, Daniel Gray, Zhongwei Wang and Di Gao.

I am pleased to note the number of members who have contributed to debate on this bill. We should now have a keen appreciation of why it is vital that cemetery and crematorium operators have a strong regulator to enforce clear requirements. I am pleased to learn that many members share my gratitude for the important work performed by cemetery and crematorium operators. I thank those opposite for putting people before politics in their support of this bill. I acknowledge their continued support in helping the Government deliver certainty to the cemetery sector. I thank the member for Cootamundra for her touching and personal reflection on her long family history of contributions to the sector.

We need to continue providing interment services that are led with compassion and sensitivity and that build trust in communities. The member for Cootamundra also noted that the bill will strengthen respect for religious and cultural beliefs, not only at the time of burial but also for generations to come. I thank the Government members who raised key points, including the need to strengthen consumer protections; update interment rights by renewal; streamline notice requirements; and make it easier for customers to maintain monuments, improve transparency and empower consumers by publishing important information. This bill brings comprehensive improvements to the interment industry. It strengthens the role of the regulator, Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW, and empowers it to be a robust advocate for customers and communities.

Having an empowered regulator to oversee the interment industry is essential. It ensures that all stakeholders adhere to the highest standards. By enhancing the regulator's capabilities, we are fostering a more accountable and transparent industry, which will ultimately benefit customers and operators alike. A key aspect of this bill is the emphasis on customer protection. We are safeguarding customers from potentially poor practices by ensuring that the regulator can share information about its regulatory activities. Transparency is crucial for driving confidence. Families will see that they are receiving fair and honest services, allowing them to focus on honouring their loved ones without the added stress of unclear or unfair practices.

Importantly, the bill addresses provisions that currently restrict families from repairing the memorials of their loved ones if they do not hold the interment rights. Families will be able to tend to their ancestor's graves under the changes proposed by this bill. This will allow them to respect the memory and legacy of those who have passed away. This bill sets clear standards for when operators should allow somebody to maintain a grave and ensures that these spaces are well cared for. It also modernises and simplifies notice requirements that must be followed before taking certain actions at a gravesite. The bill enables operators to focus on their core mission of providing high-quality interment services by streamlining processes and reducing unnecessary red tape. This ensures that operators can efficiently and effectively manage their cemeteries, which ultimately benefits the families and communities they serve.

The bill also enables cemetery operators to seek approval to renew existing cemeteries. This will unlock additional burial supply without the need to procure any new land. All of these changes represent a significant step forward in the regulation and operation of our cemeteries and crematoria. The amendments will improve outcomes for customers by providing clarity and protection, making it easier for families to navigate the process of laying a loved one to rest.

The bill delivers important reforms that address the needs of customers, operators and the regulator. It promotes transparency, clarifies responsibilities and reduces costs and red tape. The bill is a significant step forward in creating a more equitable and well-regulated interment industry. I commend the bill to the House.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **HELP TO BUY (COMMONWEALTH POWERS) BILL 2025**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 7 May 2025.**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (12:40):** I speak for the Opposition in debate on the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025. I can indicate the Opposition will support the bill. It is good to see that the



Minns Labor Government is backing the Commonwealth Help to Buy shared equity scheme despite cynically closing the New South Wales Shared Equity Home Buyer scheme from 30 June 2024. In June 2023 the Opposition moved amendments in the Legislative Council to give victims of domestic violence access to all first home buyer schemes. The Treasurer, on behalf of the Minns Labor Government, rejected those amendments on the grounds that giving victims of domestic violence access to the shared equity scheme would be a better way to "assist people to leave violent relationships and also recover and return to home ownership".

On 1 December 2023 the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault announced the opening of the Shared Equity Home Buyer scheme to victim-survivors of domestic violence. The Minister claimed this showed "the New South Wales Government's strong commitment to helping women and children escaping domestic violence build a secure and safe future". Domestic Violence NSW supported that measure but sensibly stressed that the trial scheme be extended "for an additional 12 months to provide fair and sufficient time for victim-survivors to apply for the scheme and evaluate impact". Where was the Minister's strong commitment when, scorning that wise advice from Domestic Violence NSW, the scheme was prematurely closed on 30 June 2024, just seven months after being opened to domestic violence victims?

Turning to the details of the bill, I note that the bill seeks to refer certain powers to the Commonwealth under section 51 (xxxvii) of the Constitution of Australia to enable New South Wales to be a participating State in the Help to Buy scheme set up by the Commonwealth Help to Buy Act 2024. The Help to Buy scheme is a shared equity scheme to be administered by Housing Australia, with a \$6.3 billion fund over four years and a participation limit of 10,000 home buyers nationwide each year. The income cap is \$100,000 for a single person and \$160,000 for a couple. The Commonwealth will contribute up to 30 per cent of equity for an existing home or 40 per cent for a new home. The equity is to be paid down over time or when the property is sold.

The property price caps set by region are \$1.3 million for Sydney and regional centres including Newcastle, Illawarra, Lake Macquarie, Central Coast and North Coast, and \$800,000 for the rest of New South Wales. The price cap for Sydney was originally set at \$950,000 when the Commonwealth Help to Buy Act was debated in November 2024. Our Federal Coalition colleagues aptly described this as a sick joke. The cap was then lifted in the pre-election March 2025 budget to \$1.3 million for Sydney and regional centres including Newcastle, Illawarra, Lake Macquarie, Central Coast and North Coast, although the price cap is \$800,000 for the rest of New South Wales. I remind the House that the price cap under the excellent and very popular First Home Buyer Choice scheme was \$1.5 million. When the Minns Labor Government callously abolished that scheme, it cut all support for anyone aspiring to buy a home worth over \$1 million—well below the median house price of, for example, \$1.18 million in Leppington, let alone the median house price of \$1.474 million for Sydney. Labor's replacement First Home Buyer scheme left anyone purchasing a home worth over \$850,000 worse off than under the Coalition.

The bill also amends the Duties Act 1997, the Duties Regulation 2022, the First Home Owner Grant and Shared Equity Act 2000, the Land Tax Management Act 1956, and the Property Tax (First Home Buyer Choice) Act 2022 to provide that no account is to be taken of the Commonwealth interest in the property or land for determining eligibility for the respective schemes or for the transfer duty or land tax owed. Home buyers will be paying full New South Wales transfer duty on the share of their home owned by Mr Albanese. The bill also provides for some exchange of otherwise confidential information between New South Wales government agencies and the Commonwealth for the purpose of determining eligibility under the Help to Buy scheme.

While the Opposition is happy to support the bill, because the Opposition will not stand in the way of any reasonable scheme to help people get into their own homes, it is questioning where the homes for people to move into are. As of 31 December 2024 the Minns Labor Government was already 14,001 homes short of the 37,700 needed to be built every six months to meet the National Housing Accord target. In question time on 25 March 2025, the Premier said:

The latest information indicates that New South Wales built more completed houses in the month of January than any other jurisdiction in the country ...

As the Australian Bureau of Statistics dwelling completions data for January will not be released until July 2025, it appears the Premier must have been confused and was referring to dwelling approvals which, pleasingly, were 1,645 higher than Victoria in January but disappointingly dropped to 2,634 below Victoria in February and again trailed Victoria by 1,104 for the January to March quarter. With only 13,469 approvals for the quarter, even if they all translate into completions, there is a further shortfall of 5,381 new homes or 29 per cent of the 18,850 quarterly target.

Despite its election promise of no new taxes, the Minns Labor Government imposed a \$12,000 tax on new homes. The Opposition voted against that tax. Through this bill, the Government is with one hand facilitating people getting into a new home through the Commonwealth shared equity scheme while with the other greedy

hand Premier Minns and Treasurer Mookhey are collecting up-front taxes that make homes unaffordable not just for buyers but also for developers. With that, I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (12:47):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025. The purpose of the bill is to provide the Commonwealth with powers to administer Help to Buy in New South Wales by establishing the legislative framework for New South Wales to become a participating State in Help to Buy. On 13 February 2024 the NSW Productivity Commission released a paper entitled *What we gain by building more homes in the right places*. The paper found that between 2016 and 2021 Sydney lost twice as many people aged 30 to 40 as it gained. While 35,000 people came to Sydney, 70,000 left. Productivity Commissioner Peter Achterstraat, AM, said:

... many young families are leaving Sydney because they can't afford to buy a home. Or they can only afford one in the outer suburbs with a long commute.

...

Sydney is losing its 30–40-year-olds; if we don't act, we could become known as the city with no grandchildren.

It is with that in mind that we are today debating this bill. For this city to thrive and for our State to survive and flourish, we need to ensure that young people can afford to rent and buy their own homes close to jobs and family.

At National Cabinet on 22 August 2023, New South Wales agreed in principle to participate in a national Help to Buy shared equity scheme. In November 2024 the Commonwealth passed the Help to Buy Act 2024. Each State now needs to adopt its own legislation for Help to Buy to proceed in its jurisdiction as a participating State. Help to Buy will be administered by Housing Australia and is anticipated to commence later in 2025. Put simply, the Help to Buy scheme will allow participants to co-purchase a home with the government. Housing Australia will act on behalf of the Commonwealth to administer the Help to Buy scheme in the States and Territories.

The Federal Government will give buyers participating in the scheme an equity contribution of up to 40 per cent of the cost of a new home or 30 per cent of existing homes. That will see the buyers paying a mortgage for their share of the property. However, there will not be any requirement to pay rent on the stake owned by the government. There will be a select list of lenders approved by Housing Australia. Help to Buy will be administered by Housing Australia, with eligibility criteria, administrative details and compliance requirements set via program directions. New South Wales is currently waiting for those program directions for clarity.

On Sunday afternoon I spoke with four young men in their twenties, two of whom live in my electorate and two in neighbouring areas. One is engaged and another is living with their partner. One of them spoke about a new housing development his father had mentioned in North Richmond. He was thinking of visiting the estate, but he and his partner work in Parramatta, and there was limited excitement about the prospects of living so far away from work and friends. Regardless, the cost to buy a home in that area plus travel was still out of reach for them. Likewise, one of the others stated that he doubted he would ever own his own home in Sydney. He seemed quite resigned to that fact and was also frustrated about the different scenario for him and his future versus previous generations.

Couple that with the prospect of renting for life, the casualisation of the workforce and current cost-of-living pressures, and the future seemed quite bleak. Help to Buy has the potential to change that and make the future brighter for those young men and their contemporaries. As former housing Minister Julie Collins said:

It won't just be a leg up into home ownership with savings from a smaller deposit – it will provide long-term relief to Australians who are part of the scheme ...

The Albanese Government predicts that the Help to Buy scheme could cut mortgages by up to \$380,000, depending on the price paid for each home. Who will be eligible? Australian citizens aged at least 18 years with a yearly income of \$100,000 or less for individuals or \$160,000 for couples or single parents. They will be required to live in the purchased home and may not currently own any other land or property in Australia or overseas. Participants will require a minimum deposit of 2 per cent and must prove they can pay for all associated up-front costs—such as stamp duty, legal fees and bank fees—as well as ongoing costs associated with the property, such as rates, strata and electricity bills.

This scheme is making dreams a reality. To achieve that, New South Wales must become a participating State in the Help to Buy scheme by enacting legislation to adopt specified provisions of the Commonwealth Help to Buy Act 2024. That is done in the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025. The New South Wales Government must also agree to become a party to the Help to Buy Intergovernmental Agreement. Subject to the passage of this bill, and the agreement to become a party to the intergovernmental agreement, New South Wales residents will be able to access Help to Buy once Housing Australia opens applications. This wonderful proposition will be in addition to the New South Wales shared equity scheme. Existing shared equity scheme participants are ineligible for Help to Buy; there will be no double dipping. It is intended that an

information-sharing arrangement will be in place between Housing Australia and Revenue NSW to assist Housing Australia to undertake its eligibility checks and ongoing compliance activities.

An objective of this bill is to provide a strong constitutional basis for the Commonwealth to operate Help to Buy in New South Wales, noting that the Australian Parliament does not have the constitutional power to make laws to operate a shared equity scheme in New South Wales or any other State. Precedents of New South Wales constitutional referral of powers include the Unexplained Wealth (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2018, the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011 and the Industrial Relations (Commonwealth Powers) Act 2009. The bill, within the meaning of section 51 (37) of the Commonwealth Constitution, adopts specified provisions of the Help to Buy Act 2024 of the Commonwealth and refers legislative power of the State to the Parliament of the Commonwealth to make amendments to the Help to Buy Act 2024 that may be required for the operation of Help to Buy.

The bill excludes any shared equity schemes and first home buyer assistance arrangements in New South Wales from the proposed State referral of powers, to avoid any potential inconsistency between New South Wales and Commonwealth law. The bill provides that the Minister administering the proposed Act may, for the purposes of section 46 (1) of the Commonwealth Help to Buy Act 2024, object to regulations or legislative instruments being made under that Act. The bill makes consequential amendments to the Duties Act 1997, the Duties Regulation 2022, the First Home Owner Grant and Shared Equity Act 2000, the Land Tax Management Act 1956 and the Property Tax (First Home Buyer Choice) Act 2022 so that the transfer duty liability for a person purchasing a property is not impacted by the use of a Help to Buy arrangement and so that New South Wales residents' use of a Help to Buy arrangement does not preclude eligibility for the New South Wales First Home Owner Grant or First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme; result in additional transfer duty when their interest in a property increases and the Commonwealth's interest decreases; or impact the assessment of land tax or property tax.

The proposed Act commences on a day or days to be appointed by proclamation. The New South Wales Government intends to work closely with the Commonwealth to support timely and effective Help to Buy implementation in New South Wales. Bills like this one can change the course of an individual's life. The increasing gap between property prices and median incomes has made saving for a home deposit and related costs too far out of reach for too many. When I chat to those four young men again about their futures, I hope to be able to share the great news about Help to Buy and what a difference it could make to their future plans. This is not a standalone initiative. Help to Buy complements the New South Wales Government's First Home Buyers Assistance initiatives and measures to promote housing supply.

Help to Buy relies on housing supply, and the Government is delivering a range of housing and infrastructure policies to prioritise the supply of homes in New South Wales to address the housing crisis for renters, people wanting to enter the housing market and vulnerable members of our community. That includes 30,000 new homes through the Building Homes for NSW program, unlocking up to 21,000 new market and affordable homes; a \$6.1 billion investment in social housing, including 8,400 social homes and repair of 33,500 existing social homes; a key worker build-to-rent program, with 500 homes built for health workers in regional areas and over 400 homes built for essential workers in metro Sydney; and over \$260 million to support people and families who need safe shelter, with crisis accommodation and support to move to more stable housing. *[Extension of time]*

It also includes over \$250 million of funding to support those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including those leaving correctional centres and mental health services; securing funding for specialist homelessness services and the Aboriginal community controlled sector for homelessness services; and \$555.5 million to speed up the planning system and construct more housing enabling infrastructure, which we are seeing across the Parramatta electorate. The Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025 is a game changer. I thank everyone who contributed to the bill, particularly the Minister and his department and ministerial staff. I acknowledge the work of my Labor counterparts in the Federal Government, who had the vision and commitment—and who won re-election—so the youth of today can be the home owners of tomorrow.

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping) (12:59):** I join in debate on the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025, which refers powers to the Commonwealth so that the Commonwealth Government's Help to Buy Scheme can operate in New South Wales. The Opposition will support the bill. Even a small step towards home ownership is better than no step at all. I am eager to advance the cause of home ownership, particularly for younger generations.

As a Liberal, I believe strongly that home ownership is more than just a financial milestone; it is a foundation for building strong and connected communities. Owning a home provides stability, empowers individuals to start families and encourages people to put down roots. It fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility that strengthens neighbourhoods and supports community. That is why I will always be a champion

of policies that make home ownership more accessible, not as an end in itself but because it enables people to become active participants in their community.

A confronting report by *The Daily Telegraph* stated that 50 years ago Sydney buyers needed just 4.2 times the average salary to buy a median-priced house. Thirty years ago it was 5.8 times the average annual income, but that figure now stands at 13 times the average annual income. A cost that was previously affordable, if challenging, is now way beyond the means of our average aspiring house buyer.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** It being 1.00 p.m., pursuant to standing order, 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*

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

### **Reports**

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The question is that the House take note of the report.

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (13:01):** As Chair: I participate in this take-note debate as the former Chair of the Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Remote, Rural and Regional Health. The committee tabled its third and final report, entitled *Final report – The implementation of recommendations relating to cross-jurisdictional health reform and government consultation with remote, rural and regional communities*, on 22 May 2025. The committee was established to examine and report on the implementation of recommendations made by the Legislative Council's Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health in its 2022 report, which made 44 critical recommendations for regional health reform. Over the past two years the select committee has been monitoring progress against these recommendations over the course of three inquiries.

Our first report examined workforce issues, including workplace culture and funding, while our second report looked at the delivery of specific health services and specialist care. I thank the Minister for establishing the committee and allowing me to chair it. It was one of the very first actions taken by the Government in this Parliament. It has been a very fruitful two years. This final report of the committee focuses on cross-jurisdictional health reform, collaboration and government consultation with remote, rural and regional communities. Importantly, this report also sets out a recommended pathway forward, including key priorities, new accountability measures and next steps to ensure that the health needs of these communities remain a priority into the future.

The report begins by examining cross-jurisdictional health issues with a focus on rural and remote primary care, and collaboration between local health districts [LHDs] and primary health networks. During the inquiry, the committee heard that rural and remote primary care is in crisis with general practitioner staffing shortages predicted to worsen by the end of the decade. Despite this, government responsibilities to address GP shortages remain unclear and this critical work is falling through gaps in governance. We recommend measures to improve shared governance arrangements and the development of a new long-term funding model for rural and remote primary care. This funding model should consider how funding can be pooled to overcome service fragmentation. The committee also recommends funding to expedite the use of innovative, multidisciplinary models of health service delivery that are responsive to the needs of remote, rural and regional communities. This includes the health precinct model, which aims to facilitate partnerships across the public and private sector, and bring together hospital-based care, primary care, education, industry, local government and non-government organisations.

During this inquiry, we also heard that consultation between local health districts and communities remains limited, and that the local health advisory committee model is not providing a consistent forum for genuine community consultation and input into local health services across remote, rural and regional New South Wales. We recommend that NSW Health work with LHDs to formalise the requirement for genuine consultation as part of their health service planning process, and to ensure that all communities have access to a forum that enables frank and meaningful feedback.

Finally, the report looks back at some of the persistent, unresolved issues that this committee observed over the course of its three inquiries. These include critical staffing shortages within the rural and regional health system, a poor workplace culture and working conditions, and an over-reliance on locum doctors. We conclude the report with our assessment of progress against the 25 recommendations made by Portfolio Committee No. 2 that NSW Health has reported as complete. The committee notes that the progress reported by NSW Health continues to be at odds with what communities and stakeholders are experiencing on the ground. We are concerned about the extent of progress reported and believe that the intent of many recommendations remains unfulfilled.

There is a clear need for ongoing accountability measures to ensure that reforms are implemented and the health needs of remote, rural and regional communities are appropriately addressed. To do that, we recommend the establishment of an independent New South Wales Remote, Rural and Regional Health Commissioner, who is empowered to hold NSW Health accountable in implementing reforms to improve the regional health system. We also call for a number of other monitoring and accountability mechanisms, including regular reporting to Parliament and additional funding for the Audit Office to undertake performance audits into key priority areas.

The committee commends the New South Wales Government's stated commitment to implement all of the 44 recommendations and for its support of the committee's work. We also acknowledge the positive steps that have been taken since the report was made. These include the implementation of the Rural Health Workforce Incentive Scheme and improvements to the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme, as well as expansion of the Rural Generalist Single Employer Pathway. However, the rate of progress has been too slow, and significant reform of the remote, rural and regional health system is needed. We believe that the implementation of recommendations in this report, including mechanisms for ongoing oversight, will help ensure that remote, rural and regional health remains at the forefront of New South Wales government policy in the years to come.

On behalf of the committee, I extend my gratitude to every organisation, healthcare worker and individual who contributed to this important inquiry and acknowledge those who made regular contributions across the committee's three inquiries. I also thank NSW Health and all of the healthcare executives for their assistance. Finally, I particularly thank my fellow committee members for their sincere and ongoing engagement and hard work in the last two years. It has been a joy to work with committee members: the Deputy Chair, the member for Lismore; the member for Cessnock and the member for Blue Mountains, both of whom are present in the House; and the member for Albury, who recently joined the committee. I also thank the other members who were on the committee: the former member for Port Macquarie, who was a key member; the member for Myall Lakes, who also made a major contribution; and the member for South Coast. I also thank the committee secretariat who include Matt Johnson and Carly McKenna, who supported our work, and all the other committee secretariat members.

This is a turning point. It is clear that much more needs to be done in rural and regional health. The committee has mapped a pathway forward. I believe that pathway will make a big difference to our communities. I encourage the Government to respond to the committee's report in a positive way.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (13:07):** I also take note of the Select Committee on Remote, Rural and Regional Health's report entitled *Final report – The implementation of recommendations relating to cross-jurisdictional health reform and government consultation with remote, rural and regional communities*. I acknowledge the excellent work of the committee regarding the access that those communities have to health care, particularly recommendations relating to cross-jurisdictional health reform and government consultation with those communities. The Chair of this good committee and member for Wagga Wagga has provided a very comprehensive account of the huge amount of work undertaken. I will focus on just a couple of points to reiterate the significance of the work around in the recommendations.

The committee focused on rural and remote primary care and collaboration between local health districts and primary health networks. As the good member for Wagga Wagga pointed out, the committee recommends measures to improve shared governance arrangements and the development of a new long-term funding model for rural and remote primary care. The report also examines ways to deal with service fragmentation that the committee came across time and time again.

As a member of the committee and as a member representing an area that considers itself regional but is part of the Greater Sydney network, I also want to talk about the persistent and unresolved issues that the committee has observed over time within the rural and regional health system.

I particularly note critical staffing shortages, poor workplace culture and working conditions, and an over-reliance on locum doctors. Those issues demand a response from government. I join the member for Wagga Wagga—and, I am sure, every member of our committee—in thanking every organisation, healthcare worker and individual who, even as they were dealing with the crisis, took the time to write to us and clearly articulate what they are going through and what they need. The work of NSW Health should also be acknowledged, as well as the work of our excellent and hardworking committee staff, without whom we could not have undertaken this work.

I also acknowledge my fellow committee members, particularly the member for Myall Lakes, who is unable to be in the Parliament this week because she is dealing with the impact of flooding in her community. Many members come into that work, but the good work that people across the political spectrum, across parties, do on behalf of our communities is often unreported in the way politics might be accounted for through media

stories. Based on the voices and stories that we heard, the report made 44 recommendations that we trust the Government will take seriously. Finally, I thank the Minister for Health. His establishment of the committee demonstrates the seriousness with which he is taking the issues we are dealing with and hearing about from people. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (13:11):** I welcome the opportunity to speak to report No. 3/58 of the Select Committee on Remote, Rural and Regional Health entitled *Final Report - The implementation of recommendations relating to cross-jurisdictional health reform and government consultation with remote, rural and regional communities*. I draw on the contribution of the member for Blue Mountains, who spoke about being at the interface between regional and metropolitan locations. Wherever we are in the health system, we come up against those interfaces. As the chair put so well, that leads to challenges and gaps in governance. I use that as a preface to, as the member for Blue Mountains did, acknowledge and thank all those who have been involved in the work of the committee: the chair, fellow committee members, committee staff and, importantly, people right across our community. I thank our healthcare workers and those with lived experience in the community for their contributions to the committee's reports. The chair's foreword is a fairly stark start to the report. He said:

Three years on from the Portfolio Committee No. 2's (PC2) report, communities in remote, rural and regional (RRR) NSW continue to face significant challenges in accessing health services, especially rural primary care and maternity services.

He went on to speak about the committee's concerns about the extent of progress reported against the recommendations. Having said that, some constructive elements have come through. Like the chair, for me the notion of the precinct model is important. Currently the community in Corowa is looking at the services plan for the Corowa hospital. Part of the conversation that we are looking to drive forward is perhaps being able to be considered as part of a Primary Care Rural Integrated Multidisciplinary Health Services, or PRIMS-HS, model, which the chair touched on, or even the community care model that is the current model in New South Wales. The question is how we engage our community and what the shared definition will be between local health districts, NSW Health and our community. That is something that we need to work towards in looking at those innovative multidisciplinary models.

It is obviously important for me to note the part of the report that touches on Albury Wodonga Health. Section 2.26 states that Local Government NSW Health "cited challenges for Albury Wodonga Health being a cross-border health service and for Cootamundra-Gundagai". That is our lived experience. For me, a big part of that has been looking at the frameworks and foundational documents that we set up. Again, how do we meet those gaps in governance? For Albury Wodonga Health, the original intergovernmental agreement established in 2009 set up an interdepartmental committee that was to meet twice yearly but only during the transition period, which was marked from 2009 to 2012.

The foundational framework did not put in place the engagement or interface required between New South Wales and Victoria. The fact that the intergovernmental agreement remained unsigned and unrenewed confronted me when I first came into Parliament in 2019 and I pushed for those to happen. It was pleasing to see in the latest iteration, which was signed in 2022, that there is a strategic planning committee working together "in good faith", as the document says, to agree on matters that are set out. It is really important to make sure that we get that interface right. A big part of that, in our experience with Albury Wodonga Health, has been the framework and the foundational documents. There is much more that we need to work on. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (13:15):** I speak to report No. 3/58 of the Select Committee on Remote, Rural and Regional Health entitled *Final Report - The implementation of recommendations relating to cross-jurisdictional health reform and government consultation with remote, rural and regional communities*. I think I do it as a bit of personal therapy as much as anything else. The two years of the inquiry has been stimulating, frustrating, exciting, revealing and concerning. We are incredibly lucky to have the member for Wagga Wagga, who, as members know, was a doctor himself. He came into this place having primarily worked in the public health system. He spoke the language. At committee hearings there was a whole bunch of lingo going back and forth. On most occasions I am sure the member for Wagga Wagga was the only person who really understood what was being said, but he was kind enough to explain it to us in simple terms afterwards. That is the first thing.

The second thing is that I really value and appreciate the nature of the words in this particular report. If people read it carefully—or even read just the chair's foreword—there is a sense that, although we are at the end of the two-year journey, it is still frustrating and hard to see how the massive beast known as NSW Health has changed in shape, size and scope, and what it is doing differently. It is like a cruise liner trying to turn around: It changes in minute ways for a long time before you can start to see a bit of an arc. I think that is the journey for NSW Health at the moment. I share the chair's concerns about some of the reflections on where the 44 recommendations are at the moment.

I endorse the chair's words that, on the one hand, NSW Health presented us with a report that said it made progress and achieved, finalised or finished a number of those recommendations. But in reality the people we met and talked to on the ground in the hospitals and communities we visited, including patients and employees, told us something significantly different. I give the simple example of local health advisory committees. Three years on from the tabling of the upper House report, which recommended re-establishment of and increased engagement with local health advisory committees, we still have not achieved that. That is not even setting up something new; it is simply building on something that should have existed and, in some areas, might have waned during COVID et cetera. We still do not have local health advisory committees set up and running. To me, of all the recommendations, that seemed like the simplest, but we have not got there yet.

There is still a lot of work to do.

I know that the new Government, the new Minister—and the previous Government—committed to the recommendations. The previous Government committed to 43 of the 44 recommendations and this Government committed to all 44. But there is still a heck of a lot of work to do. As the two-year term of this select committee is about to expire, I warn and plead that members keep paying attention. In that regard I absolutely support the idea that we would have a commissioner. Finally, I thank the Chair, the member for Wagga Wagga, all my colleagues, and the secretariat staff: Matt, Carly, Sukhraj, Joan, Yann, Nicolle and Karena. We have got volumes of paper that I can now shred.

#### **Report noted.**

### **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

#### **Reports**

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The question is that the House take note of the report.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (13:20):** As Chair: Yesterday the committee tabled its thirtieth report entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 30/58*. The committee examined four bills, six regulations and statutory instruments, one of which it reported on with comment. The additional five regulations examined that were found not to reach the reporting threshold under the Legislation Review Act are found at part 3 of the digest.

I draw the attention of members to the key issues raised in the digest. The committee reported on the Government's Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2025. That bill seeks to clarify the intent and operation of amendments introduced by the Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2024, particularly in relation to administrative funding entitlements. Specifically, the bill addresses how elected independent members and political parties receive payments from the administration fund, and how those payments relate to additional entitlements under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989. The proposed changes will prevent elected members or parties from claiming the same administrative expenditure from the administration fund and an additional entitlement.

The committee noted that, except for the public consultation requirement, the amendments are intended to commence on 1 April 2023, giving them retrospective effect. Retrospective legislation can raise rule of law concerns, particularly because a person is entitled to know what laws apply to them at any given time. In this instance, the committee acknowledged that the retrospective commencement would ensure legal clarity and not adversely impact personal rights or liberties. For those reasons, the committee made no further comment.

Turning to private members' bills, the committee reported on the Summary Offences Amendment (War Memorials and Other Protected Places) Bill 2025. The bill seeks to amend the Summary Offences Act 1988 to expand the definition of war memorial to include nearby items or areas that form part of the memorial site. It also increases penalties for damaging or defacing a protected place from a \$4,400 fine to a \$22,000 fine and/or two years imprisonment. In addition, the bill requires courts to order an offender to pay compensation for damage caused, regardless of whether other penalties are imposed.

The bill also changes the current protective framework for war memorials. At present, a regulation must prescribe a memorial to be protected. Under the bill, all war memorials are protected by default, unless explicitly excluded by regulation. The committee's report raised two issues and referred one to Parliament. The issue referred to Parliament relates to the proposed requirement for courts to order compensation for damage to protected places or war memorials. Compensation would be required even if a court also ordered other penalties for the same offence. The committee considered that that may constitute an excessive punishment by requiring both a penalty and compensation for the same offence. The bill could also significantly limit a court's discretion to determine the appropriate sentence for the offence. For those reasons, the committee referred the matter to Parliament.

Finally, the committee commented on the Water Management (General) Amendment (Metering) Regulation 2025. The regulation makes a number of amendments to the Water Management (General) Regulation 2018, including creating additional exemptions from metering equipment standards and reporting

under the Water Management Act 2000. The regulation also gives the Minister broader discretion to grant exemptions from certain mandatory conditions under the Act. The committee noted that the regulation changes the operation of the Act by introducing new exemptions and expanding the Minister's discretion. That may amount to a Henry VIII clause.

The committee generally comments on amendments to an Act made by subordinate legislation, which limits the level of parliamentary oversight of that amendment because subordinate legislation is not required to be passed by Parliament. However, the committee also acknowledged that the Act expressly allows exemptions to be created through regulations, and that regulations made under those provisions are still required to be tabled in Parliament and are subject to disallowance under section 41 of the Interpretation Act 1987. For those reasons, the committee made no further comment.

That concludes my remarks on the Legislation Review Committee's thirtieth digest. I encourage all members to read it. It is available on the committee's webpage. I thank my fellow committee members and others for their contribution to the digest, including the member for Upper Hunter. I particularly thank the secretariat staff for their support. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (13:25):** I make a contribution to the take-note debate on the report entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 30/58*. I will update the House on the ongoing work of the Legislation Review Committee and the fantastic leadership and efficient management shown by the chair. I also thank the secretariat staff, who pull the committee members together to enable us to perform our function. They are the driving force that makes sure we are familiar with all the detail in the bills.

In the period under review, four bills were identified as having issues in need of consideration as set out in sections 8A and 9 of the Legislation Review Act. I will go through each of those bills. The Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2025 was found to have issues regarding the retrospective commencement of amendments, but the committee made no further comment. The Health Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025 was found to have issues regarding the commencement by proclamation. Again, the committee made no further comment. The Summary Offences Amendment (War Memorials and Other Protected Places) Bill 2025 was found to have issues regarding the freedom of expression and political communication, and new powers mandating excessive punishment. The committee made no further comment on the first issue, and it referred the second issue to Parliament for review.

Finally, the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment Bill 2025 was found to have issues regarding absolute liability offences, wide regulation-making powers and incorporation of external reasonable notification guidelines not subject to disallowance. While the committee made no further comment on those aspects of the bill, I will go into a bit more detail about one of them, mainly because the committee identified that the issue could amount to a Henry VIII clause. It is always worth examining how a Henry VIII clause may impact a bill, because the committee believes them to be an inappropriate delegation of legislative power and prefers that substantive matters are set out in primary legislation rather than regulations to ensure that there is an appropriate level of parliamentary oversight.

Unlike primary legislation, regulations are subordinate legislation and are not required to be passed by Parliament. However, the committee notes that regulations are still subject to parliamentary scrutiny and can be disallowed under section 41 of the Interpretation Act 1987. I will conclude my comments, even though I love speaking about Henry VIII clauses and how they apply, as well as educating the Speaker about its impact on bills reviewed by the committee.

**Report noted.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

*Bills*

**HELP TO BUY (COMMONWEALTH POWERS) BILL 2025**

**Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping) (14:30):** I contribute to debate on the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025. A cost that was previously affordable, if challenging, is now way beyond the means of the average aspiring home buyer. AMP chief economist Shane Oliver said that the worsening situation across Australia has dramatically extended the time it takes to enter the real estate market, placing an unprecedented burden on younger generations. For the next generation, the idea of owning a home—let alone raising a family in



one—feels increasingly like a dream from the past. It is a shame that the bill before the House is just an administrative one to facilitate a Commonwealth scheme. It is ironic that it should be debated the day after the Government failed to deliver on its marquee housing project in Rosehill—a plan that promised 25,000 homes and delivered zero.

The Government also had the power to act on shared equity in its own right. In fact, it inherited a functioning shared equity scheme—the Keystart program—established by the previous Coalition Government. That scheme was targeted and meaningful but, instead of expanding it or using it to help those in need, the Government scrapped it. Perhaps most egregiously, it used the existence of that scheme as a justification to turn its back on victim-survivors of domestic violence. The Government matched the previous Government's commitment to help victims of domestic violence by allowing them to have the status of first home buyers again. When asked why it was not delivering on that election promise, the Government pointed to its shared equity scheme—the same scheme that it has now quietly abolished. It has failed to provide answers on how many victims of domestic violence even accessed that shared equity scheme.

The Government is doing the bare minimum to help first home buyers and is breaking its promises to victims of domestic violence. Make no mistake: Help to Buy is a modest intervention. It will help a small number of households who meet strict criteria, while those opposite will make big statements about how it is solving the housing crisis. Whilst this modest intervention is welcome, it will not touch the sides of the housing crisis in New South Wales. There is no comprehensive plan, no coordinated infrastructure investment, no plan for key worker housing and no vision for families who want to live, work and raise their children in the same suburbs they grew up in. Time and again the Government has shown us that it is not prepared to lead, only to legislate after someone else does. I support this referral of powers, but I do so in the hope that this Parliament will eventually be asked to consider something much more ambitious, more comprehensive and more committed to restoring the dream of home ownership for every generation, not just for the next news cycle.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (14:33):** I speak in support of the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025. This important bill addresses one of the most pressing issues facing our State—housing affordability and access to home ownership. For decades the dream of home ownership has slipped further out of reach for too many New South Wales families. Across our cities, suburbs and regional communities, people are working hard, saving diligently and doing all the right things, yet home ownership remains elusive.

The cost of housing has far outpaced wage growth. The gap between median incomes and property prices has widened dramatically. For countless households, the challenge of saving for a deposit while managing rental payments and living costs has become insurmountable. In conjunction with the Commonwealth Government's Help to Buy scheme, the bill delivers real and meaningful support to those who need it most—low- and middle-income earners who are ready to enter the housing market but face structural barriers to doing so. Under the Help to Buy program, the Commonwealth Government will provide an equity contribution of up to 40 per cent of the purchase price for new homes and up to 30 per cent for existing homes.

Importantly, participants will not pay rent on the Commonwealth's share. Instead, they will pay a mortgage only on their portion of the home. Housing Australia, acting on behalf of the Commonwealth, will administer the scheme in each State and Territory. That shared equity model gives aspiring home owners the helping hand they need to make the leap into ownership. It reduces the size of the deposit required, brings down mortgage repayments and eliminates the cost of lenders mortgage insurance—another hurdle for those with limited up-front capital.

In addition to enabling Commonwealth administration of Help to Buy, the bill makes several consequential amendments to New South Wales legislation, including the Duties Act 1997, the Land Tax Management Act 1956 and the First Home Owner Grant and Shared Equity Act 2000. Those changes are designed to ensure that participants in the Help to Buy scheme are treated fairly and consistently under State law. For example, use of the Help to Buy scheme will not affect a purchaser's eligibility for existing State programs, such as the First Home Owner Grant or the First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme. Participants will not incur additional transfer duty when their ownership share increases and the Commonwealth's share decreases. Land tax and property tax assessments will not be negatively impacted by Help to Buy participation. Those amendments are critical to ensuring that those who benefit from Help to Buy are not disadvantaged elsewhere in our legislative framework.

Help to Buy is expected to commence later in 2025, subject to the Commonwealth finalising key operational elements such as Housing Australia's lending panel contracts and participant administration systems. To align with that timeline, the Act will commence on a day to be proclaimed, allowing the New South Wales Government the flexibility to bring our legislative framework into force in tandem with the national scheme. The Minns Labor Government is to be congratulated on its efforts to improve housing access and affordability. Since 1 July 2023, the Government has expanded the First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme, increasing the threshold for full stamp duty exemptions from \$650,000 to \$800,000, and concessional rates to \$1 million. As of April 2025,

over 56,500 first home buyers have accessed exemptions or concessions under the expanded scheme, collectively saving \$1.2 billion.

Beyond direct buyer support, our Government is also investing in supply. The 2024-2025 State budget commits to delivering 30,000 new homes through the Building Homes for NSW program. That includes 8,400 new social homes and repairs to over 33,000 existing dwellings; dedicated housing for health and essential workers in both metropolitan and regional areas; and more than \$500 million for infrastructure and planning acceleration.

We are also addressing homelessness with more than \$500 million in targeted support for crisis accommodation, mental health transitions and long-term stability. The Help to Buy scheme is not a standalone solution. It is one critical piece in a larger puzzle. It works hand in hand with our State initiatives to offer both immediate assistance and long-term structural change.

Owning a home is about more than just bricks and mortar. It is about security, stability and pride. It is about giving families a foundation from which to thrive. Help to Buy will provide thousands of New South Wales residents with that opportunity—many of whom would otherwise remain locked out of the market. It is a practical, targeted policy that delivers for those who are too often left behind. The Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025 is a sensible piece of legislation and a necessary step to make the shared equity program available in New South Wales. By partnering with the Commonwealth and implementing schemes like Help to Buy, we are showing that both levels of government can deliver for working Australians. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (14:40):** I feel somewhat nervous. In the gallery is probably the largest audience I have ever had for a speech, apart from my inaugural speech and the Doonside station lifts debate. I support the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025 as introduced by the wonderful Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, who is in the Chamber and has a wonderful Parliamentary Secretary. Passing the bill will enable the Commonwealth Help to Buy Act 2024 via a targeted referral of legislative powers so that the Commonwealth shared equity scheme, known as Help to Buy, can operate in New South Wales.

As the Minister said in his second reading speech, the bill also includes consequential amendments to the New South Wales legislation that governs housing assistance, transfer duty and land tax matters. As many members have commented upon today, home ownership and access to housing for low to middle income households is getting more difficult in Sydney as prices continue to increase. I sit on the Select Committee on Essential Worker Housing, which is chaired by the member for Sydney. We have heard evidence from people regarding the difficulty of workers accessing housing close to their workplaces, particularly in the northern suburbs or close to the city where prices are a lot higher than Western Sydney. Essential workers are not just the police, teachers and nurses—who are very important. They also include bus drivers, gig workers, allied health professionals, shop assistants and cleaners, who all make the local economy operate. They also need a place to live and call home. I will not pre-empt the committee's findings or explore the various issues now as we are in the final stages of producing the report.

The Help to Buy scheme, which was put forward by the Commonwealth, is modernising a scheme from the 1980s. I note that some people in the gallery would probably be well aware of the 1980s; we would have all been young in that period. It was one of the more successful schemes from the old Home Fund programs. If you mention the Home Fund, most people would feel a shiver down their spine. There were a lot of different programs, and a lot of them failed. However, one scheme from the 1980s was similar to that which the Commonwealth is proposing for joint or shared equity. A private equity firm purchased half the house and the homeowner purchased the other half. This gave people the ability to gain enough equity to participate in the housing market. In the 1980s, a few of my friends participated in the scheme.

As the member for Mount Druitt said earlier, it is more than just bricks and mortar; it is actually building communities. Without that scheme, a lot of people would not have been able to enter the housing market or, a few years later, sell a house and benefit from the uplift in house prices. The scheme meant they could participate in the housing market rather than simply pay rent for that period. Rather than just paying rent, they were able to build a strong deposit for their next home. Unfortunately, this Help to Buy scheme was held up in the Federal Parliament, for different reasons. The Greens and Liberals delayed the legislation until last December.

**Ms Jenny Leong:** It was November.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** November, December. Close enough.

**Mr Paul Scully:** Very late November.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** Yes. I extend my best wishes to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his new Government. The election results demonstrated that people wanted change. There is no use holding up new

legislation. Up to 13,700 new homes could have been built by now if other parties had not held it back. Often there is opposition based on whether a reform will be a tax break for developers or drive up house prices, but we need to be open to new ideas, as the new leader of the more conciliatory Greens has said.

Labor's Help to Buy housing scheme will support 40,000 eligible buyers with an equity contribution of up to 40 per cent for new homes and 30 per cent for existing homes. It aims to help low- and middle-income earners enter the housing market with a deposit as small as 2 per cent. The legislation will have little impact on demand pricing based on the fact that the shared equity partner will require a fair market value for the property, not an over-inflated price due to a view that a "cash splash" to purchasers pushed up the price. The Grattan Institute predicts that the scheme will increase house prices by just 0.016 per cent, or \$160 per \$1 million spent on a home. I congratulate the Commonwealth Government on this initiative. I thank the Minister for introducing the bill. I hope it gives home buyers another opportunity to participate in the market.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** I hope the member for Blacktown is not upset that everyone has left the gallery.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** Thank you for noting that, Madam Temporary Speaker. I would have walked out too.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (14:47):** Madam Temporary Speaker, I appreciate you putting that on record. I speak in debate on the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025 and indicate that The Greens will not block or oppose the bill. The bill makes the necessary changes and additions to New South Wales law to allow Help to Buy—the Commonwealth's shared equity scheme that passed Federal Parliament in November last year—to operate in New South Wales. Under the scheme, the Commonwealth will pay up to 30 per cent of the purchase price of an existing home or up to 40 per cent of a new home for eligible first home buyers. When people who avail themselves of the scheme sell their home down the track, they will have to pay the value of the shared equity back to the government.

The bill also seeks to amend relevant State legislation to ensure that stamp duty and land tax, which are collected at a State level, are unaffected by the Help to Buy scheme. There will also be no restrictions on the ability of those who use Help to Buy to access other State-level support, like a stamp duty exemption or concession or the New South Wales First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme.

There is no doubt that there are people who will benefit from this scheme. A larger deposit means less interest paid over the life of a loan, which means smaller mortgage repayments. That is no small thing. But for the majority, who will not benefit from the scheme, there is strong evidence to suggest that it will have the opposite effect.

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that in the 12 months leading up to July 2024, 23,114 people in New South Wales bought their first home. According to the Minister, the Help to Buy scheme would assist an estimated 3,000 first home buyers in New South Wales per year. That comprises 12.9 per cent of the over 23,000 homes sold annually. If help for just under 13 per cent of first home buyers is the best the State and Federal Labor governments can offer, then fine—The Greens will not stand in the way. But what about the remaining 87 per cent? What steps will Labor take to mitigate the inequality that a policy that only helps a few will inevitably create?

Demand-side subsidies like this are inflationary. They push up the cost of housing by injecting more money into the housing market. People who can access a subsidy can suddenly afford to pay more than they otherwise would for a home, thus turning the temperature up even higher in an already overheated housing market. Before anyone gets the idea that The Greens are playing politics, as though politics is not literally the area in which we work in this place, do not just take my word for it. When giving evidence to the Senate inquiry into the Federal Help to Buy legislation, University of Queensland economics professor John Quiggin said:

These schemes have been around forever, but the money is eventually capitalised into house prices, so the beneficiaries gain at the expense of everyone else.

In a submission to the same inquiry, the University of New South Wales City Futures Research Centre warned, "Like all demand-side assistance measures, there will be some inflationary impact." Peter Tulip, the chief economist at the Centre for Independent Studies—certainly nobody can accuse them of being Greens sympathisers—also gave evidence to the inquiry. He said that the scheme will "increase prices and rents across the board" and that it is "good for the 40,000 lucky recipients of it and worse for everybody else."

The question is what will the Government do for everybody else. It takes years—sometimes even a generation—for policy decisions like this to filter through into the real world and for the effects to be fully felt. In 1999 the capital gains tax discount was introduced by the Howard Government, and in 1987 negative gearing was brought back by the Hawke Government. Both decisions supercharged speculation in housing and have contributed directly to the dire situation that renters, aspiring first home buyers and many people with a mortgage

face today. Perhaps Labor is banking on being on the Opposition benches again by the time the effects of this inflationary policy are seen, from where they can wring their hands and shirk responsibility. I hope that time will prove me wrong but, shamefully, the evidence suggests otherwise.

What will Labor do to bring the cost of housing down in the meantime, rather than just saying, "Yes, housing is expensive, but that's an inevitability we have to accept"? In 2023 the then Federal Labor Minister for Housing, Julie Collins, went on 7.30 and said that Labor wanted to "create social and affordable housing as an investment asset class in Australia". Until we stop treating housing as a vehicle for profit and wealth accumulation, we will not see the cost of housing come down in this country. First and foremost, housing is a human right. Our housing system must be centred on ensuring that everyone has a roof over their head, not on making a profit for a wealthy minority. The latest rental snapshot from Anglicare Australia found that just 0.7 per cent of rentals across the country, or 352 homes, are affordable for a person earning a full-time minimum wage. For someone on the age pension, the pool shrinks even further to just 0.3 per cent, or 165 homes.

We must do something for the thousands of people for whom those statistics reflect a dire daily reality. We cannot keep presenting home ownership as the end goal, because that will not solve the crisis for everybody. It cannot be the only pathway to stable and secure housing. If Help to Buy is a leg up for 3,000 people looking to buy a home in New South Wales, where is the leg up for the thousands more who are so far away from even contemplating buying a home and who are facing astronomical rent increases? Many live in overcrowded share houses and simply cannot afford the cost of moving if their lease is not renewed.

Last year The Greens were pleased to join with the Labor Government to pass historic rental reforms that finally saw no-grounds evictions outlawed in New South Wales. We are ready to work with the Government again to get more transformative policies for renters across the line. We look forward to reviewing the next tranche of rental reforms, which we anticipate in the coming months. We know from conversations with housing experts, community members and advocates that what renters need next is clarity. They need rent controls, enforceable minimum standards, longer leases and reforms to make affordable housing genuinely affordable.

The Greens are tired of the narrative that when we debate and amend legislation to push the Government to do more to address the housing crisis, it somehow makes us blockers. It is our job to scrutinise legislation in Parliament and do everything we can to make it better so that the needs of the community are heard. We should never be expected to just wave through legislation, and we never will. We have too much respect for the communities who chose us to represent them in Parliament. I urge all members to respect the fact that many of those communities expect this Parliament to do more to address the housing crisis, rental reform and the inequity in our society.

The Greens will always bring the voices of those communities to Parliament to ensure that they are on the political agenda, even when what they have to say might be unpopular with the government of the day or provide only a little grab on the news. The Greens will continue to fight for housing justice and hold up a mirror to the uncomfortable reality that the status quo is not good enough. More needs to be done. The time to introduce ambitious housing policies that benefit the masses, not just a few, is now. The time to ensure that everyone has a safe, secure home, regardless of whether they own or rent, is now. We cannot let that time pass us by, and The Greens are here to make sure it will not.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (14:57):** I support the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025. The bill ensures that the Commonwealth Government's shared equity scheme can operate in New South Wales by providing for the adoption of specific provisions of the Help to Buy Act via a targeted referral of the legislative powers of our State to the Commonwealth Parliament. I am genuinely excited to hear that The Greens support the bill. I will pick up on something the member for Newtown mentioned. The rub comes not so much from The Greens playing politics, per se, but from their taking the moral high ground, where they frame anything that is not exactly what they are pushing for as morally or politically corrupt. I am a member of the Labor Party. I am on this side of the House because I believe that the perfect must not be the enemy of the good. In taking a step in the right direction, the Government must not be framed as selling out the community. Tens of thousands of people will benefit from this reform. We should focus on that and on doing more as a next step.

The Albanese Government's Help to Buy scheme is a landmark initiative designed to make home ownership more accessible for Australians. Under the scheme, eligible participants will be able to co-purchase a home with the Federal Government, with Housing Australia administering the program on behalf of the Commonwealth. Buyers will receive an equity contribution of up to 40 per cent for new homes and 30 per cent for existing properties, significantly reducing the size of the mortgage they need to take on.

Importantly, participants will not be required to pay rent on the Government's share of the property. Mortgages must be arranged through approved lenders, and the scheme will cover a range of housing types, including houses,

townhouses and units, subject to price caps. While the initiative promises to ease the path to home ownership, New South Wales is currently awaiting further detail through program directions to clarify eligibility, compliance and administration.

I turn to the contents of the bill. The bill provides the necessary constitutional foundation for the Commonwealth to implement the Help to Buy scheme within New South Wales. In accordance with section 51 of the Commonwealth Constitution, the bill does two things. First, it adopts specified provisions of the Help to Buy Act 2024, enacted by the Commonwealth. Second, it refers legislative power to the Commonwealth Parliament to make future amendments to that Act, but only to the extent required for the effective operation of Help to Buy. Importantly, the bill draws clear boundaries around that referral of powers. It expressly excludes any existing or future shared equity schemes and first home buyer assistance arrangements under New South Wales law from the scope of the referral. That is a critical safeguard to prevent any legislative overlap or inconsistency between New South Wales and Commonwealth provisions in this area.

To ensure continued State oversight, the bill provides that the New South Wales Minister administering the proposed Act may object to the making of regulations or legislative instruments under section 46 (1) of the Help to Buy Act 2024 of the Commonwealth. That maintains a mechanism for State input into subordinate Commonwealth legislation that might affect New South Wales residents. The bill also makes a series of consequential amendments to ensure Help to Buy integrates seamlessly into existing New South Wales legislation. Those include amendments to the Duties Act 1997, the Duties Regulation 2022, the First Home Owner Grant and Shared Equity Act 2000, the Land Tax Management Act 1956, and the Property Tax (First Home Buyer Choice) Act 2022.

The amendments are designed to provide clarity and fairness for participants in the scheme. They ensure that entering into a Help to Buy arrangement does not alter a purchaser's liability for transfer duty. Further, they confirm that using Help to Buy does not disqualify a purchaser from receiving support through the New South Wales First Home Owner Grant or the First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme. The bill also guarantees that a participant will not incur additional transfer duty when their equity share in the property increases and the Commonwealth's share decreases. Similarly, the use of Help to Buy will not adversely affect the assessment of land tax or property tax under New South Wales legislation. I have received an increasing volume of correspondence from constituents because their land tax bill has increased. The scheme will ensure that some of those people will not experience a world of pain.

In sum, the bill provides a carefully constructed legal framework that enables the Help to Buy scheme to operate in New South Wales while safeguarding the State's autonomy and preserving the rights of first home buyers under existing New South Wales schemes. The growing gap between property prices and median incomes has made it increasingly difficult for everyday families to save for a deposit and take the first step into the housing market. Owning one's own home is commonly known as the great Australian dream. It is something that many people aspire to, and so we should try to improve the system. As the Minister said earlier today in question time, New South Wales is the State where the housing crisis has the most impact. It is particularly impacting on young people. The Government is committed to addressing the crisis, and welcomes the moves from its Federal counterparts to tackle this significant challenge.

I reflect on something my mother told me when she bought her home almost 25 years ago. She was an immigrant to this country and it took her more than 15 years to save up to buy her own home. When she bought her own home, it was the first time she felt that she had roots in this country. She felt like she belonged. I imagine that sentiment is shared by many others in the community. That does not only apply to migrants. Young people may be looking to put down roots, looking for certainty and consistency, and therefore looking for a home. The bill puts that opportunity on the table for many people in the community.

Helping first home buyers is only part of the solution. In the 2024-25 budget, the New South Wales Government committed to delivering 30,000 new homes through the Building Homes for NSW program. That includes unlocking up to 21,000 market and affordable homes, and investing \$6.1 billion in social housing, which will deliver 8,400 new dwellings and repairs to more than 33,000 existing ones. I reflect on the many people in the Liverpool community who will benefit from those changes and that investment, and for whom they will be life-changing—and I do not say that facetiously.

Labor is pulling every available lever at both the State and Federal level to help young people and first home buyers secure a place to call their own. This bill is a clear example of the kind of practical, coordinated reform that only Labor can be relied upon to deliver. The emphatic return of the Albanese Government at the 2025 Federal election shows that Australians recognise that. It was especially evident in my community, where Labor now holds Federal seats that it has not held for several decades. People know that it is Labor that brings the political will and policy discipline needed to deliver real outcomes. As I said, we will not let the perfect be the

enemy of the good. This bill marks another significant step towards a fairer, more secure housing future for our State and our country. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (15:06):** It is a pleasure to speak in support of the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025, which represents a good example of Labor governments working together on the complex problem of housing affordability in Australia. The Help to Buy scheme, which was promised and will be implemented by the Federal Labor Government, requires this complementary New South Wales legislation. It is good that we are able to put this legislation in place. It is also important to note that this is just one of the things that Labor governments at both levels are doing to overcome the housing shortage and housing affordability issues that have been generated in this country over the past decades. A lot of work is being done at both the Federal and State level, and it is important to acknowledge that.

This legislation will help the Federal Government put the Help to Buy scheme in place. The scheme enables a number of people to get government equity in the purchase of a home. They may have a deposit that is as low as 2 per cent, but the Government will contribute equity of between 30 per cent and 40 per cent so that they will need a much smaller loan to afford to buy. That will help some people. Of course, many other things are happening. As a member representing regional New South Wales, I emphasise that this is not just a Sydney problem. It is a problem for many regional communities, including Queanbeyan and Cooma.

Queanbeyan is affected by Canberra housing prices. It has gone from being an area that was once reasonably affordable, to one where it is very difficult, particularly for first home buyers, to get into the market. It is very important that we address these issues as a whole. There is pressure on Queanbeyan from Canberra's expansion and housing prices. There is a large new development in Googong, but prices are relatively expensive compared to a few years ago. Cooma is a community that was once seen as affordable. However, the very welcome influx of workers for Snowy 2.0 and of people who commute to Canberra for work—it takes an hour and 15 minutes to commute to Canberra—has seen that property market go up in recent years and become relatively unaffordable as well. We need a range of strategies to help, of which the Commonwealth Help to Buy scheme is one.

I have worked closely with the Federal member for Eden-Monaro, Kristy McBain, to utilise other Federal initiatives such as the Housing Australia Future Fund and other funds that have been put aside to assist with housing development in the region.

A joint State and Federal project in Cooma has received \$23.6 million in Federal funding to develop 120 blocks on State land. The site will include affordable housing, senior's living and public housing. It is the first time in years that an important initiative like this has happened in our region. The truth is that no new social housing was built in our area during the Coalition's period in government. Instead, things were sold off. The last new building in my electorate started during my previous term in Parliament when we last had a Labor government. I am pleased to see this shift from the New South Wales Labor and Federal Labor governments. It is part of a package of measures addressing housing affordability and accessibility.

I was bemused to see Coalition members stand up in question time today and say, "You didn't get Rose Hill up, which means you're doing nothing. What else is happening?" The Opposition frontbench has the memory retention of goldfish. Day after day, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and the Premier outline a range of things that are happening, including with transport oriented developments and the ongoing work to speed up approvals. Yesterday, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces told the House:

Planning approvals are now 15 per cent faster than under the former Government. We have had nearly 85,000 lodgements as of May this year, an increase of 28 per cent compared to the same period last year.

He also said:

I have declared 116 proposals to be State significant development. Between them, that is more than 45,000 new homes.

A whole range of different policy measures and a significant amount of work is going on to address these issues. The public interest debate put forward by the Opposition for this afternoon shows that it is absolutely leading with its chin. It is trying to suggest that nothing is happening by making a big deal out of the fact that the Australian Turf Club members voted against the Rosehill development.

Opposition members are saying, "Why don't you go back to something that we didn't do even though we had 12 years to do it? Why don't you go back to something that we had an idea about, but we didn't actually manage to get into place?" The Minns Government has been in office for just over two years, and it is putting things in place. It is making things happen in housing development and affordability. That is a stark contrast with the members opposite. Every day the Opposition members like to say, "We could have got that one done if we'd only had a thirteenth year in government." Here we go—it is the same old things every time.

**Mr Geoff Provost:** You had 16 years.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I note that the member for Tweed has been here longer than I have.

**Mr Geoff Provost:** You've been here longer than me though.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I was here before you, but you have been here longer than I have. I never understood why the member for Tweed did not become a Labor candidate. The Minister for Families and Communities pointed out the Government's historic investment and record spending on social housing. I have regular meetings with Homes NSW. New social housing properties in Queanbeyan are now on the drawing board for the first time—we saw nothing for 12 years. More people are living in tents in cold climate areas as a result of the inaction of those opposite. The member for Tweed probably has even more people in tents because it is a bit warmer in his electorate.

People sleeping in cars in Cooma or in tents in Queanbeyan shows how big a problem this is, and I am pleased that we are taking action to address it. When I ran for my seat in the last election, I told the people of my electorate that this was a high priority for me. I also outlined it as a priority in my third inaugural speech to Parliament. I am pleased to support this bill today. Members of The Greens bemoaned being seen as blockers during their contribution to the debate. The fact is that they were blockers at the Federal level. That is why it has taken a while for money from the Federal Government to start flowing.

I suspect that The Greens Federal housing spokesperson was unceremoniously dumped by his electorate because of his position on things like this. He held things up. As the member for Liverpool highlighted earlier, the pursuit of perfection at the expense of actual improvement does not help people in our society who need our assistance. I am very proud to be a part of this Government, because it is doing so much in this space. As the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, I have the opportunity to reverse the neglect in the training of apprentices for the building industry.

A couple of weeks ago, I informed the House about a former TAFE employee who came to see me. He was one of 20 people teaching carpentry at his local TAFE in 2013. The previous Government retrenched 13 of them. He lost his job. This is why we do not have the supply of skills that we need to build housing. There is also demand coming from major projects on top of this. The previous Government did not plan for this. We are not going to fix the issue in two to three years because apprenticeships take three to four years to complete, but at least we are working on it. We will continue to try to address skill shortages over the coming years. I am pleased to support this legislation. It is a small part of a long-term solution. We are working positively with the Federal Labor Government to deliver better outcomes for the people of New South Wales.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (15:15):** I speak in debate on the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025. I will tell the House a story about a young woman in my electorate. Amelia is 31 years old. She is a university graduate. She is the middle child of her family, which has a dog, a cat and a mum. She is also a Taylor Swift fan and a bona fide banh mi enthusiast. Amelia grew up in Western Sydney in the electorate of Prospect. She works as a high school teacher and supports students to achieve their dreams. Every day, despite her best efforts, she is pushed further and further from achieving her dream of owning a family home. That dream is slipping out of reach for far too many young people in New South Wales.

House prices have become increasingly unaffordable in Sydney and across New South Wales. According to the *Demographia International Housing Affordability Report*, Australia is the second most expensive nation in the world for housing, and our State capital is the second least-affordable city in the world. I support the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025. I thank the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces for his collaboration, leadership and development of the bill. While it may not a very exciting bill to read, its effects are exciting and vital not only for young people but also for everyone in New South Wales.

The bill provides for the adoption of specific provisions of the Commonwealth Help to Buy Act 2024. It effectively brings the Commonwealth shared equity scheme, Help to Buy, into New South Wales. The bill will make great strides in helping low- and middle-income households throughout the State, and particularly in Western Sydney, achieve the dream of home ownership through a targeted referral of legislative powers. A wise person once said, "A person's home is his castle." An Aussie's home is their castle, security and comfort. It is a personal space to be with your partner, family and pets. This concept is becoming unattainable for too many young Australians.

According to the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, those who have help with their deposit from the bank of mum and dad or from other relatives are twice as likely to enter the property market. What about those who do not have the luxury of family wealth to help them? Those hard-working Australians who spend years saving for a deposit. They sacrifice and keep strict budgets only to find themselves still priced out of the housing market due to large deposit requirements. This is not a simple matter of personal savings. It is a much

larger systemic problem. The Government wants to address the barriers affecting aspirational home buyers in New South Wales, particularly the younger population within our electorates.

Many potential first home buyers are young people who want to continue to live and work in the communities they grew up in. The Government wants to help them with those aspirations, and that is exactly what this bill aims to accomplish.

It allows Commonwealth laws to work in tandem with our State laws to enable New South Wales to become a participating State in the Help to Buy scheme. Funded by the Commonwealth and administered by Housing Australia, Help to Buy is a shared equity scheme that addresses home ownership barriers. It aims to assist an estimated 3,000 New South Wales households annually into home ownership over four-year periods. Eligible residents will benefit from a smaller required deposit, lower mortgage repayments and the avoidance of lenders mortgage insurance costs.

Under Help to Buy, the Commonwealth will contribute up to 30 per cent of the purchase price of an existing home or up to 40 per cent of the price of a new home in return for a proportionate interest in the property. It will also enable eligible buyers with a deposit of at least 2 per cent to obtain a loan, helping prospective home owners to enter the market sooner. To keep the scheme fair for all, eligibility criteria apply, including a means test for a maximum income of \$100,000 for singles or \$160,000 for couples or single parents; a requirement to not currently own property; and property price caps of \$1.3 million for Sydney and some regional centres, and \$800,000 for other areas in New South Wales. Upon purchase, homes must be owner-occupied and used as the participant's principal place of residence. Help to Buy participants can still apply for other home ownership support programs, such as the First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme, the stamp duty exemption and the First Home Owner (New Homes) Grant.

There are key amendments in the bill that enable Help to Buy to operate in New South Wales. To provide a robust constitutional basis for Help to Buy implementation in New South Wales, the bill refers legislative powers to the Commonwealth under the Constitution. In part 2, clause 4, the bill provides for the adoption of the Commonwealth Help to Buy Act 2024, pursuant to section 51 (xxxvii) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth. The "Help to Buy arrangement" has the same meaning as in the Commonwealth Act and includes shared equity arrangements. A shared equity arrangement in relation to a residential property is an arrangement with one or more individuals under which the Commonwealth Government contributes a percentage of the cost of acquiring a residential property.

The bill also provides exclusion provisions to ensure that current or potential New South Wales assistance schemes remain unaffected. Part 3, clause 9 declares that approved shared equity schemes under the Duties Act 1997, the First Home Buyers Assistance scheme under the Duties Act, and first home owner grants and shared equity schemes under the First Home Owner Grant and Shared Equity Act 2000 are to be excluded. Consistent with the requirement for approval from States in section 46 (1) of the Commonwealth Act, under part 10, the bill allows a Minister on behalf of the State to object to matters by giving notice of an objection to the Minister on behalf of the Commonwealth.

The increasing cost of housing is reflected in our communities, from how people live, work and spend their free time, to the long-term viability of our city. A report by the New South Wales Productivity and Equality Commission found that, between 2016 and 2021, twice as many people moved away from Sydney as moved in. Some 35,000 people moved to our city, but 70,000 left. Around two-thirds of those departures were people aged between 25 and 64. That is extremely concerning. Those trends demonstrate that Sydney is losing many of its working-age residents. That is attributable to a lack of affordability, particularly of housing. People do not have a place to set up their lives—to start and maintain a family. If that continues, we could easily become a city without grandkids, as has been said.

The Minns Labor Government is working hard to remedy that problem, which it inherited after years of neglect from the previous Government. Under this Government, more than 70,000 homes are currently under construction, the highest number in the country. Planning applications have increased 28 per cent year-on-year and approvals are 15 per cent faster than they were under the Liberal-Nationals Government. Our Low and Mid-Rise Housing Policy is set to bring on 112,000 homes over the next five years. An investment of \$200.1 million will see over 900 homes built for essential workers in New South Wales, and our Building Homes for NSW program will deliver 8,400 new and replacement social homes.

With this bill we have an opportunity not to play politics but to work collaboratively with our Federal counterparts to effect a meaningful solution for our community. Data from the 2023 Australian Youth Barometer, which surveyed 600 young Australians, highlighted young people's interconnected and confronting attitudes about their futures. Some 70 per cent of respondents said that affordable housing was their top concern. In the Prospect electorate, our young people grew up watching their families work hard. They followed suit, studying hard,



heading to university to get their bachelor's degree or upskilling at TAFE with diplomas and entering the workforce. *[Extension of time]*

Those young people are the backbone of our community, but they are struggling to enter the property market. Young people want to put down their own roots and give back to the communities that raised them but, without help, they are locked out of the housing market. Members will remember Amelia, whom I spoke about at the beginning of this speech. She represents a growing demographic in our New South Wales community, particularly in Western Sydney. She represents millennials, gen Y and the iGen. If we do not act, she might also represent generation alpha and generation beta. Amelia represents the kids who grew up dancing to the original Wiggles, trading Pokémon cards at school and waking up early to watch *Saturday Disney*. Amelia's parents told her to go to university, study hard and get a good job; then she would be set up for life. So she did. She studied hard, got a great job and climbed the rungs to become a senior teacher at her local school. She saved hard too, putting money aside from every pay cheque for that long-term dream of home ownership. Amelia applied the formula for life that her parents encouraged—the one that worked for them—but that formula may not work for Amelia.

In 1984 the average house price was \$70,000 and the average annual salary was \$19,000. In 2024 the average house price was \$939,000 to \$1.65 million in Sydney, and the median annual salary was \$67,600. In 1984 people worked incredibly hard to buy a property that was 3.4 times their annual salary. Today it is 14.4 times the average salary. Over recent decades, access to home ownership has steadily declined in New South Wales. People face barriers like saving a deposit large enough to enter the market before it climbs out of reach, and that challenge compounds as the gap between property prices and median incomes widens. This bill seeks to overcome those challenges. It sets a great example of State and Federal Labor governments working together to address an issue that affects so many people in our community. Most importantly, the bill strives to make home ownership a reality for more people in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (15:28):** I make brief contribution to debate on the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025. As we have heard from the many contributors today, this legislation takes a critical step towards delivering housing affordability for thousands of families across New South Wales, including many in my own electorate of Leppington. Let us be clear about how we got here: A decade of Coalition governments at both the State and Federal level left housing unaffordable and out of reach for a generation of first home buyers.

They sold off public housing and failed to invest in new supply. They treated housing like a purely speculative asset rather than a human right. While developers and investors profited, working families were pushed further away from their dream of home ownership.

Now Labor governments, both in New South Wales and federally, are stepping up to fix it. The bill enables the Commonwealth's Help to Buy scheme to operate in New South Wales, giving low- and middle-income earners a genuine pathway to home ownership. It will allow eligible participants to co-purchase a property with the Federal Government, in turn cutting deposits, reducing monthly repayments and finally giving families what they have long deserved—a fair go.

Leppington is one of the fastest growing parts of not only the State but probably the country. It is right in the middle of the South West Growth Area and is full of young families, first home buyers and essential workers trying to set down roots and build a future. But despite the boom in housing developments, home ownership remains out of reach for many. Deposits are too high, prices are rising faster than wages, and people who would once have been able to buy their first home in their early thirties or even twenties are now being forced to wait longer or give up altogether and stay in the rental market.

That is why the Help to Buy scheme is so important. Under the scheme, the Government contributes up to 40 per cent for a new home or 30 per cent for an existing home. That means families in Leppington could potentially save hundreds of thousands of dollars on their mortgage and thousands every year in repayments. Families already face enough challenges in suburbs like Austral, within my electorate. Many roads there are still unsealed and infrastructure has failed to keep pace with the number of people moving in, thanks to the previous Government and the current council. Finding a house is hard enough; getting into one should not be impossible. This scheme means a couple or family renting or living with relatives finally has a chance to secure something of their own.

The technical purpose of the bill is to refer specific legislative powers to the Commonwealth so that Help to Buy can operate effectively in New South Wales. It adopts the necessary provisions of the Help to Buy Act 2024 and ensures that New South Wales law supports, rather than conflicts with, that important Federal scheme. Crucially, the bill ensures that participation in Help to Buy will not penalise home buyers under existing State laws. It will not affect the buyer's eligibility for the First Home Owner Grant or the First Home Buyers Assistance

Scheme, a couple of policies I remember announcing during the election campaign with the Premier in Edmondson Park—another growing suburb in south-west Sydney. Further, it will not trigger additional stamp duty or land tax when the Commonwealth's equity stake is gradually bought out by the home owner.

In other words, the scheme works in harmony with existing supports in New South Wales. That matters in Leppington. Since July 2023 more than 56,000 stamp duty exemptions or concessions have been issued across New South Wales through our expanded first home buyer programs, saving households around \$1.2 billion. Those programs are working in Leppington, and Help to Buy builds on that success. Help to Buy will be capped at 40,000 households nationwide over four years, with an estimated 3,000 per year in New South Wales. That means 3,000 households each year could get a genuine leg-up into the housing market. I expect a significant number of households to take that leg-up and place those roots in growing suburbs like Leppington, Austral and Denham Court.

Some people may argue about the constitutional referral of powers, but that is not novel. New South Wales has referred powers to the Commonwealth before for business names registration, workplace relations and de facto relationships. In each case it enabled stronger, more unified action across our great nation. Housing is no different. The scale of the challenge demands national coordination, and this referral ensures that New South Wales does not miss out while other States like Queensland and Victoria move ahead. Help to Buy is not a silver bullet, but it is a real, practical step that will make a difference for people in Leppington and across New South Wales. It means a young nurse from Middleton Grange, or a couple working in construction and early childhood education in Austral, might finally be able to buy their first home without the crushing weight of a full deposit or an unaffordable mortgage. This collaboration across jurisdictions is what good governance looks like.

On that note, I again congratulate the Federal members in my neck of the woods, Ms Anne Stanley and Dr Mike Freeland. I have not mentioned it this week, but another example of the State and Federal governments working together is the \$1 billion for Fifteenth Avenue. That important infrastructure pathway will ensure that people in those growing suburbs and new housing areas can get to the fantastic opportunities at the airport and aerotropolis, whether they be for jobs, education or cheap flights.

Dr Mike Freeland in Macarthur worked very hard to ensure that we also got \$1 billion to purchase the corridor for the extension of the Leppington line. Local members in my neck of the woods are working very hard on infrastructure, and State and Federal Ministers are working very hard to ensure that young families get a leg-up into the housing market and to solve one of the many crises—probably the most important crisis—left behind after a dismal decade of State and Federal Liberal governments. This fantastic bill will help genuine working families and will deliver fairness and opportunity where they are most needed. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (15:35):** In reply: I thank the following members for their contributions to debate on the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025: the member for Miranda and shadow Minister for Finance; the member for Parramatta; the member for Epping; the member for Mount Druitt; my Parliamentary Secretary, the member for Blacktown; the member for Newtown; the member for Liverpool; the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, and member for Monaro; the member for Prospect; and the member for Leppington. The bill was universally welcomed across the Chamber as a good step towards doing what we can to help more people get into their homes, in addition to the housing supply and planning work we are undertaking.

I use this opportunity to review the matters raised by the Legislation Review Committee in its scrutiny of the bill, as detailed in *Legislation Review Digest No. 29/58*. The committee plays a vital role in our legislative process, supporting Parliament in its consideration of legislation. I thank the committee for its careful consideration of the bill and for providing the Government with the opportunity to address each matter raised. The Government understands the concerns the committee has raised and acknowledges that personal rights and liberties should be protected. The committee raised concerns about the retrospective termination of law by proclamation in the *Government Gazette*, particularly the revocation of a proclamation of termination under clause (7) (2) of the bill.

Under clause 4 (3), the adoption period for the primary version and the residual version of the Commonwealth Help to Buy Act begins on the commencement date for the proclamation of the Act and ends on the date fixed under clause 7 (1) (a) or (b). New South Wales can set that date for termination by proclamation of either the primary version, the residual version or the amendment reference. That date can be a future point in time under clause 7 (1). If New South Wales decides not to terminate prior to that date passing, New South Wales can revoke the proclamation under clause 7 (2) as though the termination proclamation was never made. The revocation of a proclamation of termination would enable the continuation of New South Wales's adoption of the primary version or the residual version of the Commonwealth Help to Buy Act, or the amendment reference.

Under clause 7 (3), the revocation of a proclamation made under clause 7 (2) would only have effect if it is made or published before the day fixed under clause 7 (1). That would mean that under the proclamation, the operation of Help to Buy could not be terminated and subsequently undone after the termination date. Because personal rights and liberties would not be unduly infringed through the continued adoption of the Commonwealth Help to Buy Act—and, therefore, the Help to Buy scheme in New South Wales—it is not considered that parliamentary oversight is required for the revocation of termination.

The committee raised concerns about the wide regulation-making powers with retrospective effect under clause 11 of the bill. While acknowledging the committee's concern that the meaning of "necessary or convenient" is not defined, it is a common provision as referred to in "Chapter 18: Delegated Legislation" in the second edition of *New South Wales Legislative Council Practice*. One category of potential regulations provided for in the bill is the declaration of an excluded matter under clause 9 (1) (e). These regulations would have a confined effect as they would apply only to the extent to which the excluded matter would be inconsistent with the Commonwealth Help to Buy Act in relation to the Help to Buy program. It is anticipated that such regulations would seek to provide clarity as to how an identified matter under New South Wales law would interact with Help to Buy.

As noted by the committee, any regulations made would be tabled in Parliament and be subject to a disallowance period of 15 sitting days. This should provide sufficient time for parliamentary consideration of any regulation made under the legislation. As the bill would support the access for New South Wales residents to Commonwealth Help to Buy, the regulation-making powers should not adversely affect participants and will provide the flexibility to apply regulations, where necessary, in a timely manner. The committee considered the issue of commencement by proclamation in clause 2 of the bill and acknowledges that it may be intended to facilitate greater flexibility in making administrative arrangements. Commencement by proclamation is more appropriate than a fixed date for assent as the commencement of the Commonwealth Help to Buy is not certain at this time.

The Commonwealth needs to make program directions under the Commonwealth Help to Buy Act to put in place key features of the shared equity scheme and its commencement date. It is, therefore, intended that the proclaimed commencement date would align with the Commonwealth's commencement of the national Help to Buy scheme. The New South Wales Government will continue to work closely with the Commonwealth to support timely and effective Help to Buy implementation in New South Wales. We look forward to that time. I commend the bill to the House.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## ELECTORAL FUNDING AMENDMENT BILL 2025

### Second Reading Debate

**Debate resumed from 13 May 2025.**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (15:42):** My contribution to debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2025 on behalf of the Opposition will be uncharacteristically short. The bill concerns issues that are unique to the crossbench and, therefore, will have very little practical impact on members of the Coalition. However, the Coalition certainly supports the intent of the bill, which is to drive administrative efficiency and to ensure that there is not unintentional double-dipping with regard to the use of public funds. When compliance is more straightforward, it makes life easier for everybody, including members of Parliament, and allows them to concentrate on what should be their main focus—their constituents—rather than administrative processes of operating their electorate offices. It seems there is much to be said in favour of this bill. I am not sure there is anything sensible that can be said against it. On that basis, the Opposition will support the bill.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (15:43):** My contribution in support of the Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2025 will be brief, although I will have more to say than the member for Wahroonga. The objective of this bill is to ensure that independent members and political parties are able to access reimbursement for legitimate administrative expenses, provided that no duplicate claim has been made—even in circumstances where those expenses may also fall within the scope of an additional entitlement under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989.

This bill is in response to recommendations made by the NSW Electoral Commission and reflects extensive consultation with key stakeholders, including Independent members of this Parliament and the Department of Parliamentary Services. Under the Electoral Funding Act 2018, the Administration Fund is intended to reimburse elected members and parties for genuine administrative and operational expenses. However, section 84 (1) (b) (ii) of the Act currently excludes from reimbursement any expenditure for which a member may claim a parliamentary allowance, even if they have not made such a claim. This has led to significant confusion, inequity and administrative inefficiencies.

To put it plainly, members and parties have been denied reimbursement under the fund not because of a double dip, but merely because the expenditure was technically eligible to be claimed elsewhere. This situation has disadvantaged Independent members in particular, and the administrative burden placed on the NSW Electoral Commission has been unnecessarily complex. The bill corrects this by omitting section 84 (1) (b) (ii) and replacing it with a clearer provision: Reimbursement from the Administration Fund will be denied only if a claim has actually been made under an additional entitlement. If no such claim has been made, the expense may be validly claimed from the fund.

Importantly, this bill does not open the door to double dipping. On the contrary, it introduces robust safeguards, including a requirement for members and parties to submit declarations confirming that they have not, and will not, claim the same expenditure under both schemes. This is a fair and transparent mechanism that ensures public money is used appropriately while removing unnecessary red tape. The bill also empowers the NSW Electoral Commission to recover funds in cases where it is later discovered that a claim was made under both schemes. Furthermore, it withholds quarterly payments where required declarations are outstanding, but sensibly preserves eligibility for unrelated claims and payments.

These changes go to the core of public trust in the integrity of our electoral and parliamentary systems. It is absolutely right that elected members and parties be reimbursed for the cost of fulfilling their public duties, but it is equally right that we ensure those claims are made transparently, consistently and without duplication. The bill includes savings and transitional provisions to manage this process responsibly. It allows supplementary claims to be made within 12 months of commencement of the Act and provides for extensions of repayment deadlines for overpaid amounts—extending to no later than 31 December 2026. These provisions recognise the practical realities faced by members and provide a structured pathway for resolving claims fairly.

The definition of additional entitlement has been refined in the bill to refer to those entitlements under section 10 (3) of the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989 that explicitly exclude the electoral allowance. This offers a clearer and more precise legal standard than the undefined term "parliamentary allowance", which previously has led to ambiguity and inconsistent interpretation. This amendment has been designed to enhance the operation of the law, reduce the administrative burden on the NSW Electoral Commission, and ensure all members—particularly Independents—are treated equitably in their access to public funding.

This bill will reiterate that it is not about increasing entitlements, not about opening the door to double claims, and not about weakening scrutiny. It is about removing an unintended and unnecessary restriction that has created confusion, inequity and inefficiency. It replaces ambiguity with clarity. It replaces administrative burdens with fairness, and it strengthens the Government's commitment to a transparent, effective and accountable public funding system. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (15:49):** I speak in support of the changes to the Electoral Funding Act relating to the Administration Fund. As the member for Mount Druitt said, the changes in the Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2025 are about replacing ambiguity with clarity. I thank the Special Minister of State, his staff, the Cabinet Office and the Electoral Commission for working with me and fellow Independent members, including the member for Lake Macquarie, to address an ongoing concern about the lack of clarity on whether and how Independent members can access administration funding, an entitlement that Independent members have, just as political parties have. The Electoral Commission had received legal advice that called into question whether Independent members could claim a number of items that they had previously claimed across the Administration Fund.

We worked together to resolve and address the fact that, for two years of potential funding, there had been a grey area as to whether Independent members could make claims, and whether they would need to return any funding received. The proposal before the Parliament seeks to address that by allowing a time frame for Independent members to resolve issues such as not making claims for which they were eligible, or making claims for which they were ineligible. It also allows provisions for how to address those concerns. The Administration Fund is designed to assist Independent members in their duties. However, our ability to be assisted by it was greatly limited, because it was unclear whether we were able to access funding in areas that we had traditionally accessed.

Independent members really appreciate the way in which the Government and Electoral Commission have worked with us. The hopeful passage of the legislation will give greater clarity not only to Independent members but also to the Electoral Commission. It also gives greater clarity about the use of public funding. It provides certainty that funds cannot be claimed twice. That had never been the case before, but we have now put that as an absolute certainty in the proposed legislation. The bill creates a clear and transparent process to claim and use public funds. I thank the Government, the Electoral Commission and the staff of Minister Graham's office, especially Amanda Rose, for working with us. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (15:52):** I speak in support of the Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2025, which seeks to clarify the relationship between the entitlement of elected Independent members and political parties to payments from the Administration Fund and members' additional entitlements under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989. The bill makes changes to the scope of administrative expenditure payable from the Administration Fund under the Electoral Funding Act 2018. The amendments will ensure that members are able to claim expenses from the fund even if an item may also be claimed as an additional entitlement under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989. The bill will apply retrospectively on and from 1 April 2023, as well as prospectively, and includes savings and transitional provisions to deal with supplementary claims for payment.

It is important to address why the bill is needed. It is important to say from the outset that it clarifies the relationship between payments from the Administration Fund under part 5 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 and members' additional entitlements under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989. The bill addresses concerns raised by the NSW Electoral Commission that section 84 (1) (b) (ii) of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 in its current form creates undesirable administrative complexity in the claims assessment process, as well as uncertainty for members about the management of their electoral funding obligations and entitlements. The amending bill will provide certainty and clarity for stakeholders who are both making and determining claims for payment from the Administration Fund.

It is important to consider the purpose of the Administration Fund itself. The Administration Fund was established under part 5 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 and is administered by the NSW Electoral Commission. Its purpose is to reimburse eligible political parties and Independent members of Parliament for administrative and operating expenditure incurred in a quarterly period, up to a capped amount. For elected Independent members, the quarterly amount is the amount of actual administrative expenditure incurred by or on behalf of the elected member during the quarter to which the payment relates.

For 2025 it is capped at \$70,700 per quarter. The quarterly amounts are paid in advance and any unused portion of the quarterly cap or administrative expenditure incurred in excess of the cap can be carried forward to be used in a subsequent quarterly claim in the same calendar year. It is important to note that the current Parliament contains the largest number of Independent and minor party members. It is therefore timely and important that this clarity is addressed in legislation and that the concerns raised by the NSW Electoral Commission are dealt with.

Currently, in terms of what can be claimed from the Administration Fund, section 84 (1) of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 specifies what expenses are included and excluded from the scope of administrative expenditure for the purpose of claims from the Administration Fund. Section 84 (1) (a) of the Act provides that expenditure for administrative and operating expenses can be claimed from the fund. Those expenses include: expenditure for the administration or management of the activities of the eligible party or elected member; expenditure for conferences, seminars, meetings or similar functions at which the policies of the eligible party or elected member are discussed or formulated; expenditure on providing information to the public or a section of the public about the eligible party or elected member; expenditure on providing information to members and supporters of the eligible party or elected member; expenditure in respect of the audit of the financial accounts of the eligible party or elected member; and expenditure on equipment and training to ensure compliance by the eligible party, elected members or endorsed candidates of the eligible party with the obligations under the Act.

Other forms of expenditure include the reasonable remuneration of staff engaged in the activities outlined previously for the eligible party or elected member, being the proportion of that remuneration that relates to the time spent on those activities; reasonable expenditure on equipment or vehicles used for the purposes of the activities outlined previously, being the proportion of the cost of their acquisition and operation that relates to the use of the equipment or vehicles for those activities; expenditure on office accommodation for staff and equipment; and expenditure on interest payments on loans.

Clause 4A of the Electoral Funding Regulation 2018 prescribes additional categories of expenditure that can be claimed from the fund. Expenditure which cannot be claimed from the fund under section 84 (1) (b) of the Act is electoral expenditure and expenditure incurred substantially in respect of operations or activities that relate to the election of members to a Parliament other than the New South Wales Parliament. The bill proposes to omit

section 84 (1) (b) (ii) from the Electoral Funding Act 2018, which currently also excludes claims from the fund for:

... expenditure for which a member may claim a parliamentary allowance as a member, other than expenditure for which an electoral allowance is payable under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989, Part 3.

The amendment will permit Independent members and political parties to claim expenses from the Administration Fund even if an item may also be claimed as an additional entitlement by members under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989. I turn to how the provisions in the bill were developed. Following amendments to section 84 (1) (b) (ii) of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 in 2024, the NSW Electoral Commission reviewed how parliamentary allowances other than the electoral allowance must be treated during the assessment of claims from the Administration Fund.

The Electoral Commission recommended that the Government consider a further amendment to the Act to clarify the relationship between payments from the Administration Fund and members' additional entitlements.

I thank the commission for raising the matter with the Government so it can address any issues or lack of clarity. The provision was dealt with previously by an amendment to the Act made by the Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2024, and this 2025 bill seeks to address any remaining lack of clarity. The Government agrees that an amendment is desirable because the current operation of section 84 means that eligible Independent members of Parliament and political parties cannot be reimbursed from the Administration Fund for items that are claimable under a parliamentary allowance, even if a member has not actually made a claim under such an allowance.

Independent members of Parliament and the NSW Electoral Commission were consulted on the policy proposal and the draft bill. I note the comments of the Independent member for Sydney in support of the bill. The Department of Parliamentary Services, which administers members' additional entitlements, was also consulted on the draft bill. My understanding is that it has provided its support and endorsement for the provisions contained within the bill. The savings and transitional provisions were drafted following close consultation with the Electoral Commission and Independent members of Parliament to reflect the intended operational approach to managing affected claims once the amendments are enacted.

As I mentioned previously, the changes are important to ensure that eligible Independent members of Parliament and political parties can have equitable access to reimbursements from the Administration Fund for items that are claimable under a parliamentary allowance, even if the member has not actually made a claim under such an allowance. Given that this Parliament contains one of the largest cohorts of Independent and minor party members of Parliament, a significant equity issue arises, and it must be addressed for our Parliament to be the best possible Parliament it can be. Those changes also address concerns that were raised by the NSW Electoral Commission. I commend the Minister with carriage of the bill in this place, the Special Minister of State in the other place and his staff, as well as the department, for their hard work to ensure that all stakeholders were consulted and that any issues and concerns raised are adequately addressed in the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (16:02):** I make a contribution to debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2025, and what an important bill it is. It seeks to clarify the relationship between payments from the Administration Fund under part 5 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 and members' additional entitlements under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989. The bill addresses concerns raised by our good friends at the Electoral Commission that section 84 (1) (b) (ii) of the Electoral Funding Act in its current form creates undesirable administrative complexity in the claims assessment process and, in doing so, creates uncertainty for members about the management of their electoral funding obligations and entitlements. This Government seeks to get rid of undesirable administrative complexity. We were elected on a platform of doing away with undesirable administrative complexity, so I am glad that we are discussing this bill.

The amendments will provide certainty and clarity for the stakeholders of the fund, and the bill will ensure that the processes for making and determining claims are clear. As I said previously, the Administration Fund was established under part 5 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 and is administered by the NSW Electoral Commission. The purpose of the fund is to reimburse eligible political parties and Independent MPs for administrative and operational expenditure incurred each quarter, up to a capped amount. For those in the gallery and watching at home, the cap is currently set at \$70,700 a quarter. For elected Independent members, that quarterly amount is the actual administrative expenditure that they incur and claim during a quarter. It is paid in advance, and the unused portion or expenses incurred in excess of the cap can be carried forward to be used in a subsequent quarter in the same calendar year. In theory, a member could have funding of four times \$70,700. I am not very good at maths, so I will leave it to those who are to work out what that sum is.

One issue raised about that amendment is that it is retrospective. The bill will apply from April 2023. In terms of administration that makes sense, because April 2023 was the first full quarter of this term of Parliament, but it does make it retrospective. I know that concerns have been raised by the Legislation Review Committee, and what a great committee it is. I am on that very important committee. Its function is to effectively assess bills to ensure that they do not trespass unduly on personal rights and liberties, inappropriately delegate legislative powers, or insufficiently subject the exercise of legislative power to parliamentary scrutiny.

I note that the digest in which the bill appears raised concerns about the retrospective nature of the bill, but members should not be concerned because those concerns have been addressed. The application of the bill is retrospective to enable Independent members and parties to submit supplementary claims for administrative expenditure that has occurred since 1 April 2023, regardless of whether previous claims in that period have already been determined.

Things happen in the course of being a member of Parliament, and it sometimes takes a while to charge and invoice those things, so it is fair that changes to the fund are effective from the start of this parliamentary term. Supplementary claims made by an Independent member must be accompanied by the requisite declaration that the member has not made and will not make a claim for the same item under the Administration Fund and an additional entitlement. There are checks and balances in place. When public money is given to political parties and members of Parliament, it must be governed by robust processes. I am not questioning the character of our fabulous Independent members in this place, but mistakes can be made. Administration can get complex, especially in the area of electoral funding, and that is why those checks and balances are in place.

Returning to the reason for the retrospective application of the amendments, it also enables the Electoral Commission to assess previously submitted but undetermined claims in accordance with the amended provisions. The transitional provisions have been drafted following close consultation with the Electoral Commission and members of Parliament, so they are not something that the Ministers cooked up on their own. They have consulted and they have made sure that the Electoral Commission is happy that the proposed changes can be administered and the members can be looked after. The members are happy with the changes as well. The amendments provide for public consultation on draft guidelines that relate to administrative expenditure and will only apply prospectively.

Those will only apply prospectively. It will not have any retrospective application.

In short, the bill deals with the relationship between members of Parliament and their payments under the Administration Fund and the provisions of the Parliamentary Remuneration Act. It goes a long way to seeking clarification and then fixing that clarification. As the Minister said in her second reading speech, the aim is to provide certainty and clarity for those who are making and determining claims for payment from the Administration Fund. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:10):** I am very pleased to make a contribution to debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2025. This is an extremely important bill. It is dry in its reading, but its impact, particularly on Independent members, is extremely important. The bill clarifies the relationship between payments from the Administration Fund under part 5 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 and members' additional entitlements under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989. It addresses concerns raised by the NSW Electoral Commission that in its current form section 84 (1) (b) (ii) of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 creates undesirable administrative complexity in the claims assessment process, as well as uncertainty for members about the management of their electoral funding obligations and entitlements. The amendments in the bill will provide certainty and clarity for stakeholders who are both making and determining claims for payments from the Administration Fund.

What is the real purpose of this fund? Why do we have the Administration Fund? The fund is established under part 5 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 and is administered by the NSW Electoral Commission. The purpose of the Administration Fund is to reimburse eligible political parties and Independent members of Parliament for administrative and operating expenditure incurred in a quarterly period, up to a capped amount. For elected Independent members, the quarterly amount is the amount of actual administrative expenditure incurred by or on behalf of the elected member during that quarter. For example, for 2025 it is capped at \$70,700 per quarter. The quarterly amounts are paid in advance and any unused portion of the quarterly cap or administrative expenditure incurred in excess of the cap can be carried forward to be used in a subsequent quarterly claim in the same calendar year.

The member for Leppington has spoken about these things. I will not repeat what he has said, but it is important to address when the declaration is required because some changes are being made. The bill inserts a requirement for Independent elected members to provide a declaration together with their claim under the Administration Fund, that they have not made or will not make a claim for the same item under an additional

entitlement. Similarly, in relation to a claim made by a party for payment from the Administration Fund, the bill provides the NSW Electoral Commission with the power to require an elected member of the party to make a declaration that they have not made and will not make a claim for an additional entitlement for the same item of expenditure. The bill then proposes that members and parties will not be eligible for a quarterly payment from the Administration Fund when a required declaration is outstanding in relation to the claim for the quarterly payment. However, an outstanding declaration will not affect a member or party's obligation for a quarterly advanced payment or quarterly payment for an unrelated matter, or their eligibility for other payments under the Electoral Funding Act 2018. It makes that very clear.

The existing provisions under section 146 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 provide that it is an offence to knowingly provide false or misleading information to the Electoral Commission in or in connection with a declaration under the Act. The bill also empowers the Electoral Commission to recover funds in circumstances where a member or a member of a party later receives an additional entitlement for the same item of administrative expenditure that the member or party has already claimed from the Administration Fund. This will ensure that Independents or other members of a party do not double dip for their funds.

Will extensions of time be available for members of Parliament who have to repay amounts to the Electoral Commission following their supplementary claims? The answer is very clear in this bill. Firstly, the existing provision in section 153 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 provides that:

The Electoral Commission may, in any particular case, extend the time for doing anything under this Act, if it is satisfied that proper reasons exist justifying the extension.

The bill expressly provides that the Electoral Commissioner may extend the time available in circumstances where a supplementary claim is determined and the Electoral Commission requires a member to repay an excess amount of administration funding previously received by the member. Specifically, the transitional provisions of the bill provide that the making of a supplementary claim relating to administrative expenditure incurred on or after 1 April 2023 and before the commencement of the amending Act constitutes a proper reason to justify an extension of time to repay any excess amount to the Electoral Commission beyond the usual 60-day statutory time frame. The time for repayment cannot, however, be extended beyond 31 December 2026. There is a clear cut-off.

Following the amendments to section 84 (1) (b) (ii) of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 in 2024, the NSW Electoral Commission reviewed how "parliamentary allowances", other than the electoral allowance, must be treated during the assessment of claims from the Administration Fund. The Electoral Commission recommended that the Government consider a further amendment to the Act to clarify the relationship between payments from the Administration Fund and members' additional entitlements under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989. I thank the commission for raising this matter with the Government. It is something we have taken very seriously. As a new Government we immediately went to work to create this bill and make these very important reforms.

The Government agrees that an amendment is desirable because the current operation of section 84 (1) (b) (ii) means that eligible Independent members of Parliament and political parties cannot be reimbursed from the Administration Fund for items that are claimable under a parliamentary allowance, even if a member has not actually made a claim under such an allowance. Independent members of Parliament and the NSW Electoral Commission were consulted on the policy proposals and on the draft bill. The Department of Parliamentary Services, which administers members' additional entitlements, was also consulted on the bill.

The savings and conditional provisions have been drafted following close consultation with the Electoral Commission and the Independent members of Parliament to reflect the intended operational approach to managing affected claims once the amendments are enacted. I congratulate the Minister and the department for putting this bill together. The Government has also worked closely with the crossbench and the NSW Electoral Commission to put this bill together, which is now fit for purpose. It is great that we can work so collaboratively with the crossbench to create a bill like this. It will reflect on other things that we do as a government. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (16:18):** I speak in support of the Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2025. At the outset, I thank the Minister for bringing this bill forward. I also congratulate the Independent members in this House for the collaborative way in which they have worked with the Government and the departments to put forward this very commonsense approach. It seems that every time there is a by-election, we get a new Independent. The bill is very, very timely.

**Mr Anoulack Chanthivong:** Only from the other side.

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN:** Only from the other side, yes. I acknowledge the Minister's interjection. It is important to clarify why the bill is needed. The bill distinguishes between payments from the Administration Fund



under part 5 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 and members' additional entitlements under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989. The bill addresses concerns raised by the NSW Electoral Commission that section 84 (1) (b) (ii) of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 in its current form creates undesirable administrative complexity in the claims assessment process and uncertainty for members about the management of their electoral funding obligations and entitlements. I know that every member in this place takes their obligations in terms of their electoral funding disclosures and their entitlements very seriously, so we really need to sort this out. The amendments will provide certainty and clarity for stakeholders who are both making and determining claims for payment from the Administration Fund.

How were the provisions of the bill developed? Following amendments in 2024 to section 84 (1) (b) (ii) of the Electoral Funding Act 2018, the NSW Electoral Commission reviewed how parliamentary allowances other than the electoral allowance must be treated during the assessment of claims from the Administration Fund. The Electoral Commission recommended that the Government consider a further amendment to the Act to clarify the relationship between payments from the Administration Fund and members' additional entitlements under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989.

I thank the commission for raising this very important matter with the Government. The Government agrees that an amendment is desirable because the current operation of section 84 (1) (b) (ii) means that eligible Independent members of Parliament and political parties cannot be reimbursed from the Administration Fund for items that are claimable under a parliamentary allowance, even if a member has not actually made a claim under such an allowance. I acknowledge the contribution from the member for Sydney and the important issues he raised in his debate.

As I said previously, Independent members of Parliament and the NSW Electoral Commission were consulted on the policy proposal and on the draft bill. The Department of Parliamentary Services, which administers members additional entitlements, was also consulted on the draft bill. The savings and transitional provisions have been drafted following close consultation with the Electoral Commission and Independent members of Parliament to reflect the intended operational approach to managing affected claims once the amendments are enacted.

What is the purpose of the Administration Fund? The fund was established under part 5 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 and is administered by the NSW Electoral Commission. The purpose of the Administration Fund is to reimburse eligible political parties and Independent members of Parliament for administrative and operating expenditure incurred in a quarterly period, up to a capped amount. For elected Independent members, the quarterly amount is the amount of actual administrative expenditure incurred by, or on behalf of, the elected member during the quarter to which the payment relates. For 2025, it is capped at \$70,700 per quarter. The quarterly amounts are paid in advance and any unused portion of the quarterly cap or administrative expenditure incurred in excess of the cap can be carried forward to be used in a subsequent quarterly claim in the same calendar year.

What can be claimed currently? Section 84 (1) of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 specifies the expenses that are included and excluded from the scope of the administrative expenditure for the purpose of claims from the Administration Fund. Section 84 (1) (a) of the Act provides that expenditure for numerous administrative and operating expenses can be claimed from the fund. Those expenses include: expenditure for the administration or management of the activities of the eligible party or elected member; expenditure for conferences, seminars, meetings or similar functions at which the policies of the eligible party or elected member are discussed or formulated; expenditure on providing information to the public or a section of the public about the eligible party or elected member; expenditure on providing information to members and supporters of the eligible party or elected member; expenditure in respect of the audit of the financial accounts of the eligible party or elected member; and expenditure on equipment and training to ensure compliance by the eligible party, elected members or endorsed candidates of the eligible party with the obligations under the Act.

Those expenses also include: expenditure on the reasonable remuneration of staff engaged in the above activities for the eligible party or elected member, being the proportion of that remuneration that relates to the time spent on those activities; reasonable expenditure on equipment or vehicles used for the purposes of the above activities, being the proportion of the cost of their acquisition and operation that relates to the use of the equipment or vehicles for those activities; expenditure on office accommodation for the above staff and equipment; and expenditure on interest payments on loans.

Clause 4A of the Electoral Funding Regulation 2018 also prescribes additional categories of expenditure that can be claimed from the fund. Expenditure which cannot be claimed from the fund under section 84 (1) (b) of the Act is electoral expenditure and expenditure incurred substantially in respect of operations or activities that relate to the election of members to a Parliament other than the New South Wales Parliament. The bill proposes to omit section 84 (1) (b) (ii) from the Electoral Funding Act 2018, which currently also excludes "expenditure

for which a member may claim a parliamentary allowance as a member, other than expenditure for which an electoral allowance is payable under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989, part 3" from being claimed from the fund.

This amending bill will permit Independent members and political parties to claim expenses from the Administration Fund even if an item may also be claimed as an additional entitlement by members under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989. The content of the bill sounds very dry, but it is very important, particularly for Independent members. It gives them clarity and certainty. It also gives the Electoral Commission what they have asked the Government for. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (16:27):** I speak in support of the Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2025. As many speakers have already outlined, the bill is designed to solve a particular problem which mostly applies to the Independent members or crossbench members in the Parliament. The bill clarifies the relationship between payments from the Administration Fund under part 5 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 and members additional entitlements under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989. As other speakers have said, it addresses concerns raised by the NSW Electoral Commission that section 84 (1) (b) (ii) of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 in its current form creates undesirable administrative complexity in the claims assessment process and uncertainty for members about the management of their electoral funding obligations and entitlements.

The amending bill provides certainty and clarity for stakeholders. I want to make clear that this is not giving something additional to the Independents. Essentially, it allows them to get funding which they were previously entitled to under the Act. It is different for the Independents and the crossbench compared to how it is for those of us who are part of a large party. I am sure that most of my colleagues, like me, never even thought about this, because our party deals with all of the administration of this type. We just do what we are told.

It is important to note the work that needs to continue on electoral funding laws in New South Wales. No legislation can ever be perfect and without the need for amendment. Obviously, in the case of this bill, a small amendment is being made to ensure fairness and equity in the way that electoral funds are distributed.

I want to go back in time a bit. New South Wales has a long and proud history of electoral funding laws and disclosures that have been amended over time to ensure that they keep up with community expectations. Importantly, New South Wales has capped electoral expenditure to make sure that campaigns are not excessive, meaning that all candidates can run equivalent campaigns and not be completely overwhelmed. From my memory—which goes a fair way back—a lot of the work on electoral funding started many years ago with the Wran Government, and it has developed since then.

Many decades ago there was an acceptance that a component of public funding was needed in election campaigns in New South Wales, on the basis that publicly funding election campaigns takes away some of the incentives for wealthy people or organisations to unfairly prejudice and influence campaigns by giving a candidate or a party huge donations. Conversely, huge donations can mean that a potentially fantastic member of Parliament cannot afford to even be in the race. That is similar to the proposition more than 100 years ago that members should be paid so that Parliament was not just the domain of the wealthy strata of society. The bill is all about trying to make Parliament more equitable and accessible so that the people of New South Wales are represented in a way that better reflects who they are.

Since I was first elected to Parliament, I have been proud to see the diversity of members. Parliament now much better reflects society than it used to, and I have no doubt that our electoral funding laws have helped with that. The electoral funding regime in New South Wales provides funding for parties and candidates on a per-vote basis to ensure that they can continue their operations, run at the next election and provide the services that the people of the State elected them for.

Electoral funding caps in New South Wales are interesting, particularly when compared with the Federal system. The level at which donations must be disclosed in the State is lower than the Federal level. That works really well because it increases the disclosures of donors to political parties. The other thing that works well in New South Wales is the theoretical cap on campaign contributions, which is much lower than in many other jurisdictions and certainly lower than the Federal level. At the recent Federal election I was blown away by the spending on campaigns in some marginal seats. I will use the Coalition campaign for Eden-Monaro as an example, whose cost I will be intrigued to see. I would be surprised if it is under a million dollars. The Coalition had blanket coverage on the ground—which, admittedly, is not very expensive—and volunteers and posters everywhere, to the point where it was counterproductive.

**Ms Felicity Wilson:** We don't have to pay our volunteers like you do.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I appreciate the interjection from the member for North Shore. In fact, they were being paid. No Labor volunteers in Monaro or Eden-Monaro are ever paid. They do it because they are committed to the cause, whereas in Eden-Monaro we saw blanket coverage from people who certainly gave the impression that they were being paid. I know that National Party volunteers have been paid at previous State elections, because they have said so on the booths. That was an interesting interjection from the member for North Shore.

Going back to the cost of the Coalition's Eden-Monaro campaign, it also advertised on free-to-air TV and during Raiders games on Kayo. The party ran an incredibly expensive campaign. I give great credit to Kristy McBain for winning so well, because she is such a good local member. The campaign emphasised the differences between the funding arrangements in at the New South Wales and Federal levels. It is better to cap expenditure in the way the State does, so that election campaigns do not blow massive amounts of money and are not able to be unduly influenced by massive donors, like Clive Palmer and whoever he happens to be funding. His donations are designed not to get his own candidates elected but to help the Coalition, although that did not work very well at the recent election. New South Wales can be proud of its funding and disclosure arrangements, which keep the cost of elections down.

The feedback I received during the last Federal campaign from members of the public who have no political involvement was that they were overwhelmed by the amount of pushy advertising they encountered, whether it was the text messages they received, the TV ads they saw or the bank of literally 100 signs they drove by on one stretch of road. Why would a candidate do that? People in New South Wales might not say that they like the system but, if they thought about it, they would appreciate that funding for election campaigns in New South Wales is capped. [*Extension of time*]

It is hard to make the electoral funding regime in New South Wales perfect, which is why every now and again bills like this come along to fix an anomaly and make sure the system is working as equitably as possible—in this case, to make sure that Independent members receive the allowances they are legitimately entitled to from the electoral funding and administration regimes. We need to keep working to ensure that the system is as fair as possible. Over the years in New South Wales, developments like the ban on particular donors whom society rightly feels should not be contributing to election campaigns, the cap on donations and the declaration of donors to make sure that the system is transparent, so that people do not unduly influence development proposals and the like, have ensured that undesirable elements do not help to fund election campaigns. Those are the sorts of things that governments need to keep an eye on.

As somebody who has been involved in elections for quite a long time, I would rather campaigns were 100 per cent publicly funded, mainly because I absolutely hate fundraising but also for the legitimate reason that it would completely take out some of those undesirable influences. I recognise that there are issues with that, such as how a new entrant—say, an Independent—can come into the process and fund a campaign that allows them to contest a seat. When the Federal Government was discussing campaign funding changes prior to the last election, many of the teal candidates were concerned about some of the changes that were being suggested.

The position they took was interesting because they suddenly had found a source of funding that in previous years they probably would not have had. Prominent Independents like Tony Windsor did not have those sorts of funding sources. The conversation about electoral funding and administration will be ongoing as we talk about the fairest way to ensure that our democracy works well, without being unduly influenced by donors of particular persuasions and without giving people advantage because they happen to be wealthy.

Some people are able to largely self-fund their campaigns in various contests, and that makes a difference.

We must constantly work with all the players in the process to get as close as possible to a system that enables fair access to democracy for those who want to contest on an even playing field. This legislation may play only a small part in that, but it plays a part, nonetheless. It is part of ensuring that Independent and crossbench members can access the same assistance as members of the major parties. I commend the bill to the House. I note that this debate is part of an ongoing discussion about how to get the fairest possible system in New South Wales. All members in this place obviously have a very strong interest in that discussion, but I encourage members of the public to also maintain a strong interest in it, because it is important for our democracy.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (16:40):** Before I contribute to debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2025, I acknowledge a member of my team who will be leaving us this week and who is watching from my electorate office. I thank Kyra Sumner very much for their service to the electorate office and the people of Gosford, and wish them all the very best in their new role with the Director of Public Prosecutions. I thank the House for its indulgence. I am very happy to speak to the bill. There has been a lot of consultation with the large number of new Independents in Parliament. It is nice to see that group of fresh faces on the other side of the Chamber, representing their communities. Given the results of the Federal election, we may see further fresh Independents representing their communities in the Federal Parliament. The Independent members have been

consulted and exposed to the draft bill during negotiations. I thank the Special Minister of State for his work in achieving this outcome.

Entitlements and disclosures are a very important part of our role as parliamentarians. Sometimes it is a bit tedious, but it is important for the people of New South Wales that we remain transparent about expenditure. The bill makes changes to the scope of administrative expenditure payable from the Administration Fund under the Electoral Funding Act 2018. The amendments in the bill will ensure that members are able to claim expenses from the fund, even if an item may also be claimed as an electoral entitlement under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989. That enables fairness and equity in the distribution of electoral funding for members, particularly for those who are Independents as opposed to members of major parties. I thank the Labor Party for all the work it does behind the scenes on promotions and preparation for elections.

The NSW Electoral Commission has recommended that the Electoral Funding Act be amended to clarify the relationship between payments from the fund and members' additional entitlements under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act. The commission considers that payments cannot be made from the fund for expenditure that can be claimed under a parliamentary allowance, even if the member has not actually made a claim under an allowance. I really enjoyed the contribution of the member for Monaro and his reflections on the importance of capping electoral spending in New South Wales.

My electorate is part of the Federal electorate of Robertson. The limitations I have while campaigning as a State representative are very different to the expenditure that was able to be flashed about by the Coalition candidate campaigning for the seat of Robertson. There were television ads, radio ads and excessive signage and banners. It was almost an assault on the senses to walk up to the voting booths on the day of the election. People were actually offended by the waste and expenditure. A cap on spending makes a real difference. It also limits the input from big business and donors that should not be contributing. The regulations in New South Wales do a good job of managing that influence on elections.

The Administration Fund is established under part 5 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 and is administered by the NSW Electoral Commission. The purpose of the Administration Fund is to reimburse eligible political parties and Independent members of Parliament for administrative and operating expenses incurred in a quarterly period, up to a capped amount. For an elected Independent member, the quarterly amount is the amount of actual administrative expenditure incurred by or on behalf of the elected member during the quarter to which the payment relates. For 2025 it is capped at \$70,700 per quarter.

The bill clarifies the relationship between payments from the Administration Fund under part 5 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 and members' additional entitlements under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989. The bill also addresses concerns raised by the NSW Electoral Commission that section 84 (1) (b) (ii) of the Electoral Funding Act, in its current form, creates undesirable administrative complexity in the claims assessment process, as well as uncertainty for members about the management of their electoral funding obligations and entitlements.

Clarity about the administrative complexity of electoral funding obligations and entitlements is very important. It is quite a process to separate where our responsibilities lie and to transparently meet those responsibilities to the public and the Parliament. The amendments in the bill will provide certainty and clarity for stakeholders who are making and determining claims for payments from the Administration Fund. Section 84 (1) of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 specifies which expenses are included and excluded from the scope of expenditure for the purpose of claims from the Administration Fund. I will not reiterate those expenses, as the member for Penrith has already explained them in detail.

The bill creates a requirement for Independent members to provide, together with their claim under the Administration Fund, a declaration that they have not made and will not make a claim for the same item under the additional entitlement. Similarly, in relation to a claim made by a party for payment from the Administration Fund, the bill provides the NSW Electoral Commission with the power to require an elected member of the party to make a declaration that they have not made and will not make a claim for an additional entitlement for the same item of administrative expenditure. In closing, I thank the Independent members of Parliament, the NSW Electoral Commission and the Department of Parliamentary Services for providing input, and I congratulate the Special Minister of State and his team on their work on the bill.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (16:46):** I speak in support of the Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2025. It is an important and necessary measure to bring clarity, fairness and greater transparency to the electoral funding landscape in New South Wales. The bill addresses a longstanding area of administrative complexity. It strengthens the integrity of our electoral funding framework and enhances the practical ability of our democratically elected representatives to meet their obligations in a responsible and accountable manner. At its core, the bill provides much-needed clarification on how members of Parliament and political parties can access

and account for reimbursements from the Administration Fund, which is established under part 5 of the Electoral Funding Act.

I begin by outlining why the bill is necessary. Section 84 (1) (b) (ii) of the Act has generated a great deal of administrative uncertainty. In its present form it creates complications in the claims assessment process, both for the NSW Electoral Commission, which administers the fund, and for members of Parliament and political parties trying to understand what they can and cannot claim. It is important to note that those concerns were raised by the NSW Electoral Commission. I give credit to the Special Minister of State for bringing this legislation and to Parliament for debate.

It is necessary to lay down some fair and equitable groundwork, particularly for newer members of Parliament who do not necessarily understand how the processes apply. I am one of those people. I come from a business background. I was quite clear about the expenses that I could claim when I was working for a particular client, and how that related to me in terms of taxation on a GST basis and on an annual tax return basis. That was very clearly delineated for someone operating a business. However, coming into this place, it is difficult to understand the complexity of the different allowances for political parties and for individual members, which ensure we can do the best job we possibly can without being inhibited by overarching concerns about the amount of money it costs. That is something I have had to deal with.

The overlap with additional member entitlements under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989 is an example that has been especially problematic. This bill directly addresses those concerns. It provides clear legislative guidance on what may be claimed from the fund. It removes ambiguity, reduces unnecessary administrative burdens and delivers confidence to members of Parliament in managing their obligations and entitlements, whether they are aligned with a political party or are an Independent. The Administration Fund is a key mechanism used by the NSW Electoral Commission to reimburse eligible political parties and Independent members for administrative and operating expenses incurred during a quarter.

This should not be confused with campaign funding. There has been a lot of talk about how good it is that the campaign funding system in New South Wales has a clear cap on the amount of money that can be spent on a campaign. That is great for New South Wales, because it ensures quite a level playing field. If a person wants to represent their community, they are not unnecessarily burdened by hugely expensive campaign costs or by a system where a person needs enough money to win an election. We do not want to go down the road of US-style politics where virtually unlimited amounts of money can be thrown into a campaign to get somebody into an elected position.

It is good that New South Wales has a cap. We have seen a glimpse of what that looks like during the recent Federal election. Extraordinary amounts of money were thrown at the campaign for the division of Greenway in an attempt to remove the sitting member, Michelle Rowland. Fortunately, the bid was unsuccessful. I can see how this plays out in other electorates where these members clearly win. This provides a clear disadvantage, particularly for Independents. This bill is not about campaign funding; it is about elected representatives. The funding ensures that representatives have access to public resources to support the essential activities required to help them serve their constituents and operate effectively as a local member of Parliament.

For elected Independent members, the 2025 quarterly cap on expenses is \$70,700. This cap ensures accountability and equity across the system. Payments are made in advance each quarter, and the system allows unused or excess expenses to be carried forward within the same calendar year. This offers members the flexibility to manage their costs responsibly. It does not apply to other funds available to MPs, including funding for communications. What can currently be claimed from the Administration Fund? Section 84 (1) (a) of the Electoral Funding Act lays out a comprehensive list of eligible administrative and operational expenses, including costs related to staff, office space, information dissemination, policy formulation events, training, auditing and compliance support.

For example, an Independent MP can be reimbursed for expenses related to holding public forums, which can be quite expensive to put on. They may require a member to hire a hall, public address equipment, event staff and furniture. These costs can add up when a member is simply trying to do the best possible job as an elected representative. Expenses can also include training staff in compliance matters. It is naive to assume that somebody who is a very good community advocate will understand the intricate way the Parliament works without any training whatsoever. Training costs money. Maintaining an office to support constituents is another cost passed on to MPs just so they can do their job.

The major obstacle is section 84 (1) (b) (ii), which excludes anything that could also be claimed as a parliamentary allowance from claimable expenses, even if the member has not actually claimed it. This has led to uncertainty and unfair outcomes. This bill proposes to remove that exclusion. It will no longer matter whether an item is also eligible under a different parliamentary entitlement. If it is an eligible administrative expense under

the fund and the member has not claimed it elsewhere, it can be legitimately reimbursed. This will be a relief for members like me who come out of the private sector and struggle to understand which entitlement to allocate expenses to. I can imagine how much of a relief this will be for Independent members of Parliament who do not have the advantage of a supportive party like Labor to help them navigate the system.

To reflect this practical approach, the bill will apply retrospectively from 1 April 2023, which is when this Parliament began. Retrospective commencement ensures that Independent members and political parties will be able to submit supplementary claims for legitimate expenses that they have incurred since becoming a member of Parliament. This recognises the fact that there are claims that have already been lodged or are yet to be made that have been affected by the current ambiguity of the law. Importantly, this change is not retrospective in a punitive or unclear way. It is corrective in nature and is designed to bring past claims into line with the clarified law. Some claims have been unclear about which funds they should come from. The changes will ensure the reimbursement of funds that have legitimately been used while not adding extra layers of confusion. [*Extension of time*]

The bill also provides the NSW Electoral Commission with the power to require similar declarations from party-endorsed members. It is fair to say that this bill will really help independent members. How did this bill come about? Following amendments in 2024, the NSW Electoral Commission conducted a review of how parliamentary allowances should be treated in relation to claims from the Administration Fund. The findings highlighted the legal and administrative challenges created by the current wording, especially for independent members.

The Government thanks the NSW Electoral Commission for its careful and thoughtful review. This bill has been prepared to clarify the intent and operation of the law in response to its recommendations. Independent members of Parliament, members of the Opposition, the Department of Parliamentary Services and other relevant stakeholders were closely consulted during the drafting of these provisions. This is a good, well-rounded piece of legislation that incorporates the views of all of the major stakeholders. These measures ensure that changes will be implemented fairly and consistently with due regard to claims already made or currently in progress. I conclude by saying that the Electoral Funding Amendment Bill 2025 strengthens the integrity of our electoral funding system. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (16:58):** In reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Wahroonga, Mount Druitt, Sydney, Liverpool, Leppington, Prospect, Penrith, Monaro, Gosford and Riverstone for their contributions to the debate on this bill. The member for Sydney noted his gratitude to the Government for working and consulting with him and other Independent members of this House in the development of this bill.

I note that the member for Lake Macquarie is in the Chamber. He does not have to express his gratitude because I know how thankful he is that the House supports this bill.

Following amendments to section 84 (1) (b) (ii) of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 in 2024, the NSW Electoral Commission reviewed how parliamentary allowances other than the electoral allowances must be treated during the assessment of claims from the Administration Fund. The Electoral Commission recommended that the Government consider further amendments to the Act to clarify the relationship between payments from the Administration Fund and members' additional entitlements under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 1989. I thank the commission for raising that matter with the Government. The Government agrees that an amendment is desirable because the current operation of section 84 (1) (b) (ii) means that eligible Independent members of Parliament and political parties cannot be reimbursed from the Administration Fund for items that are claimable under a parliamentary allowance, even if a member has not actually made a claim under such allowance.

Independent members of Parliament and the NSW Electoral Commission were consulted on the policy proposal and on the draft bill. The Department of Parliamentary Services, which administers members' additional entitlements, was also consulted on the draft bill. The savings and transitional provisions have been drafted following close consultation with the Electoral Commission and Independent members of Parliament to reflect the intended operational approach to managing affected claims once the amendments are enacted. Finally, the bill also provides for the NSW Electoral Commission to publicly consult on draft guidelines that relate to administrative expenditure. This amendment will apply prospectively only. I note that members have not raised any concerns about the amendments in the bill. 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

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Public Interest Debate*

### HOUSING SUPPLY

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (17:02):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes members of the ATC yesterday voted against the Premier's plan to purchase Rosehill Racecourse.
- (2) Notes that while the Premier waited 18 months for his false promise to be rejected, the Camellia-Rosehill Place Strategy next to the Rosehill Racecourse has been on hold, which would deliver 10,000 new homes and up to 15,400 jobs.
- (3) Notes after the first six months of the National Housing Accord, the Minns Labor Government has missed New South Wales's delivery targets by 37 per cent or 14,001 homes, whilst commencements are also at their lowest year on year figure in a decade reflecting a housing pipeline running dry.
- (4) Calls on the Premier and Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to stop making empty promises and get on with delivering the Camellia-Rosehill rezoning proposal to deliver desperately needed new homes for New South Wales.

Just to ensure that this is not characterised in any other way, no-one is celebrating the demise of this idea. We all agree that continued inaction on housing hurts everyone. Nor is this a commentary on the democratic decision of Australian Turf Club [ATC] members. This morning I heard from a community housing provider who vividly set out the terrible human impact of the housing affordability issue on our city and, indeed, our State. Their view, like so many others, was that big ideas are absolutely needed to fix this problem. In fact, good public policy comes from well-considered big ideas. But the reality across Sydney is that there are actually no big ideas coming from this Government, and now we know that Rosehill was not a big idea.

**Ms Anna Watson:** As opposed to your big ideas. What ideas?

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN:** It was a policy scribbled on the back of a napkin. I hear the interjections from members opposite. What was our big idea? Building the metro was a big idea. Scrapping stamp duty was a big idea. I note the Minister for Gaming and Racing is in the Chamber—cashless gaming was also a big idea. But those big ideas take serious work. Rosehill, on the other hand, was merely 18 months of gaslighting the people of New South Wales into believing there was some sort of plan to build a mini city at Rosehill. We were led to believe that the Premier's friend brought the idea to him on behalf of the ATC. That, in itself, is weird. That is quite an odd proposition, if indeed that was the case. Page 9 of the unsolicited proposal guidelines poses the simple question: What is the opportunity cost for Government if it were to proceed with the proposal? Now we know: The opportunity cost has been about 10,000 new homes that could have been moving ahead as part of the Camellia-Rosehill Place Strategy. In December 2023 the Premier said:

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity ... The government sees this as an opportunity to put its money where its mouth is ...

He went on to say:

This is exactly the type of proposal my government has been talking about over the last 6 months.

That is equally weird because that means it has been nearly 24 months that this whole thing has been talked about. An unnamed spokesperson for the Premier said—it is always worrying when they get the unnamed spokesperson out because you never know where they will go—"It was the biggest thing we will ever do as the Government, if this comes off, put it that way." There we have an unnamed spokesperson just going for it.

Is no-one else curious as to how and why a once-in-a-generation opportunity—the Premier's own words—basically died, and the general thrust of all the Premier has said is that he is disappointed? When the Premier responds to collapse and incompetence with vague feelings of disappointment, we have to start to worry. When there was a train meltdown, he was super disappointed; for workers insurance, he was disappointed; and for a general lack of plan or ambition for the Government, he said, "I am just disappointed." An interesting pattern is starting to appear, but I cannot claim credit for identifying it. It was actually one of the Labor backbenchers, many of whom enjoy a chat with members from this side of the Chamber. They pointed it out to me.

**Mr Anoulack Chanthivong:** Name them.

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN:** No, I do not want to destroy them. They said to me, "When Premier Minns says he is disappointed, what he is actually doing is signalling disapproval but sidestepping direct accountability." The Premier described the situation as deeply disappointing. Any reasonable person—to use his term—would say that,

because it is disappointing. But the language stops short of accepting fault. The Premier does not say, "We failed" or "We mismanaged." He is subtly reframing the conversation from outcomes to emotion, to get around issues of incompetence. What mums and dads and the frustrated renters around this State are really thinking is that the Premier should not be saying that he is disappointed; he should be saying, "We didn't consult thoroughly enough. We misjudged the appetite for change. We failed to build support," or even, "We completely overcooked this and it has been set back years." However, each of those statements involves an admission of error, and this Premier neatly avoids that by always being disappointed.

This was not bold; it was absolute amateur hour. The Minns Labor Government has proven time and again that it is not a government of serious people. When there is a rail network meltdown, it says, "Sorry, here is a fare-free day." But it cannot even get that right and the fare-free day does not work. I am surprised that it has not already commissioned a review into the review of the review of Rosehill as it has done with everything else, like why the trains are not working. The Premier said it was a once-in-a-generation opportunity, yet Rosehill lies in ruins not because of political opposition but because this Government could not even manage to get the basics right. There was no signed agreement, no genuine consultation and no proper planning. It was just a political stunt that has now backfired spectacularly. Let us not pretend this was a minor misstep; this was Labor's centrepiece housing policy. The idea that Rosehill was some sort of great act of political courage is ridiculous. It is time that we called out this Government for what it is. It is unserious, unprepared and unable to deliver anything more than a press release.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast) (17:08):** What a great load of psychobabble we just heard. The cowards on the other side—

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order: The Minister is using unparliamentary language. I ask the Minister to withdraw the comment.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** I did not hear the comment. I can barely hear what the Minister is saying.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** The cowards on the other side of the Chamber said that they supported the proposal, but when the ATC members—not the Government—voted against the proposal, they criticised the Government. I am proud to be part of a government with a Premier who is prepared to take a risk on the big issues and find solutions to problems. On the other side of the Chamber, we hear a whole lot of waffle. For 12 years members on that side put us in our current position. They did nothing. Their planning system was an absolute mess, which we have to straighten out. Contract after contract is not just faulty but also set up in the worst possible way, so that taxpayers have been left with massive burdens and huge debt, yet they lecture us on this side—the adults—about how to govern.

The proposal was not the Government's proposal. It came from the Australian Turf Club [ATC]. The Government listened carefully to the proposal and said, "It makes sense. If we are building the metro through there and the ATC is willing to sell, then we have an opportunity to do a once-in-a-lifetime housing project." Members opposite can criticise that. The Premier always said that it relied on the ATC members backing it in, so it is a fallacy for members opposite to suggest that it is a failure.

Another important aspect is that the ATC saw an opportunity for funding that would secure the New South Wales racing industry into the future. Victoria is recording losses and suffering massive backward steps in revenue. The New South Wales racing industry had the foresight to understand that the proposal gave it an opportunity to ensure the security of one of the State's most important industries. Those opposite may criticise; I know it is hard to be in opposition. We sat on that side of the Chamber for a long time, but we learnt, and that is why we are in government now. If members opposite want to hang onto their poor policy decisions then they will be there for more than 12 years. I guarantee them that.

This Government looks at opportunities and wants to work with people to get better outcomes. We know that the current system, which the members opposite put in place, will not deliver the housing we need. We need to change gears sometimes. We need to take a risk. They can be critical of that. They can play their downright dirty politics, which is what they are doing. They can criticise the Premier for being brave and stepping up. But we will continue to stand proud that we are having a go and trying to solve this. It is not about the members opposite; it is about the mums and dads and young people who cannot get into housing.

Nothing makes me angrier than members opposite lecturing us, when we deal with those community members every day of the week. Nothing is more important than the security of a home, and members opposite are against every attempt to deliver that. They can play their dumb politics. They can score their wasteful victories that no-one cares about. We will get on with the job of trying to develop policies that deliver for the people of



New South Wales. The empty rhetoric of those opposite is worth nothing. They can have their little victory—although they apparently supported the project, so I am not sure what the victory is. It is very hard to figure out what they are doing. On this side of the Chamber we will take risks, because we know that making sure people are okay is the most important thing.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** Before calling the next speaker, I note that I could not hear the Minister because of interjections from both sides of the Chamber. Public interest debates are robust, but members will show the speakers respect.

**Mr JAMES WALLACE (Hornsby) (17:13):** Over-promising and underdelivering is the hallmark of this Labor Government and Premier Chris Minns. That is the lesson the New South Wales community is learning as this minority Government continues to run its short course. That is what we are seeing in education outcomes and health outcomes. Heaven knows we are seeing it when it comes to trains, and now we are seeing it in housing.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** I call the member for Coogee to order for the first time.

**Mr JAMES WALLACE:** Amid a worsening housing affordability crisis and facing a political problem with the lack of a credible plan on housing, Chris Minns stood on the side of the track at Rosehill racecourse and promised a new mini city with 25,000 homes. But there was one problem: The Premier had not done the work. He may have agreed a price with the Australian Turf Club [ATC]. He may have promised it \$5 billion. But there was no steady, thought-through plan to deliver the transformation at Rosehill or to win ATC support. All we get is spin from the Minns Labor Government. We do not get homes built; we do not get more affordable homes. We just get spin. The Labor Government has spun itself into a political mess, and we are all worse off. That obsession with spin and media management might look slick for the cameras, but it has real ramifications for the people of New South Wales.

There were 18 months of delay on the Camellia-Rosehill Place Strategy. The draft plan developed through consultation in 2021 was carefully thought through, but it was put on ice by the Minns Labor Government for 18 months. That place strategy would have delivered 10,000 new homes, 15,000 new jobs for the region, access to light rail, road upgrades and the opening up of the Parramatta River foreshore. The plan was put on hold when, as Leader of the Opposition Mark Speakman said, the Premier chased a mirage. The Labor Government and the Premier spun themselves into a political mess, and the citizens of New South Wales kept their unaffordable home prices. Those opposite claim to care about the challenges of millennials and gen Z in buying a home, but the Liberals represent that demographic and that generation in this Parliament. We know that Labor's housing strategy is not working. The goal of a good government should be to set a target for home prices as compared to average household incomes, and then to develop a strategy to build homes to meet those targets.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** I call the member for Camden to order for the first time. I call the member for Camden to order for the second time.

**Mr JAMES WALLACE:** The job of the Premier and the housing Minister is to build homes and contain prices on housing, and they are failing to do that. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows housing approvals and commencements at 12-year lows. The Minns Labor Government is on track to miss its National Housing Accord target by over 150,000 homes over five years, the biggest shortfall of any State in the country. The Premier and the planning Minister will spin and spruik the announcement of transport oriented developments, but it is just an announcement. Feasibility issues mean that that program is unlikely to deliver homes any time soon—or any time over the next decade. Members do not need to take my word for that. They can take the word of the Government's own *State of the Housing System* Report, which states that those developments are "highly unlikely given the ongoing commercial feasibility and capacity constraints".

On 702 ABC Sydney, the Treasurer said publicly that interest rate cuts might help us to meet our housing targets because they will make house prices higher and therefore more attractive for developers. That is the absurd spin of the Labor Government: It is actually hoping for house prices to increase. Rosehill was a political solution for the Premier—a flashy and slick announcement he could point to as an example of him addressing the crisis in front of him. It was a political solution not grounded in reality. As that solution falls over, we are promised we will be told of the secret plan B. What is plan B, why is it secret and why could it not be told to this House or the New South Wales public? Over-promising and underdelivering is what we are getting.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (17:19):** I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this public interest debate. It is so PID-weak. Hasty criticism is a great way to draw attention away from the 12 years of Liberal-Nationals neglect and failure to deliver for the people of New South Wales. My 25-year-old and a 28-year-old live at home with me, which I love, but they would love nothing more than having the same dream their parents had of purchasing a home. The Opposition were in Government for 12 long years and did nothing about

delivering housing, and now we have a housing crisis. Maybe the member for Manly was asleep during question time, but several times the Premier and the planning Minister said they were disappointed with the Australian Turf Club [ATC] members vote on the Rosehill racecourse yesterday. But that is democracy.

With regard to the second paragraph of the motion, I point out that members opposite were in government for 12 years. Let us look at what Labor has done in its short time in government. The Minns Labor Government has rezoned land around stations through the Transport Oriented Development Program which will deliver 230,000 new homes over the next 15 years. For 10 days the member for New York—sorry, Willoughby—repeatedly opposed the Transport Oriented Development Program and the low- and mid-rise housing policy. He claim that St Leonards is not a well-located area, despite having a train and metro line, and being close to major employment centres.

The Labor Government's low-and mid-rise reforms will result in more diverse homes being built right across our State from suburbs in Greater Sydney as well as the Illawarra, Hunter and Central Coast and will supply 112,000 homes over five years. The NSW Housing Pattern Book designs will provide certainty with well-designed and well-built homes. This Government is delivering on more affordable homes. We are investing \$450 million to build new apartments for essential frontline workers. The Housing Delivery Authority, which already has declared 116 major housing projects as State Significant Developments, has the potential to deliver more than 45,000 new homes. Not only that, this Government delivered the largest investment in social housing in the history of New South Wales. Thank goodness our passionate Minister Rose Jackson is fixing the Liberal-Nationals mess regarding social housing. We fixed up the rental mess. I am pleased to acknowledge that the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister Chanthivong, is in the Chamber. Three key changes became effective from Monday of this week.

**Mr James Wallace:** Well done!

**Ms MARYANNE STUART:** Thank you. The Government is delivering on its election commitment of making rent fairer for 2.3 million renters across the State by removing no-ground evictions, by making it easier to have pets in rental homes, and by ensuring that renters have a convenient fee-free way to pay their rent. Let us talk about the skills shortage that the former Government left us. Members opposite do not believe in public education. They decimated TAFE. The Labor Government is building TAFE back up with permanent teachers and staff and offering fee-free TAFE courses. The Office of Local Government is offering 1,300 apprenticeships, which include town planning positions. Members opposite would be nothing short of naive if they think the damage they caused over the past 12 years will be fixed overnight. We have everything in place to deliver for the people of New South Wales.

The Minns Labor Government inherited confusing planning systems from the previous Government. One of them was so wrapped up in red tape that it was described by the Premier and planning Minister as being like a spaghetti junction, causing difficulty for large developers as well as mums and dads who were trying to build a new home. It is no wonder that New South Wales was not building enough houses. This Government is a long way behind the eight ball because of the legacy the former Government left us. This morning on ABC Radio Opposition Leader Mark Speakman said there is no residential development occurring. I wonder what his constituents would say about that? I ask the Leader of the Opposition to look upwards in his electorate. It has been nicknamed "Crane-ulla" because of all the cranes that can be seen in the skyline.

This Government is getting on with the job of building housing for the people of New South Wales. Opposition members are obsolete. The Minns Labor Government has superseded the Coalition and its outdated thinking of nimbyism. Stop being obstructionists, get onboard and let us get on with our job of building a better New South Wales.

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping) (17:24):** What a pleasure it is to have the member for Drummoyne in the chair, overseeing the public interest debate. As I start my contribution to this debate, I really have to ask Government members: How does it feel to be done over by Mark Latham—twice? First, he loses for Labor in the unlosable election, and now he has lost for Labor to horse trainers.

**Mr James Griffin:** He's the gift that keeps on giving.

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE:** Exactly. He is the gift that keeps on giving to the Labor Party. We heard from the Premier that it is okay the he lost the vote over Rosehill because he wants to take risks. He wants to be bold. We can only assume that this mysterious plan B of his will be bold and risky. I brainstormed a list of bold places the Government might have up its sleeve for building more houses. Maybe its plan B is the Botanic Gardens where the Government will build luxury condos among the flowerbeds. Maybe its plan B is the Sydney Cricket Ground [SCG] and the Government will build more houses in Moore Park. Maybe the Government's plan B is to build housing along the Harbour Bridge to give people harbour views?

Then it occurred to me what the Government's actual plan B is and where it will put 25,000 homes. The Government owns another racecourse. That is right! The Government owns Randwick racecourse. Would that not be the ultimate revenge by the Premier? He could not get the Australian Turf Club to agree to Rosehill, so he will just take over Randwick. It is coming. Say goodbye to the Everest and say hello to Everest Heights. Randwick racecourse will be bulldozed to make way for 25,000 homes. Nothing is off limits for the 25,000 homes that the Government wants to build. Nothing is off limits for plan B. The Opposition waits with great anticipation for what harebrained idea the Government will offer us.

This sad state of affairs is exactly what we would expect from a Premier who is all press conference and no delivery. We see that right across this Government—its members are constantly apologising and admitting they have more work to do. They talk a big game, but they cannot deliver. They cannot deliver selective school tests. They cannot get the trains to be on time, and they cannot keep the gangs off our streets. Government members know they are well behind on housing delivery targets, and they are only making things worse for the young people of this State.

Housing affordability is a very serious issue. In the latest data, Sydney buyers need 13 times the average annual income to afford a house in Sydney. That is utterly depressing for young people, and particularly the young Opposition members on this side of the House. Under the Minns Labor Government, New South Wales already has missed its National Housing Accord targets by 37 per cent in the first six months alone. That means it is 14,000 homes short. Building commencements are at their lowest year-on-year figure in a decade. The housing pipeline is drying up, yet this Government wasted nearly two years chasing a thought bubble at Rosehill that was always unlikely to succeed. In the words of the Prime Minister, they are "delulu with no solulu". The reality is that it is just not feasible to build houses in this State.

**Mr David Harris:** Why did you support the concept then?

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE:** Labor told us it was a great idea. Labor had to get it over the line, and it could not do it. Labor could not get horse trainers to vote for the proposal, no matter what bribes they offered them. This was Labor's idea. It gave them \$5 billion and tried to buy them. The reality is that it is just not feasible to build houses in this State. Earlier today we heard Government members talk about the housing crisis. They would have us think they were solving the housing crisis and that all young people would be in houses in no time at all. But, no. Government members were merely amending legislation to make way for a Commonwealth scheme that will help only a small number of aspiring homebuyers. If that is the Government's solution, I have to tell them—that ain't it. The Government should get on and deliver the Camellia-Rosehill rezoning.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (17:29):** I move:

Remove all words after "House" and insert instead:

- (1) Rejects the former Liberal-National Government's chaotic, convoluted and confusing planning system that created unnecessary red tape and underdelivered on housing.
- (2) Endorses the Transport Oriented Development Program to allow more medium density housing around transport hubs.
- (3) Notes the Government's series of housing initiatives, including the creation of the Housing Delivery Authority that has already declared 116 major housing projects as State significant developments - with the potential for more than 45,000 new homes.

It is disappointing to listen to members opposite. It is embarrassing that the pollywaffles we just listened to think that the housing shortage is some sort of joke that they can laugh and giggle about when people in all of our communities are facing a real housing crisis. Members opposite think it is a laughing matter to make a joke of. I can assure them that the issue is no joke in my community or in the community of all Government members. We take it very seriously. There is no way that Government members will make a joke of those people. Like the member for Heathcote, I have two adult children who are trying to get into the housing market. What members opposite have done this afternoon is disgraceful. The member for Manly is a member of the Select Committee on Essential Worker Housing. In that committee he bargains hard and talks about essential worker housing, yet in this public interest debate he has moved a motion to bag out this Government which is doing all it possibly can to address housing.

For the record, the decision about the sale of the Rosehill Racecourse was made by the Australian Turf Club. It was not a decision made by the Minns Labor Government. Members opposite need to understand that. I turn to what the Government is doing. I am happy to announce that the Government has introduced a program of planning reform and planning system performance improvement—the biggest in decades—to get housing and job-creating investments moving again in New South Wales after 12 long, torturous years of inaction from members opposite. Not only that, this Government has delivered the largest investment in social housing in New South Wales history—something members opposite never cared about and never did any maintenance on. We begged them to get it done but they did nothing. Those investments are coupled with reforms to the rental systems

to make renting fairer. This afternoon, a former Minister in this place, Stuart Ayres, said the Liberal Government got it wrong by prioritising faster travel time over housing development. That comes from a former Liberal Minister.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** A man known for his honesty.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** A man known for his honesty. He said, "The previous government prioritised travel times over delivering housing, and that was a mistake."

**Mr Anoulack Chanthivong:** A mistake!

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** A big mistake. A former Liberal Government Minister is now saying that it was a big mistake, yet members opposite are playing stupid games. I will go on to what the Government has done. Our rezonings around stations through the Transport Oriented Development Program is expected to deliver 230,000 new homes over the next 15 years.

**Mr James Wallace:** Not according to your own report. It says they are not feasible.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** If members opposite listen, they might learn something. Our low- to mid-rise reforms will see more diverse homes built right across the State from suburbs in Greater Sydney, the Illawarra, the Hunter and the Central Coast. We will supply 112,000 homes over the next five years. We created the pattern book designs, which will provide certainty that those homes will be well designed and well built. Our infill affordable housing bonus is helping to deliver more affordable homes. I could go on, and I will. It will help health workers and paramedics, teachers, police officers and firefighters to rent at subsidised rates in areas closer to the city. We are investing in their jobs and services to the tune of \$450 million. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (17:34):** In reply: I thank all members for their contribution to such a good debate. I thank the member for Wyong for his incredible enthusiasm and good humour. He proposed that the Government be congratulated for taking a risk. But it was ultimately a reckless risk that has not delivered anything. The member for Hornsby spoke the truth. He was seeking plan B, which was ultimately never revealed during the debate. The member for Heathcote introduced the new lexicon of "PID week" to the House—I am not sure of the parliamentary language, but I am sure it will be worked out—and raised the relevance of the Opposition. When the Premier directed comments to his members that they may want to check at the door their levels of arrogance as a result of the Federal election outcome, they might have missed that.

The member for Epping was also seeking answers to plan B. Where is this mysterious plan B? The risk appetite, as we are all told, should be there. The Sydney Cricket Ground and a whole host—the botanic gardens I think was put there. The member for Shellharbour always gives a good lesson during the public interest debate.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** Happy birthday.

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN:** Is it happy birthday? Happy birthday to the member for Shellharbour. Unfortunately, I do not think that we can support the amendment but it was worth a try. Having heard all that, there are some agreed facts in the debate. One is that someone needs 14 times the annual average income to buy a property in this State. That is unacceptable to all members. Something needs to be done. The other agreed fact raised by the member for Wyong is that housing is a human right. We all agree with that sentiment. Therefore, more needs to be done. A point was raised about my work as a member of the essential worker housing committee. Having heard from stakeholders across the State, what they would say is no different from what Opposition members have raised during question time today. They want more than disappointment that the once-in-a-generation idea of Rosehill did not eventuate. They are not seeking disappointment. They want implementation and outcomes. The longer we go past the more than two years of this Government, the more memory fades. We do not want to hear what the former Government did or did not do. People do not want disappointment. It is all hollow words. For those reasons, I commend the original motion to the House.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....39  
Noes .....29  
Majority.....10

AYES

Atalla, E

Greenwich, A

O'Neill, M

## AYES

Bali, S  
Barr, C  
Car, P  
Catley, Y  
Chanthivong, A  
Cotsis, S  
Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Davis, D  
Donato, P  
Doyle, T  
Finn, J

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

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

## NOES

Clancy, J  
Cooke, S  
Coure, M  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Dalton, H  
Davies, T  
Griffin, J  
Henskens, A  
Hodges, M  
James, T

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

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

## PAIRS

Aitchison, J  
Butler, L  
Dib, J  
Hornery, S  
Kamper, S  
Minns, C  
Saffin, J  
Warren, G

Dwyer, R  
Cross, M  
Anderson, K  
Thompson, T  
Taylor, M  
Ayyad, T  
Saunders, D  
Kemp, M

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....40  
Noes .....29  
Majority.....11

## AYES

Atalla, E  
Bali, S  
Barr, C  
Car, P  
Catley, Y  
Chanthivong, A  
Cotsis, S  
Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Davis, D  
Donato, P

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

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

## AYES

Doyle, T  
Finn, J  
Greenwich, A

Mehan, D  
O'Neill, M

Whan, S  
Wilkinson, K

## NOES

Clancy, J  
Cooke, S  
Coure, M  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Dalton, H  
Davies, T  
Griffin, J  
Henskens, A  
Hodges, M  
James, T

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

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

## PAIRS

Aitchison, J  
Butler, L  
Dib, J  
Hornery, S  
Kamper, S  
Minns, C  
Saffin, J  
Warren, G

Dwyer, R  
Cross, M  
Thompson, T  
Taylor, M  
Anderson, K  
Ayyad, T  
Saunders, D  
Kemp, M

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

*Community Recognition Statements*

**CAMPBELLTOWN CAMDEN DISTRICT CRICKET CLUB**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (17:52):** I say a huge congratulations to the Campbelltown Camden District Cricket Club—the Ghosts—as they notch up a brilliant 40 years at the crease. This is not just a milestone; it is a legacy built innings by innings, season after season. From their debut in the 1985-86 Sydney Cricket Association competition, the Ghosts have gone from strength to strength, fielding elite talent from the Macarthur region. To this day, around 95 per cent of their players come through the local junior ranks—a true grassroots success story. With 29 premierships under their belt—16 men's and 13 women's—the club continues to deliver match-winning performances on and off the field. I give a special shout-out to a couple of names familiar to this place: club president Morris lemma and vice-president Chris Patterson, as well as all of the players, officials and volunteers over those four illustrious decades. I congratulate them on everything they have achieved for cricket, the community and the club.

**NARRABEEN HOUSE**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (17:53):** I acknowledge the amazing group of people that came together today in New South Wales Parliament to acknowledge the opening of Narrabeen House, which is an emergency and temporary accommodation facility on the northern beaches. I acknowledge Dr Shane Moran, executive chair of Retirement by Moran; Sally Taylor, the managing director of Retirement by Moran; Todd Barlow, the chief executive officer of Soul Patts; Tanny Mangos, the corporate affairs and investor relations manager of Soul Patts; Josephine Sukkar, a board member of Soul Patts, and founder and principal of Buildcorp; and representatives from Bridge Housing, Mission Australia, Women and Children First, Burdekin Association, Shelter NSW. Of course, I also acknowledge the outstanding team at the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter, who have led the way and made this wonderful facility a reality.

**PORT STEPHENS ELECTORATE FLOOD RELIEF VOLUNTEERS**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (17:54):** On behalf of the people of the Port Stephens electorate, I place on record my community's deep gratitude to everyone who stepped up to respond to the recent flooding that has had an enormous

impact on many local residents, families, households and businesses. I thank each and every volunteer in the State Emergency Service, from the Port Stephens and Tomaree SES Units, to the SES volunteers who travelled from elsewhere to support us. Their hard work and dedication to our community and beyond will never be forgotten. I also place on record our thanks to the local Rural Fire Service, Marine Rescue and Surf Life Saving volunteers who have been assisting in the response efforts, alongside the NSW Police Force, NSW Ambulance, Fire and Rescue NSW, and the hardworking teams at Port Stephens Council and MidCoast Council. This Parliament, the Government and the people of Port Stephens are incredibly grateful to our volunteers, emergency service workers, council workers and all locals who lent a hand. During this immensely challenging time for Port Stephens, our community's spirit has shone bright.

#### **DARYL AND CATHY WILSON**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (17:55):** Daryl and Cathy Wilson are two well-known Lithgow locals who have done so much for the community they live in. As founding members of the Lithgow and District VRA, the couple have attended many rescue operations over 38 years of volunteer service, saving countless lives. Daryl was senior deputy captain for 20 years and Cathy attended many incidents with him. Daryl and Cathy were also instrumental in establishing a St John's Ambulance brigade in Lithgow. In 1985, the pair broke the world record for performing CPR for 60 hours, raising much-needed funds for the new brigade. They also went on to help set up more brigades across the region. Daryl and Cathy are also foster carers. They have taken in over 167 children and shown them love. In their words, "Most of these children had been to hell and back, and it was up to us to pick up the pieces. They came to us with nothing and left with plenty." The love from this couple knows no bounds, and there is no one more deserving of recognition than Daryl and Cathy.

#### **PARRAMATTA SCHOOLS GUINNESS WORLD RECORD**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (17:56):** I congratulate students from Maronite College of the Holy Family, St Bernadette's Dundas Valley and four other schools for breaking the Guinness World Record for the longest sandwich production line, with 14,520 sandwiches stretching an incredible 1.75 kilometres, surpassing the previous Texan record of 10,000 sandwiches. In fact, they made over 15,000 sandwiches in just 37 minutes. Even better, all the sandwiches were made to feed hungry children thanks to Lyndon Galea, founder of Eat Up. The Guinness World Records has been a mainstay on library bookshelves and in Christmas stockings for decades, so it was very exciting to see a world record broken by students from Maronite College of the Holy Family, ably assisted by staff, including Andrew P., Nic J., Anne Marie and Nathaniel. Their names will be recorded in the annals of history. From cheese toasties to the iconic vegemite sandwich, this was not just about breaking a record, but about making a difference. Maronite College's motto, "Know, Love, Serve", has never been more evident.

#### **STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater) (17:57):** Last week was Wear Orange Wednesday, a time to show appreciation for the State Emergency Service volunteers. The SES is a critical part of Pittwater's resilience and response to natural disasters. In times of crisis, when floods surge or storms rage and communities face the unthinkable, it is our SES volunteers who step forward, often putting their own safety aside to protect ours. These incredible volunteers dedicate countless hours to training, preparation and then, without hesitation, to response. They are our neighbours, friends and family, yet when the call comes they transform into highly skilled and courageous first responders. Over the past week these brave volunteers have headed out in uncertain circumstances to rescue people, to deliver supplies or to be a friendly smile in tough times throughout the State and in my electorate. We owe them an immense debt of gratitude for their professionalism, their resilience and their profound impact on keeping our communities safe. I thank every member of the State Emergency Service.

#### **FLYNN DONNELLY**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (17:58):** Congratulations are in order for Flynn Donnelly from Busby West Public School, who is stepping up to the plate for the opportunity of a lifetime. He has been selected to play baseball in the United States later this year. Although young, Flynn is no rookie when it comes to sporting success. In 2023 he was recognised as a local young champion, taking home the leadership award for captaining multiple teams, proving he is not just a team player, but a natural leader both on and off the field. He was recognised for his incredible sporting achievements at the Aboriginal Student Achievement Awards last year, receiving an award from over 630 student nominations. I also give a big shout-out to the incredible Busby West community, who are stepping up to bat with a fundraising drive to help cover Flynn's travel costs, selling chocolates to get him over the line. I encourage everyone to "pitch in for Flynn"—pun very much intended. I know I speak for all of Liverpool when I say we cannot wait to see him hit it out of the park on the world stage.

**RICHARD KENNEDY, OAM**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (17:59):** On 19 May 2025 the Upper Lachlan community farewelled a much-loved and distinguished citizen, Mr Richard Kennedy, OAM. Mr Kennedy dedicated 77 years to serving Crookwell and the wider Upper Lachlan shire, including 21 years on council, nine as mayor and three as deputy mayor. He led with humility, integrity and an unwavering commitment to public service, and has left a lasting impact on local government and the community he loved. A quiet achiever, Mr Kennedy never sought recognition. His motivation came from a genuine desire to give back. In November 2024 his extraordinary service was formally recognised by the Governor-General when she visited Crookwell to personally present him with the Medal of the Order of Australia. Richard Kennedy's legacy of leadership, compassion and selfless service will continue to inspire generations in the Upper Lachlan shire. He is survived by his children Barry, Maree, Michael and James, and is now reunited with his beloved wife, Thelma, and daughter Karen. We honour his memory and thank him for a lifetime of extraordinary contribution.

**MOUNT ST JOSEPH CATHOLIC COLLEGE MILPERRA**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (18:00):** I acknowledge the compassionate efforts of the Mount St Joseph [MSJ] school community in Milperra, who have once again taken part in their Knits for Vinnies project to support families in need during the winter months. This heartwarming initiative invites students and members of the wider school community to come together during recess and knit 20-centimetre squares. These little squares are then sewn together into blankets and donated to the St Vincent de Paul Society's Vinnies Winter Appeal. Last year the MSJ community lovingly completed five blankets, including a crocheted baby blanket. This year they aim to do even more. The project reflects the school's strong values of compassion, social justice and community service. It is a simple yet powerful act of kindness that provides warmth, comfort and dignity to families doing it tough during the colder months. I congratulate the students, staff and extended school community for their generosity and community spirit. Their actions remind us that small efforts stitched together with care can make a big difference.

**ALBURY WODONGA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (18:01):** I acknowledge and celebrate the re-establishment of the Albury Wodonga Symphony Orchestra [AWSO], a cherished cultural institution in our region known for its richness, complexity and emotional depth. The AWSO brings together dedicated musicians from across Albury-Wodonga and the wider area, including some who travel from as far as Myrtleford, united by their passion for orchestral music and their commitment to our community. Special recognition goes to President Jessie Swan, Vice-President Tara Chambers, Secretary Katie Clarke and the entire team, whose leadership, vision and passionate hard work have brought the orchestra back to life. Their efforts ensure that great orchestral music continues to be accessible and celebrated in our local communities. The concert held on Saturday 17 May was a wonderful evening. I thank the AWSO for its inspiring role in enriching our region with music. Its contribution continues to deepen and strengthen the cultural life of Albury-Wodonga.

**COMMUNITY ACTION FOR BETTER LIVING**

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (18:02):** I acknowledge a significant milestone for our inner west community. I recently attended the opening of the new premises of Community Action for Better Living [CABL] in Burlington Road, Homebush. For over five decades CABL has been a steadfast presence offering practical and emotional support to disadvantaged, vulnerable and at-risk members of our community. Its services include family support, domestic and family violence advocacy and support, meals on wheels, and a wellbeing and support hub. These have been instrumental in strengthening individuals and families across Burwood, Strathfield, Canada Bay and the broader inner west. CABL's move to its new Homebush location marks more than just a change of address; it represents a renewed commitment to providing accessible, integrated services in a welcoming environment. This modern facility is already serving as a vibrant wellbeing and support hub. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the dedicated staff, volunteers and board of CABL. Their unwavering dedication to social justice and community wellbeing continues to make a profound difference.

**TAHMOOR PUBLIC SCHOOL PARLIAMENT**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (18:03):** Last week I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the Tahmoor Public School's 2025 parliament. This very formal event was attended by the year 6 cohort and their elected representatives. I was delighted to see the formalities that took place, and to see the leaders of tomorrow confidently explore what leadership can achieve. The encouragement from the principal regarding the initiatives and ideals that these representatives should follow is a great start for any parliament, and I look forward to watching these future politicians evolve. The Tahmoor Public School parliament will strive to display responsibility, loyalty, leadership through peer support, and collaborative decision-making. This will set the



standard for all future cohorts and help students to remember that good leaders take the time to listen to everyone before making a decision. I look forward to hearing from members of the school parliament with any requests to improve their place of learning. I also really enjoyed the mace that the students made for themselves.

#### **SPRINGWOOD VIEW CLUB**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:04):** I acknowledge and celebrate two very special milestones: the fifty-ninth birthday of the Springwood VIEW Club and the sixty-fifth anniversary of VIEW Clubs of Australia. I thank President Toni Thomas for the invitation to the club's special luncheon, and to the mistress of ceremonies, Nikki Tunica. VIEW stands for Voice, Interests and Education of Women. The organisation has been empowering women for over six decades by fostering connections, creating opportunities for personal growth and supporting the education of young Australians in need. This incredible milestone of 65 years highlights the dedication of VIEW members like those at the Springwood club, who continue to volunteer their time, advocate for children's education and make a lasting difference in the lives of Australian families. On behalf of the Blue Mountains community, I thank every member of the Springwood VIEW Club and all VIEW women across Australia for their commitment, compassion and tireless work in uplifting those in need. I congratulate them on 65 years of friendship, advocacy and making a meaningful impact in the lives of so many children, and I thank VIEW for everything that they do.

#### **LITTLE WINGS CHILDREN'S CHARITY**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (18:05):** I acknowledge the incredible work of Little Wings, a non-profit organisation that is making a tangible difference in the lives of families in regional Australia. Recently, a small aircraft took off from West Wyalong carrying two-month-old Oakley Reid and her mother, Skye. Oakley was born with serious digestive issues leading to sepsis, and needed urgent specialist care which was unavailable in her hometown. The nearest life-saving treatment was over six hours away by road at the Children's Hospital at Westmead. Little Wings provides free air and ground transport to ensure sick children like Oakley receive the medical care they so desperately need. For families already overwhelmed by illness, the added burden of distance, limited local services and financial strain can feel insurmountable. This is where Little Wings steps in, bridging the gap with compassion and care. I commend Little Wings for its dedication and thank all those who contribute to this life-saving service.

#### **ELFA MORAITAKIS**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (18:06):** Elfa Moraitakis is the Chief Executive Officer of SydWest Multicultural Services, a leading organisation for cultural diversity issues, which provides services for the elderly and newly arrived migrants, youth activities and disability services. Elfa's leadership, strategic direction and innovation is also acknowledged in her appointment to the position of Director of the NSW Council of Social Services, the peak body for the social services sector and, more recently, her appointment to the Multicultural NSW advisory board. Elfa has been actively involved in the community sector for the past 30 years and has an extensive background in developing services for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Elfa was named Blacktown Woman of the Year in 2017 for supporting women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to establish their own businesses. She was also a finalist in the 2021 Social Impact CEO of the Year awards, and the 2020 UNSW Alumni Awards for social impact and service. I thank Elfa for her leadership and continued partnership in the community.

#### **HELPING HANDS TRIVIA COMMITTEE GRAFTON**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (18:07):** This evening in the New South Wales Parliament I acknowledge the Grafton Helping Hands Committee's trivia night. Last Saturday night at the Grafton District Services Club, the committee held a trivia night for young Tilly Walsh. Tilly is in year 1 at St Mary's Primary School in Grafton and, at the moment, is undergoing treatment for leukaemia. Tilly, her dad, Mark, and mum, Kirsty, and other family members joined the Grafton community for a huge fundraiser at the Grafton District Services Club. I acknowledge the support of Ray White TKG and their staff, who did a lot of work pulling it all together. There were ticket sales, a raffle and also an auction item, for which Mitch Donovan and Ray Donovan from Donovan Livestock and Property did their best to pump up the sale price. Amazingly, \$45,000 was raised from one trivia night. I wish Tilly good luck on her cancer journey.

#### **LEANNE LEECH**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (18:08):** I acknowledge Leanne Leech, a true legend of netball in Riverstone and a tireless champion of the broader community. For over 53 years, Leanne has devoted herself to the sport she loves, beginning her journey at just 10 years old with the Riverstone Netball Club—a club she has loyally served ever since. Across five decades, Leanne has been everything from player and coach to umpire, mentor and club president. Under her leadership, Riverstone Netball Club has grown and thrived, remaining

strong, inclusive and financially sound. Her impact extends well beyond the club. She has received recognition, including a 2004 service award and life membership of the Hawkesbury City Netball Association. Leanne was recently honoured at the Riverstone Schofields sports council awards at the Memorial Club in recognition of her lifetime of service to her club and community. Still coaching, umpiring and serving on committees, Leanne continues to shape generations of players and volunteers as she prepares to step down as president later this year. She is a true champion of the Riverstone community. Leanne, I salute you.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** I remind members to keep their community recognition statements to one minute.

#### **FRANK PEROSIN**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (18:10):** I formally acknowledge and commend Frank Perosin of Griffith for 65 years of outstanding community service. A father of two and a grandfather of six, Frank has devoted his life to promoting the unique charm of Griffith since migrating to the area in 1950 from the Onè di Fonte province of Treviso, near Venice in Italy. Frank is a dedicated tourism supporter and volunteer who shares his passion with everyone he meets. He is a genuine advocate for diversity. The list of community projects he has helped is huge. It includes Pioneer Park; the annual salami festival; the Griffith Italian museum; the Sikh games; Rotary, where he has received the esteemed Paul Harris Award; Sacred Heart parish council; the Police Citizen of the Year Awards; Salvation Army annual appeals; Meals on Wheels; and even a successful campaign to get SBS to broadcast from Griffith. His wife of 60 years, Margaret, says that Frank is a very generous man who is not focused on himself. He observes people who need help and says, "We've got to do something." Along with the entire team and community, I sincerely congratulate Frank on his invaluable contribution to Griffith.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** Member for Murray, I gave you the three seconds that you were not given at the beginning of your contribution. However, you ended up running over by well over 10 seconds. I remind members that although the word limit for community recognition statements is 200 words, it is not possible to say 200 words in a minute.

#### **PENRITH YOUTH SERVICE**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (18:11):** I acknowledge and commend the outstanding work of Platform Youth Services, a dedicated local organisation that has been serving vulnerable and homeless young people for over 25 years across Penrith and surrounds. Recently awarded over \$500,000 in State Government funding, Platform Youth Services will expand its provision of medium-term supported accommodation for young people aged 16 to 17. This funding allows teenagers to transition safely from crisis accommodation to independent living, offering them not just housing but also hope, stability and a future. Under CEO Stephanie Oatley, Platform Youth Services provides wraparound support to young people facing some of life's toughest challenges. Whether through supported housing, outreach or crisis intervention, its work is changing lives and creating pathways out of homelessness. I thank the team for their deep commitment to young people and for being a vital link between crisis and opportunity. Their work deserves our highest praise and ongoing support.

#### **MARY BONFANTE**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (18:12):** I acknowledge Mary Bonfante for organising the fantastic Chris O'Brien Lifehouse gala dinner last Saturday 24 May at Aqua Luna. Over the past few years, Mary has helped fundraise over \$70,000 for the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. Those funds go directly towards cancer research and support the programs and care offered to patients at the Lifehouse. Mary is a dedicated, inspiring and strong woman. Between 2017 and 2018, she was a patient at the Lifehouse, where she saw firsthand the impact that the doctors, nurses, researchers and staff have on patients and their loved ones. This inspired her to fundraise for the hospital, giving back to the community that supported her, ensuring that everyone is given the very best chance of beating their cancer diagnosis. I sincerely thank Mary, the Bonfante family and the entire group of hardworking volunteers involved in organising the dinner. It was a night full of hope. I wish Mary and her team all the very best.

#### **ITALIAN REPUBLIC DAY FESTA**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (18:13):** The twentieth anniversary of Italian Republic Day at Club Marconi was a special celebration of tradition, culture and heritage. A significant part of that tradition was the opening mass, presided over by Father Anthony Fregolent. Spirituality holds a vital place in Italian culture, and Club Marconi respectfully honours it through the commencement of the festa. The 2025 Italian Republic Day festa was also an important opportunity to celebrate the seventy-ninth anniversary of the historic referendum that changed Italy's future. The referendum saw the Italian people vote for a republic rather than a monarchy. It was a defining moment in Italy's history, reflecting its values of democracy, unity and freedom. Throughout the day, attendees

experienced a vibrant showcase of Italian music, food and traditions, reinforcing the strong bonds within the community. I thank Mr Morris Licata and the board of directors of Club Marconi for their kind invitation.

#### **PETER MCASKILL**

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (18:14):** I recognise Peter McAskill, a justice of the peace, from Forestville RSL, for his extraordinary commitment to the Wakehurst community. As membership officer and wellbeing support coordinator, Peter goes above and beyond for veterans and their families, conducting regular hospital visits and wellbeing check-ups, always being a steady source of support. But Peter's dedication does not stop there. As schools liaison officer, he builds strong connections between Forestville RSL and local schools, coordinating art and poetry competitions, commemoration ceremonies and education grants for students who are relatives of veterans. Peter's decades of tireless service have created a legacy of care and connection. He not only supports those who have served our country but also educates and inspires young people in my community. Peter is known for his approachability, sense of humour and willingness to go the extra mile—qualities that make a world of difference to those around him. Peter's tireless work, compassion and leadership have made a lasting difference in the lives of so many in Wakehurst. He is the kind of volunteer every community needs: selfless, reliable and deeply caring. On behalf of the Wakehurst electorate, I thank Peter for all he does for our veterans and for the next generation.

#### **KELLY QUANDT**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (18:15):** After 36 years of service, Kelly Quandt has become the Rural Fire Service's first female deputy commissioner. Her exceptional leadership overseeing critical projects and teams has significantly strengthened the competency of the RFS throughout her tenure. Commissioner Bob Rogers has commended Kelly for improvements to service delivery, securing the safety and wellbeing of staff, volunteers and the community. As a highly respected leader within the organisation, Kelly was awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal in 2018, a testament to her influential leadership. Kelly is also a longstanding volunteer with the Waterfall and Sutherland District rural fire brigades, where she has held roles including brigade captain and group captain. I am proud to speak about Kelly's achievements and wish her every success in her new role as deputy commissioner. I thank Kelly on behalf of the Heathcote electorate.

#### **ST MATTHEW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH WINDSOR**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (18:16):** I acknowledge the bicentennial of St Matthew's Rectory and Stables in Windsor on 18 May 2025. I was honoured to attend this celebratory event alongside esteemed guests, including Her Excellency the Hon. Margaret Beazley, AC, KC, and Bishop Stuart Robinson. Constructed 200 years ago, the rectory and stables are pieces of exquisite architecture nestled in the heart of Windsor. The rectory was described accurately by historian Ian Jack as a "supremely poised and elegant house", a statement that remains true to this day. The beauty of St Matthew's rectory, the rustic stables and the surrounding gardens with a vista across the lowlands highlight Hawkesbury's history. I congratulate Reverend Chris Jones, his wife, Kerry, and the many volunteers who put together the program for this wonderful occasion. It was a privilege to join the local community and celebrate such an historic Hawkesbury milestone.

#### **AUSTRALIAN ALEVI CULTURAL CENTRE**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (18:17):** Recently I was honoured to take part in the celebration of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Australian Alevi Cultural Centre—a remarkable milestone for a community that has contributed so deeply to Australia's multicultural community. Since its founding in 1991, the Australian Alevi Cultural Centre has been more than a place; it has been the cultural and spiritual home for the Alevi Turkish community in the Auburn electorate. For over three decades, it has preserved Alevi identity, language and traditions while fostering inclusivity and mutual respect. The anniversary concert was a powerful tribute to the community, featuring the talents of Ali Eren Çınar and İlke Yıldız, musicians who are carrying forward the Alevi legacy. These captivating artists were a powerful addition to the celebrations. I thank the organisers, particularly Eler, the volunteers, artists and elders who have built and sustained this vital institution through cultural expression, community engagement and intergenerational resilience.

#### **LOUISE VANGESTEL**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Tarragal) (18:18):** I congratulate Louise Vangestel on her well-deserved recognition on the 2024 Hidden Treasures Honour Roll, which celebrates the vital contributions of women in regional, rural and remote New South Wales communities. Louise's passion, perseverance and selfless commitment have left an indelible mark on my region. Through her tireless work establishing and growing the Tarragal Outrigger Canoe Club, she has created a welcoming and inclusive space that promotes health, culture and community connection. In partnership with Bara Barang Corporation and alongside organisations such as the Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council, Louise has championed cultural understanding and youth development,

particularly among Aboriginal youth. Her leadership in developing paddling programs for the Frank Baxter Youth Justice Centre exemplifies her dedication to mentorship and positive change. Louise has overcome considerable challenges in founding this not-for-profit club, from navigating regulations to building membership and ensuring safety. She was also named 2024 Terrigal Woman of the Year. I thank Louise for her vision and tireless service.

#### ASPECT SCHOOL

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (18:19):** The Aspect School in Sutherland provides education for children on the autism spectrum. Through tailored learning plans and family-focused solutions, the school empowers students and families in meeting the complex needs of those living with autism. The Aspect School's holistic approach to education serves to limit the frustration and anxiety often experienced by those on the autism spectrum. That is reflected in the school's commitment to lifelong learning, which aims to set students up for long-term success in the community. Children from all backgrounds and levels can be diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, and the Aspect School's work is vital to creating an autism-friendly society. I have witnessed firsthand at Aspect School how even small adjustments can foster inclusivity for those living with a disability. On behalf of the Heathcote electorate, I thank Aspect School for its invaluable contribution to education.

#### PENRITH CITY AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL SERVICEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (18:20):** On Sunday 25 May this year I had the honour of attending and paying a tribute at the Penrith City Australian National Servicemen's Association's nineteenth anniversary memorial service, which was held at the St Marys RSL club. It was a solemn and dignified service as we honoured the 287,000 young men called up for service in our nation's navy, army and air force in two schemes between 1951 and 1972. Of those brave Australians, 212 paid the ultimate sacrifice and died on active service—two in Borneo and 210 in Vietnam. Since Federation in 1901, national service was in the Australian tradition of volunteer forces for overseas service, backed up by a pool of men with basic training in the Navy Reserve, the Citizen Military Forces and the Citizen Air Force. I thank the Penrith City Australian National Servicemen's Association, led by President Roy Young, for arranging and hosting that important commemorative service. I pay tribute to all who have served our nation. Lest we forget.

#### IRENE KIM

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (18:21):** I celebrate Irene Kim, a year 5 student at St Paul's Grammar School. I was honoured to award Irene two Premier's Sporting Challenge awards in the past week for her outstanding performance and dedication in representing New South Wales in diving at the 2024 Australian Elite Junior Championships and School Sport Australia. Irene is a very humble, quiet achiever. It was fitting that the school organised for the awards to be presented at the junior school assembly, which was also proudly attended by Irene's mum. I have no doubt that we will see much more from Irene in the future as she pursues her dreams in the field of diving. A short clip was played at the beginning of the assembly, and I do not think I could have made it up that ladder. I wish Irene good luck.

#### AMELIA R

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (18:22):** Last week, more than 20,000 morning teas were held across the country, raising more than \$6.5 million for the Cancer Council as part of Australia's Biggest Morning Tea. One of the most inspirational of those was the extraordinary effort of Amelia R, a year 6 student from class 6A at Thornleigh West Public School. Amelia is a compassionate and driven young leader with a deep commitment to community service. Motivated to take action after witnessing a family member's battle with cancer, Amelia took the initiative to research Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, create a presentation and pitch the idea of hosting a morning tea to the school principal, Mr Hubbert, who immediately supported Amelia. The morning tea was held last Wednesday, and Amelia raised over \$5,000 for cancer research. Amelia drove every part of the morning tea, creating posters, sending emails to the school community and working through a checklist to ensure the event ran smoothly. Well done to Amelia.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### AUBURN HOSPITAL

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (18:23):** As National Volunteer Week comes to a close, I take this moment to express something that cannot be said enough: thank you. I thank the volunteers across the Auburn electorate who give up their time, day in and day out—not for recognition or reward, but simply to make our community stronger, kinder and more resilient. They are the heartbeat of so much of what works in our society. Some of the most vital efforts happen within the local health system. In hospitals, volunteers play a critical role—especially buddy volunteers and those supporting families facing crisis in palliative care wards. Those are not

easy roles; they require strength, patience, empathy and the kind of quiet heroism that too often goes unnoticed. However, those people should know that their work matters deeply.

In November 2023 Auburn Hospital opened its new supportive and palliative care unit, which is a much-needed and profoundly important facility. The unit was built with care and compassion, and with our diverse community in mind. The rooms are larger to allow whole families to be together. Lounge areas and outdoor spaces give patients a chance to feel human again, catch a bit of sun and smile with someone they love. Those small things mean the world in hard times. We all hope we will never need a place like that. However, when that time comes—when someone we love is in pain, and we have not slept, and we feel overwhelmed—it is a comfort beyond words to have a place like Auburn Hospital, where the focus is on not just medical treatment but also dignity, support and the emotional needs of patient and family. Auburn Hospital's palliative care team members understand that. They work closely with patients to align care with individual wishes, whether it is a short stay or a longer journey. Every decision is guided by compassion. Every action is guided by care.

I take a moment to recognise the larger success story. Auburn Hospital is not just providing great palliative care; it is leading across the board. Of all major hospital emergency departments in New South Wales, Auburn ranks third in the percentage of patients starting treatment on time, third in the percentage of patients leaving the emergency department within four hours, and first in transferring patients safely and efficiently from paramedics to emergency department staff. That is not just impressive but also lifesaving, and it is a testament to the professionalism, dedication and efficiency of the people working at Auburn Hospital.

However, hospitals do not run on medical staff alone. They rely on volunteers, administrators, cleaners, translators and family liaisons. Those are the people who step in to do the things that keep the whole system moving with humanity at its core. Without them, the system would falter. That is why investment in our public health system, and especially in palliative care, is not just smart policy; it is a moral responsibility. In the 2023-24 New South Wales budget, more than \$1.7 billion was allocated to palliative care over four years. That represents a 6.8 per cent increase from the previous year under this Government. The allocation is increasing again by another 8 per cent in 2024-25.

That is what it means to put people first—to recognise that the final chapter of someone's life deserves as much care, respect and attention as every other chapter. I finish where I began: with gratitude. I thank every volunteer in my electorate. I thank every staff member at Auburn Hospital and across our public health system. They hold the line in times of crisis. They offer comfort when words fail. They give our community not just service, but also heart. They may not always see the full impact of what they do, but, believe me, it is felt.

### **WAHROONGA ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (18:27):** In the previous sitting week, I brought to the attention of the House some of the significant investments made in the Wahroonga electorate under the previous Coalition Government. Major projects such as NorthConnex and upgrades to Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital, the Pacific Highway, local schools and railway stations have been transformative for my community and have helped to support our growing population. I highlighted the impressive local investments of the former Coalition Government, and demonstrated how that investment has sadly not been matched by the current Minns Labor Government. In fact, no new infrastructure commitments have been made to my electorate in the past two years.

Despite imposing significant planning changes on the Wahroonga electorate and surrounding suburbs without community consultation or consideration, the Minns Labor Government refuses to invest in important local infrastructure. Worse still, the Minns Labor Government has tried to recover infrastructure funding that was already promised to the electorate by the former Coalition Government. For example, the Minns Labor Government has tried to recover the \$40 million given to Hornsby Shire Council for the Westleigh Park upgrade, as well as money given to Ku-ring-gai Council for more parking for commuters along the North Shore train line. Those were commitments made by the former Coalition Government.

It is proof that the Minns Labor Government is not serious about creating liveable cities for the people of New South Wales.

Westleigh and its surrounding suburbs are in desperate need of usable open space. Taking this money away is an attack on our community. The Minns Labor Government has also attacked our community by selling Hillview Community Health Centre. The land for that centre was purchased by the health and transport departments in the 1970s. The State Government made this strategic investment for health services and because of its proximity to the Pacific Highway and the North Shore train line. The Minns Labor Government has announced that it will sell Hillview Community Health Centre to private property developers, which is a breach of its election promise to not privatise any public assets.

That site is of particular concern because its sale will prevent the much-needed expansion of the Pacific Highway at Turrumurra and the expansion of the 100-year-old North Shore train line to accommodate the increase in our local population. It is incredibly short-sighted. The land was invested in for the expansion of our city. The Pacific Highway is the major northern route out of Sydney. Selling this site would be a huge mistake and it would have long-lasting consequences for our city. We desperately need to expand the railway bridges over the Pacific Highway at Turrumurra and Pymble to handle the population increase that is being pushed on our city by the Minns Government.

The Wahroonga electorate needs more bus services in addition to road expansions. Many of my constituents consistently ask me for more bus services, particularly young people. The Minns Labor Government continues to reject those requests. We are greatly in need of more investment in our century-old drainage and sewerage services, parks and sporting facilities. The former Coalition Government made major investments in Mark Taylor Oval and Westleigh Park. Many community members and sporting clubs are already enjoying the benefits of those investments. It is now up to the Minns Labor Government to invest in our local community. I will not be holding my breath for any funding for our local community if the first two years of this Government are anything to go by. So far, the Minns Labor Government has not invested in schools, parks, roads or sporting facilities to accompany the increases in our local population.

That is the policy of the Minns Government. Several reports from the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils have already identified the dearth of sporting facility investments in our area. That might explain why housing approvals and housing completions have plummeted around the State in the past two years in comparison with the much higher numbers during the 12 years when the Liberal Party was in government. Rental affordability greatly increased during the 12 years of the former Coalition Government. Over the past two years rental unaffordability has reached depths never seen during the 12 years of the Coalition Government. The Government will deliver the State budget in future weeks. We can only hope that there will be true investment in local infrastructure in Wahroonga and elsewhere in our State.

### FOOD INSECURITY

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (18:32):** Food insecurity does not always make the news, but it is a harsh daily reality for too many families across New South Wales, and especially for families in south-west Sydney. This quiet crisis is unfolding in schoolyards, where children open lunch boxes and find little inside; in homes, where parents skip meals so their kids do not have to; and in the growing queues outside food relief services in our suburbs. This is not a new challenge. In fact, it is deeply rooted in communities like Liverpool. A 2004 study of three low-income suburbs in south-west Sydney revealed that over one in five households, or 21.9 per cent, were experiencing food insecurity. That figure jumped to 30 per cent for households with dependent children. For single-parent families, it climbed even higher to 45 per cent.

That data is more than two decades old, but the underlying issue has not gone away. If anything, it has become more entrenched. It is troubling that we still do not have consistent, comprehensive data to track food insecurity in New South Wales. We get glimpses, including snapshots or crisis reports from researchers and community organisations, but we lack the robust evidence needed to drive long-term solutions. People on the ground do not need a dataset to know what is happening. We see it in rising demand, stretched services and the growing burden on community organisations. The current cost-of-living crisis has hit families hard. It has been devastating for those already living on the edge, especially in lower income areas like parts of Liverpool. Providers of food relief in my electorate tell a consistent story: Demand is at record levels, lines are longer, people are more distressed and the situation they face is more complex than ever before.

The area with the postcode 2168 has some of the highest rates of financial disadvantage in the State. I helped secure a \$100,000 grant for CORE Community Services, which launched a mobile food pantry 18 months ago. It began operating last year and has brought food directly to residents facing barriers such as mobility, lack of transport or stigma. It is more than a food van; it is a trusted, community-driven response to hunger. A grant of \$30,000 was delivered to Liverpool Neighbourhood Connections, which is another local initiative that is making a tangible difference. This funding helped it rebuild its youth hub, which was damaged by a fire. The funding has also helped it to continue offering programs like after-school meals and homework support for young people. These programs provide the only hot meal many local children receive in a day as well as a safe space to be cared for and supported.

These are not grand, headline-grabbing projects, but they are deeply important. When people do not have enough to eat, it impacts every part of their life, including education, employment, parenting and physical and mental health. Food security is not only a welfare issue but also a foundation for wellbeing and dignity. The South Western Sydney Local Health District understands this and has taken an admirable step with its three-pronged approach. Firstly, it is co-designing local projects with community members to improve access to affordable food. Secondly, it is building capacity in community organisations to expand food security efforts. Thirdly, it is

advocating for systemic change to ensure that food security becomes a sustained policy priority. We need more community-first, policy-backed responses like this, because food security is not a challenge we can solve with charity alone. It demands structural solutions, investment, coordination and the political will to prioritise those who go unheard all too often.

It is often the most vulnerable people in our communities who feel like they have no voice. I am incredibly proud of the work that is happening in Liverpool. I am deeply grateful to the volunteers, organisations and public servants who show up every day to make a difference. I note the role that our local public schools play in ensuring that our local families are supported. I often hear about teachers who put their own income towards helping their students, and schools that spend budgets on ensuring that students have uniforms and that families are able to put a roof over their heads. They can even pay rent for their students. We need a lasting commitment from all levels of government to ensure that no-one living in a country as wealthy as Australia is left wondering where their next meal will come from.

### HUNTER AND MID NORTH COAST FLOODS

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (18:37):** I highlight the stress that my community is under following a natural disaster. There has been terrible flooding in the past 10 days. Yesterday, this House displayed the best of the New South Wales Parliament. I believe that members did this in response to seeing the best of human nature on display in the Upper Hunter and Mid North Coast regions over the past 10 days. These areas will find the road ahead very difficult. I say this from experience as a representative of an electorate that has really copped it, from the 2018-19 drought to the 2019 bushfire that burnt 50 per cent of my electorate. It feels like it has not stopped raining since the COVID-19 pandemic. My community is still recovering from the 2022 floods.

I acknowledge the member for Tweed, the member for Ballina and the member for Lismore.

The four of us have joined forces. We have a common bond, of course: We live in a beautiful part of the world. Members understand that we come from different political parties and at times have different political views, but when it comes to recovery, we are united. The one message the four of us would like to instil in the minds of members now going through hell is that united we can achieve amazing things in recovery. The road will be long, hard and frustrating, and at times it can feel like we are not getting anywhere, but if we work together—and I am sure all members will—we can achieve great things for our communities who are hurting.

I do not want to be the bearer of bad news, but our communities will hurt for a long time to come. In my electorate, people who were living in their homes before the 2022 floods are still not back in them. They are living in supported accommodation in pod villages. This has been a difficult and terrible time for the east coast of New South Wales. Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred delivered a fresh round of challenges for my electorate of Clarence. I have stood with farmers who have seen their crops completely wiped out. Probably only 10 per cent of the soybean crop in my electorate remains. The sugarcane crop for this year is not too bad, but next year's crop, which should be planted now, is non-existent in some areas. The timber industry is suffering because it is too wet for crews to get into the bush, and the beef industry is struggling. At a time when prices are up, the cattle cannot deliver the benefits of what should have been a terrific season.

I highlight to the House and the Government how important it is that category C support is applied for. Category C support is a pretty unsexy name, but it allows primary industries to get extra help to overcome what has been an ordinary time on the farm. For that support to flow, the New South Wales Government needs to apply. The application is then assessed, and the Federal Government goes fifty-fifty with the State. To the best of my knowledge, the State Government has not yet applied for category C funding, although I will stand corrected if that is untrue. Out of that same event, the Queensland Government has applied and been successful in attracting category C funding for its farming families. The line on the map that is the New South Wales and Queensland border should not decide who gets category C funding and who does not. I reiterate how important it is that funding is made available to areas that have suffered through prolonged natural disasters. I thank the House.

### BLUE MOUNTAINS FOOD SERVICES

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:42):** I celebrate the extraordinary community spirit and invaluable contribution of the volunteers at Blue Mountains Food Services, who play an essential role in supporting our most vulnerable community members. As we have heard over the past week, volunteers are the heartbeat of our communities, particularly in the Blue Mountains. Nowhere is that more evident than in the work done by the incredible individuals who serve with Blue Mountains Food Services. Those volunteers are more than just helpers; they are the lifeblood that sustains our community, offering warmth, connection and care to those who need it most. Whether it is delivering nutritious meals each week, offering a friendly face to those who live alone, or simply providing a much-needed chat, those volunteers have a profound impact.

From the heartfelt messages of thanks received from clients, it is clear that their kindness is deeply appreciated. Many clients share how their volunteers bring joy to their day, brightening even the darkest mornings with their smiles, their cheerful greetings and the simple act of showing up. The volunteers at Blue Mountains Food Services demonstrate that giving time is not just about delivering a meal; it is about delivering hope, connection and a sense of belonging. As one client beautifully expressed, "Sometimes you are the only person I see or speak to all day, and even though you are always busy, you take the time to make me feel cared for." Their simple acts of kindness, combined with their ongoing commitment, make a world of difference.

This is not just about feeding the body; it is about nourishing the soul. Volunteers at Blue Mountains Food Services support a sense of community, combat loneliness and help to reduce social isolation. Their efforts go far beyond what we see in the delivery of food. They contribute to the wellbeing, dignity and quality of life for many older Australians in the Blue Mountains. The resilience and warmth of our volunteers help to ensure that the Blue Mountains remains a place of care and support, especially in times of need. Over the years, those volunteers have been there through the toughest challenges. Whether through bushfires, the pandemic or the ongoing struggles faced by many in our community, they continue to show up week after week to help keep us all connected.

On behalf of my community, I say a heartfelt thank you to all the volunteers at Blue Mountains Food Services and all the volunteers across my community in the Blue Mountains. I look forward to hosting Jane Dinsdale-Scanlon, Rose Miners and June Bonn for lunch next week. I turn up to all sorts of events and celebrations in my electorate, and I offer a lucky door prize of lunch at our fancypants dining room, the Strangers' Restaurant, here at Parliament. People are overjoyed to jump on the train, come and sit down and have a meal, and I usually ask if they want to bring someone along.

Next week, the Minister for Women, who is responsible for volunteers in this State, will join us for lunch. I look forward to hosting Jane, Rose and June and thanking them for the wonderful luncheon they put on for all of our volunteers last week. Their generosity, kindness and support make our beautiful Blue Mountains a better place to live. They are unsung heroes, and we are incredibly fortunate to have them. I thank the volunteers at Blue Mountains Food Services for everything they do. May they themselves continue to be blessed for the blessings they give.

#### **PARKES ENERGY RECOVERY FACILITY**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (18:46):** The proposed energy-from-waste project at Parkes has ignited passionate discussion across the community, and understandably so. It is natural and right that the public seeks to understand the impacts, benefits and potential risks from any proposed energy-from-waste infrastructure. I acknowledge and respect the concerns raised by local residents. My office has taken receipt of a number of emails and phone calls regarding the proposal, some in favour of it and some against. Transparency, rigorous assessment and ongoing community consultation are critical for any development. As an elected representative, I owe it to the communities I represent to get all the facts, listen carefully and make decisions that are supported by both science and social responsibility.

Metropolitan centres across Australia face an increasing challenge in waste management. As the population grows, so does the volume of waste being generated. Traditional landfill is unsustainable both economically and environmentally. It consumes valuable land, generates emissions and leaches pollutants into soil and groundwater. The Parkes energy-from-waste proposal, being advanced by a group of companies led by Tribe Infrastructure Group, aims to convert residential non-recyclable or red-bin waste into electricity, converting the static energy value of what would ordinarily be landfill waste material into usable energy. This waste management process is not a substitute for recycling. Rather, it is promoted as an alternative and last-resort solution for waste streams that cannot be economically or practically recycled.

Internationally, energy from waste is not new. It is a proven waste management process that has been operated for decades in countries with robust environmental track records, including Sweden, Germany, Japan and the Netherlands. It reduces landfill and captures energy whilst being promoted as adhering to some of the world's most stringent emissions standards. The Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation has promoted Parkes for such a proposal. The Parkes Special Activation Precinct is uniquely placed. It is home to the growing National Logistics Hub, and its local council has shown a proactive approach to innovation and sustainability. If approved and constructed under best practice and operated within the most stringent emission limitations, this project will reduce pressure on landfill while providing energy and steam, and it will create skilled local jobs in both the construction and operation phases.

But with opportunity must come assurance and accountability. Parkes residents have raised legitimate questions about air quality, emissions control and long-term safety. Those concerns must not be dismissed; they must be thoroughly addressed through the planning and environmental assessment process. If I am not satisfied that the most stringent of emissions and pollutions standards can be met and maintained, I will not support it—



plain and simple. Our communities need proactive and transparent communication from proponents, regulators and the Government, which have facilitated the project proposal through the Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation. I have spoken with Minister Sharpe about the project and the foreseeable issues, and I have requested community consultation from the Environment Protection Authority. The Parkes community must be fully informed about how the plant will work, what waste it will accept, how emissions will be managed and what impact such emissions might have.

We also cannot ignore the broader regional benefits. The proposal represents an estimated investment of \$1.5 billion. It will generate construction activity and will support downstream industries in logistics, maintenance and energy. We cannot pretend that energy from waste is the ultimate waste solution; nor can it be suggested that all concerns can be simply waved away by economic arguments. But I do believe that my responsibility as an elected representative is to weigh both risks and rewards—to pursue innovation while fiercely protecting public health and environmental integrity. If done right—and I stress "right"—this project could be a win for modern, responsible waste management and a significant investment into Parkes. That would be likely to spark ongoing investment by attracting other industries, lured by the cheaper energy available from the project.

However, we need to ensure that the project is subject to the highest scrutiny, that the community's voices are heard and respected, and that the process is transparent. I must do my due diligence before arriving at a position of either supporting or rejecting the project. The engagement process has already begun; I have personally participated in the community consultation run by the proponent in Parkes. I have met with concerned residents, and I continue to listen to them with an open mind. I plan on visiting an energy-from-waste facility in Western Australia later this year. The process cannot be rushed. If the Parkes community decides it does not want this in its backyard, after balanced and informed consideration, then the State must respect its wishes.

#### **EAST HILLS ELECTORATE VOLUNTEERS**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (18:51):** Last week was National Volunteer Week, a great opportunity to recognise and celebrate the wonderful people who give their time to help others in my community. Having spent much of my own life volunteering, I know firsthand the deep rewards it brings, not just to those who receive help but also to the volunteers themselves. Volunteer work empowers, builds connections, gives people a real sense of purpose and helps them to realise their potential. Volunteers give their time, skills and energy without expecting anything in return, and the impact is immense. In 2023 New South Wales had 4.3 million volunteers, contributing a total of nearly 894 million hours and a value of \$178 billion to the State.

From my experience, it is clear that at the heart of any strong community are the people who give their time, freely and tirelessly, to help others. I give a big thankyou to so many in my community. So many incredible organisations and individuals across East Hills provide an important service to make our community a great place to live. Firstly, on behalf of everyone in our community and across New South Wales, I thank our emergency service volunteers who jumped into action during the recent floods. I thank the SES Bankstown unit, which is there for my community in floods, storms and other emergencies to help keep us safe.

I move from life-saving volunteers to safe spaces and thank Revesby Community Op Shop [ReCOS], which is a local not-for-profit op shop. ReCOS recently participated in Australia's Biggest Morning Tea to raise funds for the Cancer Council. Last Thursday I had the pleasure of attending that event and met so many of the volunteers. I thank Brian, Judy, Karen, Jenny, Thi, Shirley, Rhonda, Alouce and all the other volunteers for their hard work in running the op shop for many years. The Autism Community Network, led locally by Vanessa Gauci, is another stand-out organisation. I recently attended one of its fundraisers and saw the incredible support the network provides. Padstow Community Care, which runs a hub for seniors, has been a lifeline for many. I thank the volunteers there for their service.

The Beauty Point social club raises money for Biyani House, and clubs such as the East Hills Asphalt Divers motorcycle club combine their passion with fundraising for worthy causes. Wonderful organisations such as the East Hills District Men's Shed, the East Hills Voice, Interests and Education of Women [VIEW] Club, Just One More Row and Keith's Closet also do important work. I am proud to be a patron of the Trilogy Foundation, which raises money for youth and kids with special needs in Canterbury-Bankstown. Those groups each help in their own way and show the many different faces of volunteering.

Our community is also supported also by a number of social and community-driven groups, such as the Lebanese Australian Friendship Committee, Muslim Women Australia, Probus, Rotary, VIEW Club and so many more. Our electorate is extremely lucky to have a strong volunteer presence in our many clubs—such as Revesby Workers' Club, Panania Diggers, Club Condell Park and Padstow RSL Club—whose volunteer boards not only keep the institutions going but also support local schools, community groups and sports clubs.

Our local sports clubs are also almost entirely powered by volunteers. Coaches, canteen workers and team managers all give their time so that kids and adults can get out, play and connect. I acknowledge several people with whom I have spent hours volunteering and administering sport around East Hills: Neil Taylor, Mark Smith, Mette Kitiona, Dan Kurtz, Charlie Broughton, Tara Banbury, Josie Tobenhouse, Keith Rozairo, Daniel Gardner and Jenenne Papadopoulos, just to name a few.

Our areas is lucky to have strong Girl Guides and Scouts groups, which are growing as more of our young people step into volunteering under the guidance of lifelong volunteers. I thank the volunteer leaders from those organisations. I have also enjoyed many hours with a list of long-time volunteers, such as Derek Russell, Kim and Wendy Stevenson, John Murray, Donna Fenner, John Rodwell and Amanda Sivier. The list goes on and on. On behalf of everyone in our community, from those whose lives those volunteers have been transformed to those who feel comforted by just knowing that they are there to help, I thank them very much.

### ST LUKE'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (18:56):** Over the past eight or so years, I have had the great privilege of getting to know the school community and leadership of St Luke's Grammar School, located in Dee Why. The school was founded in February 1993 following the amalgamation of three schools from the Anglican Schools Corporation on Sydney's northern beaches. Today it stands as a testament to the tenacity, vision and leadership of that community over many years. The school has a proud record of supporting students in academic, sporting, theatrical and a host of multidisciplinary pursuits. I acknowledge the great work of Principal Geoff Lancaster, Deputy Principal Kester Lee and wonderful Manly local Jane Hughes, who is the business manager at the school. Along with the entire faculty of St Luke's and the broader school community, they should be enormously proud of their efforts to provide children and families on the northern beaches with such an outstanding school.

I recognise in particular the year 8 students of St Luke's Grammar School for their dedication and service to our local community through a practical and meaningful sustainability initiative at the nearby beach of Dee Why. Each Monday those students volunteer their time to support One Meal Northern Beaches' composting program at Fisher Road School, helping to divert food waste from landfill and create nutrient-rich compost. That initiative goes beyond environmental benefit; it is an act of generosity and care by which St Luke's students lend a helping hand and contribute positively to the lives of others. Their energy, commitment and willingness to serve are a credit to their school and their families. I thank the staff, the One Meal volunteers and especially the students from St Luke's, who are making a difference, one compost bin at a time. It is just a short contribution this evening.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I thank the member for Manly, who is certainly not adding to the compost in this House tonight.

### WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY NIRIMBA CAMPUS

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (18:58):** I talk about the closure of the Nirimba campus of Western Sydney University and, basically, Western Sydney University's mismanagement over the past few years.

It is in total disarray, unfortunately, with up to 400 jobs being cut. That is almost 10 per cent of the workforce. The university has decided to close the Nirimba campus in Blacktown. The vice-chancellor, George Williams, says that a university is not a corporation, and that Western Sydney University is expected to cut up to 400 jobs to help cope with an almost \$80 million deficit in 2026 amid a large deterioration in student numbers. In an article, the vice-chancellor said, "We"—as in Western Sydney University—"must be relatable, approachable, transparent and honest."

Unfortunately, it is not achieving any of that. Recently, the vice-chancellor has cheated off both the Community Public Sector Union [CPSU] and the National Tertiary Education Union [NTEU]. Both unions challenged the university over its decision to close the Nirimba campus, accusing it of mismanagement and profiteering. The vice-chancellor said that closing the campus will somehow deliver enhanced experiences for the students. I do not know how that would happen with a closed campus. I suppose the long travel times to outside of the area will mean students can study on the train. CPSU branch secretary Troy Wright also talked about the problems and challenges of closing the campus. He said:

It offers school leavers a pathway to university and with aboriginal outreach, childcare and accommodation it offers wrap-around services invaluable to the Blacktown community.

It is so sad to see a shrinking footprint in Western Sydney, with Blacktown and the Hills now not represented in tertiary education. That is 25 per cent of the Western Sydney population. Troy Wright also said that we must question the financial governance of the leadership team, given that it spent about \$20 million to change the name from the University of Western Sydney to Western Sydney University. What a waste. The vice-chancellor is obviously trying to do what he believes is best by cutting courses. He says there are cost-of-living pressures. Vince

Caughley from the NTEU also spoke strongly for keeping the Nirimba campus, saying that it is a tragedy for student access to higher education and the dedicated staff who are losing their jobs.

The Nirimba campus opened around 2006 and the numbers have been fairly steady. It started off with about 1,000 students and grew to about 2,200 by 2015. That was about 5 per cent of the whole university. Once we get to 2020, the numbers started dropping to 2,000 and then 1,200. That is because the university shut down its Diploma of Business, which had various majors; building and construction diplomas, and TAFE is next door with building and construction, which was a good pathway from TAFE to university; humanities courses such as the Diploma of Social Science with majors in tourism and policing; and the Diploma of Science with a major in health. That is ridiculous.

In 2012 the university was building state-of-the-art laboratories on the campus and said that the campus had reached maximum capacity. In 2015 the college generated \$61 million of the university's total income of \$849 million, which is roughly 7.2 per cent of the total revenue, yet it only had 5 per cent of the students. In 2018, it was once again punching above its weight with \$61 million generated of a total \$1 billion income. That is 5.8 per cent of the revenue versus a 5.2 per cent student load. There is not too much bouncing around in the university's revenue sources from \$800 million to about \$1 billion, yet its expenses have blown out. It is time that the university comes clean, and looks after the people of Western Sydney by not shutting down campuses.

### FERAL DOGS

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (19:03):** Three hours from Parliament is a small township called Cullen Bullen. It has a population of 279 people, a small school, a corner store and a speedway for car racing. Apart from a few houses surrounding the school, the area is predominantly rural, with most of its locals living on the land. It is a very pretty area made up of rolling hillsides and rocky peaks. Positioned between valleys, it is bitterly cold in the winter, but that does not bother the farmers nor the livestock that inhabit the region. It is a peaceful and friendly pocket of the State. The community, who are part of my electorate, have never asked for much. They are self-sufficient, hardworking and full of the Aussie can-do spirit, but something has them beat. The majority of farms in the region are prime lamb or merino wool producers that have been around for generations. Decades of rearing stud animals and perfecting blood lines to create award-winning wool or lamb has come under threat.

Feral dog populations have boomed in the past two years to the point of becoming out of control. The estimated dog population far outweighs the 279 locals. The humans are outnumbered, and their livestock no longer stand a chance. In recent weeks I have met with locals. Their stories are heartbreaking, and I will share some with the House. In the span of mere months, one farmer lost his entire flock of over 400 sheep. He has zero livestock left. Every single one was killed by feral dogs. Despite his best efforts to reinforce fencing, move sheep from paddock to paddock and even capturing 17 feral dogs, he lost his entire livelihood, and what was once a bustling sheep farm is now a vacant paddock.

The neighbouring farm is run by sixth-generation sheep farmers. I was on the farm with them while they mustered the last 100 sheep of what was once a 3,000-strong flock into the yards for sale. The farmer told me he felt he had no options left but to sell up. The dogs had beaten him. Each morning this farmer was waking up to gruesome sights of dead and dismembered sheep or half-mauled and barely alive sheep, having to put them out of their misery. He and his wife nursed the ones they could save back to good health. That process usually takes up to eight months due to the nature of the injuries. He has lost so many sheep that he cannot willingly stand by and watch the rest of his legacy, his life's work and his family's livelihood be attacked by the dozens of feral dogs each night. As of this week, he is no longer a sheep farmer.

Another farmer told me he kits himself out in camouflage gear and has dedicated hours to studying feral dogs. He waits throughout the night guarding his flock. Night after night, no matter the weather, he is out on his land protecting his livestock. He moves them from paddock to paddock to keep the dogs guessing and to prevent further attacks. Still, his efforts have been unsuccessful, with fearless feral dogs sneaking up to him and behind him and still killing his sheep. There are many more similar stories across the region, all resulting in substantial losses and tough decisions.

The dogs are smart, and one approach will not work. There is no pattern to their attacks, but farmers know they are there. They know they are lurking in the shadows and that another attack is coming, just not when or where. Moving the sheep, deploying traps and using bigger livestock to protect the sheep also does not work. Alpacas, cattle and domesticated dogs have also been mauled and killed. The feral dogs are ruthless in large packs. They corner their prey, no matter the size, or wear them out until they are unable to outrun the pack anymore. Our farmers are tough. They get on with the job without complaint, but this cannot continue. They care about their livestock. They raise them from birth and are highly concerned with their welfare.

The farmers cannot sleep at night knowing that leaving their livestock out in a paddock is like a death sentence. It is not happening only in Cullen Bullen. This is a growing issue across regional New South Wales, with feral dogs expanding their territory, growing their packs and outnumbering the farmers and their livestock. There are two issues to address. The feral dog population has been tracked to be coming out of State-owned property, such as State forests and national parks, and a better collaboration between public and private land managers to manage pests across boundaries is critical. We also need a three-pronged united attack to decrease the feral dog population. One alone will not work.

Our farmers need to be prioritised before the Australian sheep industry, which is worth \$5 billion to our economy, is brought to its knees. The situation is already dire. Shearing sheds across the region have fallen silent, impacting direct and indirect jobs, farmers and their families, and now the sheep market, with many getting out of sheep farming and selling off remaining stock. The issue cannot be fixed overnight, and the industry cannot be revived overnight. I ask the State Government to take note of the pressing issue, provide support to our farmers and become better neighbours.

### WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY FAIRFIELD CONNECT

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (19:09):** Back in 2023 when I first entered Parliament—and throughout my time living in Fairfield—I recognised the need to bolster education in my area, particularly with respect to tertiary education. I spoke previously about how decades ago university footprints and communities in Western Sydney were quite limited. That had an impact on kids aspiring to go to university. Fairfield has one of the lowest rates of people with post-school qualifications in New South Wales. On top that we have the highest unemployment in the State—I believe at the moment it is 11.4 per cent compared to the State average of a high 3 per cent—and the lowest income, so it is clear that we need to do significantly more on education in my part of the world.

In 2024 we worked towards securing a Western Sydney University hub in the Fairfield CBD. That is important because, as members have said, you can't be what you can't see, and I agree. My take is that you can't be what you can't do. That is what universities and tertiary education institutions do: they help upskill and uplift people to achieve their dreams, which is so critical. Last year I spoke about how the university hub in Fairfield provides critical services and facilities, including modern study spaces, computers, videoconferencing technology and facilities, free Wi-Fi—which is very important in my part of the world and in other areas—enrolment supports and future student engagement workshops.

Earlier this year, I can report to the House that we secured an extra \$3.5 million from the Federal Labor Government to transition the hub into a suburban university study hub. That funding is critical because it uplifts the educational infrastructure in Fairfield, which is much needed. Specifically, this funding will bolster academic skills, improve support services and the back office staff attached to those services, and develop the writing and research skills of students from our local areas. A lot of people from Fairfield have English language difficulties, so both verbal expression and writing is critical. This funding will go a long way to bolstering that work. Funding will also go to student support services such as general wellbeing support, which is so important, as well as study advice.

When I was a kid, I thought studying for an exam involved studying the night before and hoping for the best. But retaining information requires gradual progression over time, so it is important to teach people study techniques that are fit for purpose. That funding will help students to access student services, placements and work-integrated learning, which is so critical, and careers advice as well. Many people across New South Wales are confused about what they want to do with their life. To be fair, that is not static; it is quite fluid. I think at different ages and in different periods of our life, we reflect on whether we are doing what we want to do and on whether we are doing something that means something to us, that is important and makes us grow. I am happy to have advocated in that space.

Tomorrow CPA Australia and Commonwealth Bank professionals from Fairfield will hold a financial literacy forum for people in the local community at the new university hub. Financial literacy is so important, particularly with the cost-of-living crisis. We need to improve people's ability to manage their budget. I acknowledge Chris Bowen, the local Federal member. He was a strong advocate for driving that forward, along with the healthcare reforms we have made. I thank Jason Clare, the Federal education Minister, for his passion for education. He has left a mark in the education space, particularly in Western Sydney. I thank Western Sydney University for its commitment and taking the chance to set up a hub in Fairfield. I have spoken to Vice-Chancellor George Williams about uplifting communities like Fairfield. I look forward to working on that further to ensure we leave no-one behind and provide everyone with the best possible education.

## WOLLONDILLY AND SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS TRAIN SERVICES

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (19:14):** I talk about trains and what can only be described as a bulging, red-hot potato mess on our train system. I do not mean the mess close to the city but the mess in the regions, where people live with poor rail services year round. While it is easy for both Government and Opposition members to blame each other, the fact is we have an ageing rail fleet with a clogged network that is mapped on the suburbs of the 1970s. We have so much growth in the south-west growth area, including at the airport, and the best we get is the purchase of land between the airport and Campbelltown but no tracks. Where there are tracks outside the comfort of the inner west or eastern suburbs, which have a number of transport options, the service is not what we expect.

Wollondilly has been represented by four members since the electorate was re-established, and its trains run on timetables from decades ago. On top of that, the trains are consistently late. Trains in my community are not delayed by fallen lines. Delays and cancellations are a reality. Wollondilly residents saw the uproar in the city; they heard the calls to fix the system and the promise by the Premier to provide a free day's travel. We understand the calls for free transport every day. The Southern Highlands line is the sole public transport option for Wollondilly. There are also two private buses in Wollondilly—yes, just two—but remember that we are as large as the whole of the Sydney metropolitan area, and those buses do not suit office workers as they travel through the villages during the day.

As of 5 April 2025, patronage in the Southern Highlands was 69,571. That is 40,000 less than the Hunter, 800,000 less than the Blue Mountains, just under a million less than the South Coast line and a whopping 1.5 million less than the Central Coast to Newcastle line. This line goes to Canberra, the nation's capital, so it is a lost opportunity and great disappointment. The Endeavour railcars that service the track are diesel units that were built in Dandenong, and they are ageing. Many seats are broken or torn after years of use. Sometimes the toilets do not work, and the trains seldom run on time. The trains are due to be replaced, and the artist's impression of the new red sets with three carriages look great, but all we get is nice pictures to look at while we wait for infrequent trains that have a good chance of being late. That is happening in a region where tourism is premium.

On a side note, I have spoken to the Southern Highlands Water Polo group in the past fortnight about the recent pool renewal in Wingecarribee. It is worth noting that we have no full-sized indoor swimming pool, and we do not even have viable transport to travel to other areas that are fortunate enough to have better facilities. We have a great need for transport and more investment from the Government. This is not a call for additional trains or replacements. Passengers would be content with the existing rolling stock if they had a reliable timetable and services to suit all hours. Running trains on the line every half an hour is ambitious, but we should work towards it. But that is all long term, and even the short-term announcement of the set replacement is yet to be made.

With a government that promises to do better and treat everyone the same, the answer for the people of Wollondilly is simple: We need free transport every day on the Southern Highlands line. When the trains are late and chaotic for one day in Sydney, free transport is provided for a day, so it is right to conclude that transport should be free nearly every day in the Wollondilly and Southern Highlands seeing as we have chaos nearly every day.

## JAMISONTOWN UNITING CHURCH

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (19:18):** I recently attended the last service of Jamisontown Uniting Church on Mulgoa Road in Penrith, which was built by the locals to cater for the increasing population of the two Jamisontown subdivisions of land that had been mostly farms. The church was built in 1869 and began as an all-denominations United Sunday School. Previously, the Sunday school met in the home of Elizabeth Smith, whose house soon reached capacity. The Sunday school started with eight children but quickly grew to 45 pupils and three teachers. The building's existence is owed largely to the many generous donors and philanthropists around Penrith, and that generosity prevails to this day.

John Price, the first town clerk of Penrith and alderman, also served as the superintendent and secretary of the school until his death in 1893. Mr Arthur Judges was also one of the Sunday school teachers in Mrs Smith's house, together with her two daughters. Mr Judges was a pharmacist and served on the board of the Penrith hospital for 28 years, as president and secretary. He was also mayor of Penrith and guided the city through the Great Depression.

The very modest, neat brick structure of the Uniting Sunday school was opened by Mr Samuel Lees, MLA. In doing so, he recognised the many donations of community. It is widely reported that there was much fundraising during its lifetime, but there are two in particular that I wish to remark on. The first was the recycling of scrap metal from the local milk factory. The milk factory in Penrith, which opened in 1922, is still operating 103 years later. It produces milk and cream products to this day. That includes 2½ million litres of milk a week and over

145 million litres of milk a year, which comes to the factory and goes out as finished products that are distributed not just across our region but also around the country. The second notable injection of funds for the church came from the Main Roads board when it purchased some land for Mulgoa Road widening, for the princely sum of \$8,354. Today that road is again undergoing widening. If only the funding for the missing link of stages 5A and 5B was costed in today's dollar terms as modestly as it was back then.

Through the years, as the town grew and the population exploded, additional buildings were added to the original structure of the church in 1908 and 1965. In 1981, it was welcomed into the Uniting Church. There have been many community uses and events through the years, like Penrith City garden club meetings, kids playgroups, community dances, dance classes, polling booths, weddings and receptions. However, it is likely best recognised in today's Penrith as the op shop, which has operated for the past 17 years. While the closure of Jamisontown Uniting Church on Sunday 18 May 2025 was a sad day for many, we were able to view a large collection of historical memorabilia and photos. More importantly, community members came out in large numbers to share their happy memories. We were also treated to singing by the Samoan Uniting Church Faith Community. I thank Max and Colin Fragar for sharing their family history regarding the church, and Reverend Geoff Stevenson and Reverend Christine Bayliss Kelly for the invitation to participate in the historic service.

### CENTRAL COAST MODEL UNITED NATIONS ASSEMBLY

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:22):** I recognise an inspiring event I had the pleasure of attending recently—the 2025 Model United Nations Assembly, or MUNA, hosted by Central Coast rotary clubs on Wednesday 22 May in Erina. MUNA is part of Rotary International's enduring commitment to youth development. It is an annual initiative that encourages senior high school students to engage in global diplomacy, develop public speaking skills and deepen their understanding of international affairs by simulating debates of the United Nations [UN] General Assembly and Security Council.

This year's event was once again a tremendous success, with over 70 students in 22 teams from high schools across the Central Coast, including the following schools from my electorate: Central Coast Grammar School, Terrigal High School, Erina High School and Green Point Christian College. Each team represented a different nation, having spent weeks researching their allocated country's history, politics, economy and foreign policy, and crafting their stance on a series of UN-style resolutions. The resolutions debated were as important as they were complex, ranging from fostering sustainable forest management and advancing nuclear-weapon-free zones to the protection of human rights in the digital era. Those are not just academic subjects but real and pressing challenges faced by our global community.

The dedication shown by all students was remarkable. Their research was thorough, their arguments persuasive and their enthusiasm infectious. It was clear to me and to all those in attendance that our future leaders are already among us. The students spoke with poise, intelligence and a deep sense of global responsibility. A special congratulations must go to students Drew Baker-Jones, James Irvine and Lily Scholte of Central Coast Grammar School, who were awarded first place. Representing Ghana, that team delivered impassioned speeches, impressing the judges. I thank the Rotary Club of Gosford North, which is generously sponsoring the Central Coast Grammar School team when they go on to represent the Central Coast at the Australian National MUNA in Canberra this August. What an extraordinary opportunity that will be for them to expand their horizons, engage with other passionate young Australians and take part in national-level diplomatic discourse. We wish the team all the best.

I also congratulate the Terrigal High School team, including Riley Crawley, Lily Wilson and Gabe Parkinson Barrantes. The team took on the challenging task of representing the Islamic Republic of Iran and, out of a highly competitive field, achieved an impressive second place. Well done to every student who participated. Whether they debated in favour or against the resolutions, and whether their amendments passed or failed, their commitment to understanding the world and voicing their views matters. They embraced the challenge with great energy and integrity, and I commend them all.

I also take this opportunity to sincerely thank and congratulate the Central Coast combined Rotary clubs, including the dedicated volunteers and organisers who made the day possible. Their commitment to youth development in the region is unwavering, and their efforts behind the scenes ensured a professional, welcoming and memorable experience for everyone involved. Special thanks must go to Jill Hamilton from the Rotary Club of Terrigal for the event coordination and administration. Special thanks also go to Russell Grove, the Secretary-General of the MUNA event—and also a former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly—for his leadership and stewardship.

MUNA has a proud history. Since its inception in Canada and introduction to Australia by the Rotary Club of Lake Cargelligo in 1980, it has grown into an internationally recognised program. The first Australian National MUNA was held in 1997, and it has been going from strength to strength ever since. The United Nations itself

continues to enthusiastically support the initiative, recognising its value in nurturing the next generation of global citizens. Events like MUNA play a vital role in shaping our young people into thoughtful, informed and confident contributors to society. It is about much more than debating; it is about listening, learning, compromising and representing ideas bigger than oneself. Those are the very values that the United Nations was founded upon.

The Model United Nations Assembly reminds us that young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow; they are the changemakers of today. The passion and intelligence displayed by the students at MUNA filled me with pride and gave me immense confidence in the future of our region and our world. Once again, I congratulate the participating students, their supportive teachers and the incredible volunteers from the Central Coast combined Rotary clubs. They are helping to shape a more informed, engaged and compassionate future. It was truly inspirational to be a guest speaker at MUNA. Every year, I have had the pleasure of being there. To see the understanding, depth and passion of our year 11 school leaders and those who want to be involved is truly inspiring. I walked away from MUNA knowing that our future is in very safe hands. These are compassionate young people who want to learn and to give back. I congratulate all of them for making this year's MUNA another great success.

### **SALVATION ARMY HEATHCOTE**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (19:27):** As crises in our communities become more complex and common, beacons such as the Salvation Army and its dedicated employees and volunteers, continue to work tirelessly to support those impacted by hardship and injustice. Through transformative care and compassion, the health of a community is defined by the treatment of its most vulnerable. The Salvation Army serves not only to support those who are down and out but also to journey alongside them on the path of mutual flourishing, redemption and dignity. Its impressive community support is founded on its four mission pillars—namely, caring for people, working for justice, building healthy communities and creating faith-based pathways.

In the Heathcote electorate we are blessed with several Salvation Army posts. From Heathcote to Helensburgh, and Engadine to Sutherland, each location offers unique, tailored community supports to those in need. The shire Salvos team leader, Mark Soper, understands that effectively addressing crisis in our community requires an interorganisational approach that connects individuals to government agencies, medical practitioners, housing and rental assistance, as well as connecting the homeless to facilities such as showers and kitchens. On Sydney's southern edges in the suburb of Heathcote, bordered by the Royal National Park, many people live homeless and sleep rough. To combat their hardship a special local woman, the late Barbara Koppe, did exceptional work in establishing the Heathcote Hope Shop.

The Hope Shop quickly became more than a second-hand retail store. It also became a community space for people to restore their spirits over hot drinks, warm meals or a simple chat. For those sleeping rough, the Hope Shop now offers sleeping bags, tents and camping mattresses as well as a laundry facility. There are also plans to convert its outback toilet into a shower. In the Illawarra, the Helensburgh Salvos provides courses in personal development. The See Change course is a six-week program created in partnership with the University of Wollongong's psychology unit. It teaches strategies to reclaim functional behaviours that enhance personal and family wellbeing, supporting the rebuilding of broken relationships through truth, redemption and change via practical personal development.

In Engadine and Sutherland, the Salvos run the Positive Lifestyle Program, where workers such as Michelle Wheatley support vulnerable individuals with referrals to partnering agencies and emergency assistance. The power of collective action that seeks to, as Mark Soper puts it, "Love and serve others" is vital in helping the vulnerable transform their lives. In the past year that axiom, evidenced by the Salvos' unwavering generosity, has provided 7,300 hot meals to the hungry, sent 183 children to Kids Camp, supported 700 kids with counselling, given 160 back to school packs to those without, administered 1,060 casework sessions, gifted 10,500 food hampers and 780 Christmas food and toy hampers and provided 550 one-to-one alcohol and drug support sessions. I am deeply grateful to the Salvos for their work. They enrich and transform so many lives. Our communities need their example of practical love, support and provision of services to our most vulnerable. On behalf of the Heathcote electorate, I sincerely thank them for the boldness with which they serve and the strength in unity that they continually promote.

### **NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:31):** Amid the devastation unfolding on the Mid North Coast, one thing stands out above the headlines: the bravery and selflessness of our volunteers. We have seen extraordinary efforts, such as emergency services volunteers rescuing families from submerged houses, boating them to safety and helping them to clean up through thick mud and debris. Spontaneous volunteers have provided support where they can, particularly to displaced residents who may have lost everything. This is the best of our State—people stepping up for one another, often strangers, in times of need.

Last week was National Volunteer Week, a timely reminder of the power of volunteering to bring people and communities together. Nowhere is this more evident than in regional and rural New South Wales. In towns and villages across my electorate of Cootamundra, volunteers are often the only emergency responders available. When disaster strikes, it is neighbours helping neighbours. While flooding is quite rightly at the forefront of people's minds at present, we must not forget the thousands of men and women in the Rural Fire Service, the Volunteer Rescue Association and the State Emergency Service who are responders at other moments of crisis.

They are the people who respond to motor vehicle accidents on our rural roads, helping during the most challenging of situations. Many still carry emotional scars from Black Summer and other disasters that they have faced. However, volunteering in rural New South Wales extends far beyond emergency situations. Volunteers drive the sick and elderly to medical appointments, which are often hours away. They serve in our charity shops, stack shelves in Foodbank stores, advocate through the Country Women's Association and NSW Farmers and strengthen communities through Lions Clubs Australia, Rotary International, VIEW clubs, men's sheds, Meals on Wheels and hospital auxiliaries, just to name a few. These wonderful and giving people provide services and support that otherwise would require paid staff. Often having paid staff is simply not viable in small towns.

It has been estimated that volunteers save the New South Wales economy around \$178 billion each year. That is extraordinary when one considers our entire economy is worth about \$700 billion. Quite literally, the wheels would fall off without them. But the true value of volunteering is not only financial. Volunteer-run sports clubs, youth programs and events help reduce social isolation, which is especially critical in small, isolated towns. The vast majority of those towns lack public transport. Historical societies and museums keep local stories alive and protect the history of our vibrant communities, and agricultural show committees bring whole regions together. These groups create connections for older residents, people with disability and those living alone.

However, unfortunately, this vital sector is under strain. Our regional communities are ageing. More and more volunteer organisations are calling out for help, pleading for extra hands to help keep their doors open. Without people, our non-profits will falter and, if they fail, the social fabric of our rural communities is at risk. How do we fix this? National Volunteer Week is a fantastic celebration. It cannot be the only time we speak about the significance of volunteering. Volunteers do not step forward for applause, but recognition is important. It raises awareness of the vital role our volunteers play in our society, and it inspires others, especially our young people, to consider how they too can contribute.

There is no single skill set that makes someone a good volunteer. Someone might be best able to serve in one of our many emergency services organisations. Someone else might be tech savvy and help with social media or bookkeeping. Another person might love animals and lend a hand at Riding For the Disabled. Whatever a person's talents or interests, there is a place in a volunteering organisation for them. Just as important as finding the right fit is knowing that volunteering also gives something back: a sense of purpose, new skills and lifelong friendships. As a Parliament, we must do everything we can inside and outside this place to support and encourage this spirit. We must ensure that every person, whether they live in our cities or in our towns and villages, knows how they can help and why it matters. Ultimately, we want people across New South Wales to view volunteering not just as something they do but as a vital part of everyday life.

#### CATHOLICCARE SYDNEY

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (19:36):** I acknowledge the extraordinary work of CatholicCare Sydney, a vital community service provider that has been delivering care, connection and support to individuals and families across our State for over 80 years. CatholicCare Sydney is the social services agency of the Archdiocese of Sydney. Formed in 1941, it provides over 50 programs in the areas of carer support, counselling, aged care, family support, children and youth, allied health and disability services. CatholicCare's mission is grounded in upholding the dignity of every person. From supporting vulnerable families and seniors to delivering counselling, disability and mental health services, it is a vital pillar in strengthening our communities.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting CatholicCare in my electorate and got to see firsthand the fantastic work that it does for our community. CatholicCare Sydney has stood as a compassionate and steady hand, offering not only professional services but also human connection and hope. Initially known as the Catholic Welfare Bureau, it originated when four kind-hearted women wrote to the then Archbishop of Sydney recommending that a Catholic welfare bureau be established to better help disadvantaged members of society. How strategic were they? Today CatholicCare has hundreds of staff and volunteers who contribute to this meaningful mission.

Over many years, I have formed a fantastic relationship with the CatholicCare Belmore office, based in my electorate in Lakemba. That office is at the centre of their disability services work. I recently visited, and it was fantastic to see participants thriving in a warm and friendly environment. They were reflecting on their recent excursions and socialising over some great music and dancing with disco lights. I did join in the dancing; it was



like a day club, and it was fantastic. The office is right in the middle of my electorate. A whole lot of Bulldogs supporters were there as well.

It was particularly excellent to see the work done in the upskilling of participants' coffee-making skills. I love my coffee, and the coffee was fantastic. I had about three. I was delighted and honoured to be invited alongside the Premier and Minister Washington for our CatholicCare services to launch the BariStars mobile initiative based at St Marys Cathedral. I urge everyone to attend the service, which is available in the middle of the day. It is a great space and a great place to grab a coffee while supporting our wonderful participants, who are doing great work for the young people operating a fantastic mobile coffee van. I acknowledge and thank Archbishop Fisher for his blessing and for his kindness. It was great to be able to thank him for the incredibly important work he does, particularly in community leadership and spiritual leadership.

For those who may not be aware, BariStars is an innovative program designed specifically to support individuals with disabilities. Participants are provided with hands-on training in key areas of the hospitality industry, including barista skills, customer service and an introduction to small business operations. Participants gain not only practical job-ready experience but also the confidence and independence that come from working in a real-world environment. Through BariStars, CatholicCare helps young people with disabilities to develop the skills and self-belief they need to thrive in hospitality and beyond. I am very proud. I thank Archbishop Fisher, Mr Bay Warburton, Tina Schembri, Tearne Madden and Kelly Turner. I know that I have left out a lot of amazing people, but I thank the fantastic, amazing and incredible CatholicCare team for doing this incredible work, day in and day out, with dedication, perseverance and compassion. I congratulate the CatholicCare team on all their excellent work.

### **BULLYING IN SCHOOLS**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater) (19:41):** We know that bullying is the cause of mental health issues and a key driver of youth suicide, but the urgency with which we must respond has never been greater. Since being elected the member for Pittwater, I have been truly saddened by the number of people who have come forward to seek my assistance about concerns for their own children who are subjected to bullying. I have also been shocked and concerned at the number of constituents who have come forward to talk to me about broader mental health issues they are experiencing, the services they are dealing with, inpatient experiences—particularly in psychiatric wards—and, more recently, concerning a particular hospital in my electorate, Northern Beaches Hospital.

In those discussions, many revealed to me that the commencement of their mental health issues came while they were at school, or during those schooling years, as a result of being bullied. This often had occurred many, many years earlier. We do not talk enough about bullying in schools and the devastating long-term damage it can have on individuals' lives. I am conscious that this is a sitting fortnight in which we are debating the impact of bullying in the workplace and harm minimisation strategies, but in this sitting fortnight we also heard the devastating news that another child has taken their own life due to relentless bullying.

Suicide is the leading cause for of death among Australians aged 15 to 24 years of age, but Atreyu McCann was only 13. According to media reports, his mother, Clare, reported bullying more than 10 times to his school and to the NSW Department of Education. She said she begged for help and that no-one came. Despite numerous psychologist reports and a formal post-traumatic stress disorder diagnosis, no effective action was taken to address his bullying. On Friday he committed suicide. Charlotte O'Brien was 12, a student at Santa Sabina College, and had experienced bullying since year 5. Her family also contacted the school repeatedly, on at least 20 occasions since 2022. In September last year, she took her life.

Corey Woodhouse was 14. Corey endured bullying online through social media accounts linked to his school email. He committed suicide in August 2023. His father faced an ongoing battle with the Department of Education to get copies of his son's school emails, which he did eventually get. They were provided by the Minister. But these are not isolated cases and they are not new. The NSW Ombudsman has repeatedly raised concerns in annual reports of the Child Death Review Team. In its most recent publication, it noted systemic failures in how bullying and self-harm risks are identified and responded to across education and health systems, but it also raised concerns about the slow progress in implementing recommendations from past reviews.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that among people aged 15 to 19, the rate of hospitalisation for intentional self-harm is the highest of any age group in Australia, particularly among teen girls, where that rate is 500 per 100,000. Closer to home on the Northern Beaches, I know that youth suicide has also had a profound impact on our community, with a spike in youth suicide rates particularly in 2015. Schools have extensive anti-bullying policies, yet the bullying persists. Positive action is being taken, yet the bullying persists. Teachers need more support and there is a bigger role for government. I know that the New South Wales Government and the Federal Government are taking some steps in the right direction. The New South Wales

Government recently committed to introducing suicide prevention legislation modelled on South Australia's Act. That is welcome, but legislation alone is not a solution.

In November, work began on a statewide approach to bullying in New South Wales schools. The Federal Government also commenced a similar process in February this year. However, I have concerns that it is a closed process. This is an opportunity to hear from the broader community about their lived experience and the impact bullying has had on many families, as well as the long-term impacts of that bullying. I have concerns that the consultation on these processes might risk that valuable lived experience and also may risk innovative approaches being undertaken by some people.

I will call out just one in my electorate. Tommy from Find Your Feet works directly with groups of young people to encourage them to stand up for their mates when they see exclusion or bullying. He uses an interesting technique whereby he encourages everyone to find their feet in real time. He gets them to stand up and take personal responsibility. While I acknowledge the Government is acting to address bullying in our schools, I must also impress upon the Government that more needs to be done to make sure we are capturing all these stories and that people can have their voices heard.

### CHILDCARE SERVICES

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (19:46):** Today I wish to speak on an issue affecting thousands of families across Western Sydney, particularly in my electorate of Leppington: childcare deserts. There are areas where the number of available childcare places is vastly outstripped by the number of children who need them. My electorate has a lot of new housing. With a lot of new housing comes a lot of new families and a lot of young children. It is a situation that continues to leave working families without real options, locked out of access to early education, and forced into sometimes impossible choices. I have heard directly from parents in the electorate of Leppington who are facing this struggle each and every working day. One constituent told me she applied to five different childcare centres and only one could offer a place, and then that was for only two days a week. The others had waiting lists of up to two years.

I know from speaking to parents when I am out and about in the electorate that unfortunately this is not an outlier issue but rather the norm across many parts of my community. The problem is particularly acute for parents of children under two years of age and parents who have children with additional needs. While childcare centres might exist nearby, they are often not equipped to care for younger children and children with additional needs. For working parents, especially those who are trying to re-enter the workforce, this is more than just a logistical hurdle. It is a crisis that limits their ability to earn an income and plan their future. Let us be clear about why we arrived at this point: This is the result of years of inaction, underinvestment and short-sighted policy under both the former State and Federal Liberal governments. For too long they allowed the system to drift and left it to the private market, which prioritised profit over fairness.

Centres were built in higher income areas where fees could be maximised, whereas growing suburbs like Leppington were left with chronic shortages. We are now seeing the consequences of that hand-off approach, not just in access but in accountability. Recent reports of disturbing allegations within one of the nation's largest private childcare providers underscore the urgency of the need for a stronger, more transparent and better-regulated early education system.

Families deserve to know their children are safe, nurtured and receiving high-quality care. In Western Sydney, female workforce participation is just 65 per cent compared with the 76 per cent average across the rest of the city. The gap is not about capability or ambition; it is about access. Families in Leppington are being held back because there are simply no places for their children, but steps are now being taken to fix it.

The Minns Labor Government is building 40 new public preschools in Western Sydney as part of its policy to deliver 100 new public preschools. Thankfully, five of them are located in Leppington. Those preschools will be co-located with public primary schools, meaning families can access early learning in the same place their children will eventually go to school. Leppington Public School will be next to a local high school, meaning that parents will be able to drop off kids from preschool to primary and high school ages, and then drive no more than half a kilometre up the road to Leppington station. That will make things easier for working families in my electorate. Most importantly, the preschools will be fee free, public, play based and designed to give three- to five-year-olds a smoother, supported transition into kindergarten. For families in Leppington, it is the support they have been waiting for.

At the Federal level, the re-elected Albanese Labor Government is also stepping up. Its \$1 billion Building Early Education Fund, which will start in a couple of months, will deliver 160 new not-for-profit childcare centres across Australia. It will provide a guaranteed minimum of three days of care per week. The centres will be built where they are needed most, not just where they are most profitable. In addition, early childhood educators—who

have long been undervalued—have received a long-overdue 15 per cent pay rise, helping attract and retain the workforce needed to support that massive expansion. Those are not handouts or bandaids; they are long-term investments in our children, our families and the future of our region. For too long, the people of Western Sydney were left behind, but that is changing.

The steps being taken now by both the State and Federal Labor governments are a direct response to the failures of past governments, and a clear recognition that child care is an essential public infrastructure and service. For the parents in Leppington who have been doing it tough—waiting, juggling and sacrificing—help is finally coming. I will keep fighting to ensure that it keeps coming until every family has the support they need and every child gets the start they deserve.

### WHITE CLIFFS NATIVE TITLE

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (19:51):** White Cliffs is one of the most iconic places in New South Wales, if not Australia. The moonscape of the opal field, unique to White Cliffs, shelters the promise of opal and draws people far and wide to this tiny 140 town. Opal is not the only thing the land shelters. Residents of White Cliffs also live underground in what we call dugouts. In summer, temperatures reach well over 40 degrees, and the only efficient way to escape the heat is to dig into the cool earth. There are about 120 dugouts. They are not just holes in the ground; they are often stylish homes you would expect to see in the flash suburbs of Sydney. Those unique properties and the precious opal cut from the ground are key to White Cliffs' prosperity. It is the future of that prosperity that I speak about tonight.

For a little town, White Cliffs has been through a fair bit. I want the community to be able to move forward, but they are still up against it. In 2015 native title was granted to parts of White Cliffs. To own land where there is a native title claim would cancel out that native title. However, until 2019, Crown Lands continued to inform dugout residents that they would be able to freehold. The truth was that owning the dugouts outright would be impossible and they had been told a lie for years. Not only that but, since the date of effect of the Barkandji native title claim, White Cliffs mineral claims have been pending—134 of them, in fact. So, through no fault of their own, the White Cliffs community can no longer own their family homes or mine for opal at full capacity.

Regarding the ownership of the dugouts, I worked with Minister Kamper—and I thank him for that—to secure a lease in perpetuity that could be passed on to family and, if not, the first right of refusal would go to the Barkandji. That is the most secure tenancy available, but we cannot forget that a previous department and government promised them a freehold. With the White Cliffs Mineral Claims District subject to native title, miners also require approval from traditional owners to mine. That approval has been granted by the Barkandji Native Title Group Aboriginal Corporation, but the claims are still pending. The State has done its part, and I thank the Attorney General for that.

Following approval from the Barkandji Native Title Group Aboriginal Corporation, a determination under section 26C of the Act is required. That is where the State Attorney General writes to the Federal Attorney-General requesting that they make a determination, taking into consideration the approvals already received from the native title and the State Attorney General. For White Cliffs miners and some residents, the red tape has been overwhelming. My office in Broken Hill has received correspondence from members of the community about the fragile state of people's mental health. Again, I make the point that this is through no fault of their own. There is more to the story. Since 2015 NSW Resources has invalidly granted, renewed and transferred mineral claims. That means that both miners and landholders have continued to operate under a mineral claim that is not legally valid. That is for both White Cliffs and Lightning Ridge miners and landholders.

The Government has had to step in and reissue the licences. I thank Minister Houssos for that. From that, we now have a review of the legislation. In a way, that is good because it provides an opportunity to work through some of the very real issues that both miners and landholders face. But it is exhausting for those involved. Currently, only 16 claims can be mined in White Cliffs, with 134 pending. That has a huge impact on the income of miners and the local economy of White Cliffs. I have been told that 45 people moved to White Cliffs during the COVID-19 pandemic. They were drawn to it, as so many are, by the unique lifestyle, small community and the promise of finding that life-changing stone, only to find out that they cannot access a claim and, without that, have no future there.

When I was there last week, I was very happy to meet a couple at the pub who had relocated from Sydney: a registered nurse and a builder. They were skilled people who want a future in White Cliffs. How do we get more people like that to move out there and stay? The White Cliffs Miners' Association is rightly frustrated. They have lost a significant amount of time underground, and tourism revenue is plummeting exponentially. Without mining, there is less reason for people to move to White Cliffs and start a new life. There is reduced tourism and, without good levels of tourism, the local shops and pub have limited revenue. The White Cliffs community needs a decision from the Federal Government, and they need it now. Five minutes is not long enough to go deep into the

details of just what White Cliffs is up against. However, it is long enough to explain that this iconic and unique community is facing a complex web of bureaucratic hurdles just to stay afloat. I encourage everyone to visit White Cliffs and spend lots of money.

### AGRICULTURE WORKFORCE

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (19:56):** Brenda Schoepp said, "Once in your life, you may need a doctor, a lawyer, a policeman, and a preacher. But every day, three times a day, you need a farmer." Her words remind us that agriculture is the world's most important industry. We all rely on it daily. Its importance is clearly indicated by the \$19.4 billion it contributes to the New South Wales economy. Currently, there are an estimated 78,300 people working in the sector, some 2 per cent of the New South Wales workforce. Data from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research tells us that, in 2023, student enrolment for VET agriculture studies in New South Wales was at 5,400, with enrolments relatively consistent over the past several years. That sits as a backdrop against industry projections that, from 2026, an additional 2,000 people per year will be required in the industry. Like most other industries, agriculture is experiencing a skilled worker shortage. There are six jobs for every graduate.

At the Sydney Royal Easter Show this year I valued meeting young PhD students Imogen, Jennifer and Jack, who are embracing studies in the agricultural sector. They, along with students they were mentoring from Narromine High School, are some of the next generation that will lead agriculture in our State and nation forward. Whilst at the show, I met with Jenny Hughes, the education manager at Cotton Australia. Jenny is a passionate advocate for creating pathways for high school students to gain experience and network within the agricultural industry. Jenny expressed to me the importance of getting both regional and city-based high-school-aged students acquainted with the possibilities and benefits of a career in the industry.

One area Jenny highlighted was that there is a lack of qualified agricultural high school teachers, with only 300 schools that offer an agriculture course beyond year 10. That greatly restricts the opportunities for students to select agriculture as a subject, which further reduces students accessing post-high-school agriculture studies. Students from both cities and the regions should have the opportunity to study a diverse subject such as agriculture. I commend Damian Toohey and the team at Albury High School, who are leading the way, with Albury High School receiving approval to deliver the primary industries course as part of the Stage 6 curriculum starting in 2026.

The new offering will give students hands-on, real-world experience in agriculture and open pathways to qualifications like certificate II in agriculture and beyond.

Continued investment is key to ensuring the longevity of a sustainable, skilled workforce. Initiated with a \$14.7 million investment in 2017 by the former Liberal-Nationals Government, AgSkilled is a workforce training program for the agriculture and livestock sectors to help ensure that workers are prepared for industry changes driven by innovation, research and technology. When launching AgSkilled 2.0 with a further \$15 million of new funding in 2020, the then Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, the Hon. Geoff Lee, said that the key to the program's ongoing success was the engagement with industry to ensure training in agriculture is designed to be relevant, current and responsive to industry needs. The current Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education said:

AgSkilled is not just about training; it's about building a resilient, innovative, and highly skilled workforce that can drive productivity and sustainability in our agricultural industries.

The Department of Education website states that in 2023-24 the AgSkilled program:

... delivered 601 courses across 145 locations in NSW, with 2,536 participants. An impressive 95% of these participants completed their courses, showcasing the program's effectiveness and popularity.

Whilst I acknowledge the funding of \$5 million in last year's budget for AgSkilled 3.0, it is deeply concerning that the program is only funded until 30 June this year, with no further funding committed by the Minns Government as yet. As raised with me in a meeting with the president of the NSW Farmers Association, Xavier Martin, there is a need to provide certainty with a minimum of three years of funding to maintain and expand what is a proven model in AgSkilled. Industry-led training programs and initiatives work. They know what is needed to train the next generation of agricultural workers. The industry knows the unique skills and the challenges that may be faced now and in the future. I urge the Government to continue funding support for AgSkilled. We need to see certainty for industry-led programs that demonstrate impact. For, as in Proverbs "Those too lazy to plough in the right season will have no food at the harvest." Now is the right season to invest in training for the future of the agricultural workforce.

### BENDENINE WIND FARM

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (20:01):** Recently I attended a community meeting hosted by residents from Binalong and Bowning, two small villages in my electorate facing another industrial wind factory at their doorstep, the proposed Bendenine Wind Farm. The proposal will see approximately 90 wind turbines up to 200 metres in height between the two villages, dominating their skylines. The company proposing the development was off to a great start asking for a meeting with the local progress association and the association did the right thing by publicising the meeting to the community in the hope that residents would have the opportunity to learn more about the proposal. However, at the last minute the company advised the association it would not front up because too many people were going to the meeting. What a slap in the face to the communities involved.

The wind farm proponents demonstrated their complete disregard for the very people they claim to be consulting. If they believed in their proposal and truly believed they were doing the right thing by the community, they would not be afraid of fronting up and answering the community's questions. Hiding does not build trust; it erodes it. We constantly hear about how New South Wales has frameworks for renewable energy proposals, yet when proponents fail to follow those processes, there are no consequences. The New South Wales Government says it supports community-led renewable projects but, in reality, the decisions are being made for communities, not with them. There is nothing planned or sustainable about allowing large-scale industrial infrastructure to be built on the doorstep of any and every village, especially when there is little infrastructure or benefit for those villages.

The State environmental planning policies [SEPPs] exist to guide where those types of developments should and should not go, supposedly to protect cities and their growth strategies. Some may question that strategy when the company proposing to build two solar factories within 10 kilometres of Goulburn city are to this day continuing to be allowed to process its proposal despite the SEPP disallowing it. Why is the Minister or the planning department not putting a stop to it, given that it is within the 10-kilometre range? Despite those so-called protections to the cities, small rural villages such as Bowning and Binalong have no protection from the industrial chaos at their doorstep to protect their growth strategies, amenity or property rights. Cities get buffer zones and protections and are not forced to live with the saturation of the rural landscape. Cities do not allow industrial-scale projects to be built in areas not zoned for industrial projects so why is it that small villages like Binalong and Bowning are subjected to it? Where is the fairness in that? And where are the protections for rural communities?

It is not just Bendenine. My electorate is at saturation point. Project after project is approved or proposed, with little coordination, no strategic oversight and very little care for the cumulative impacts on the landscape, farming, amenity or people. The planning system is flawed and communities in rural areas are being ignored. Let me name just a few of the projects already operating, under construction or proposed in my electorate: Merino Solar Farm, Gundry Solar Farm, the Canyonleigh battery, the Willavale battery, HumeLink, Marulan Solar Farm, Woodlawn Wind Farm, Capital Wind Farm, the Wattle Creek battery, Wattle Creek solar farm, the Hanworth battery, Swallow Tail Battery, the Bannaby Battery, Gunning Solar Farm, Crookwell 1, 2 and 3 wind farms, Rye Park Wind Farm, Taralga Wind Farm, Cullerin Range Wind Farm, Biala Wind Farm, Collector Wind Farm, Gullen Range Wind Farm, Gullen Solar Farm, Springdale Solar Farm, Bookham Wind Farm, Yass Solar Farm, the Derringgullen battery, Coppabella Wind Farm, Wallaroo Solar Farm, Bango Wind Farm, Conroys Gap Wind Farm, Conroys Gap Stage 2 Wind Farm and Yass Valley Wind Farm.

It is simply too much. A community is living beside almost every one of those projects. They deserve better. They deserve a government that is willing to say enough is enough and follow the rules. The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure must stop treating regional communities as dumping grounds. It should be actively monitoring saturation and cumulative impacts, and when a region has reached its limits, the answer to developers should simply be "No. Go elsewhere." Our communities accept that renewable energy is part of the State's future, but the future cannot come at the expense of rural communities, community wellbeing, rural character or proper process. We need planning that puts people first, and that starts with truly listening to the people already living in the shadow of these decisions.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 20:06 until  
29 May 2025 at 10:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

### CERTIFICATES OF COMMENDATION

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Congratulations and thank you to members of the Bombowlee and Tumut Rural Fire Brigades, Captain Paul Webb, Senior Deputy Captain David Rosetta, Senior Deputy Captain Andrew Symons, Senior Deputy Captain Rodney Sutton, and Firefighter Mark Smith for their dedication and quick thinking in performing CPR on a patient in cardiac arrest. The men have been presented with Commissioner's Certificates of Commendation (Unit) for performing rotations of CPR on the patient, after urgently responding to an "Assist Ambulance" call on 25 January 2024. With paramedics still on the way, the firefighters worked quickly to sustain the patient's life and support her distressed family until ambulance officers arrived about 20 minutes later. The brigade members helped to load the patient into the ambulance and Senior Deputy Captain Symons drove the ambulance to hospital, allowing the paramedics to continue to focus on the patient. Their citation acknowledges the members' action under pressure, and their experience, care and skills while displaying professionalism and compassion. On behalf of an appreciative community, I would like to thank all involved for responding so effectively in a confronting situation.

### HUNDREDS RAISED AT PONY CLUB FUNDRAISER

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Rosewood Sports and Pony Club for their wonderful community spirit and generosity hosting a Biggest Morning Tea fundraiser for the Cancer Council, held in-conjunction with Mother's Day. True to Rosewood's character, the morning was filled with laughter, camaraderie and delicious homemade treats, characteristics of what this town is known for. The event welcomed 27 riders in attendance, making it Rosewood's largest rally to date. It was a testament to the growing strength and unity of the club, made possible by the collective effort of members, families, and friends. Together, they raised \$505.85. I thank all those involved. The commitment and generosity of the Rosewood Sports and Pony Club are what make this community so special.

### JAMES WILTSHIRE - BORDER MAIL PHOTOGRAPHER

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge James Wiltshire, as I bid farewell to one of the Border's most gifted photographers, and who is embarking on an exciting new chapter in his career with the Australian Football League. James has been with the Border Mail for nearly a decade. More than just a photographer, he has been the storyteller, a witness to history and a chronicler of our community's triumphs and challenges. James' lens has captured moments of celebration and heartbreak, resilience, and unity. James' work speaks volumes, from the excitement of the 2017 Ovens and Murray Football Grand Final to the haunting images of the Black Summer Bushfires of 2019-2020, where the sky glowed orange and the sun disappeared behind thick smoke. His compelling photographs have earned him a Walkley Award nomination. During the uncertainty of the pandemic, he turned his lens to the empty streets, Border checkpoints on the Hume Highway, and the eerie quietness that defined that period. James, thank you for capturing the greatness of moments, both big and small. I wish you all the very best in your new role with AFL.

### CLAUDIA AND PERCY – HOLBROOK PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Claudia and Percy from Holbrook Public School who have travelled to Newcastle to represent the school in the NSWPSA Hockey Championships as part of the Riverina teams. This is an achievement that highlights their hard work, dedication and true sporting spirit. I also extend my best wishes to Mrs Pontt, who is coaching the girl's team. Her leadership and support are invaluable to our young inspiring athletes. Well done, Claudia, Percy and Mrs Pontt, bring home your very best!

### SOUTHERN SYDNEY BUSINESS AWARDS

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I was delighted to be one of the keynote speakers for the inaugural Southern Sydney Business Awards earlier this month. The merit-based awards are a great initiative of the Sutherland Shire Business Chamber to recognise the innovation, excellence and leadership of small enterprises. I recognise the businesses who were part of the awards for believing in their idea, getting behind their staff and providing great service to their customers and community. PT Doors, a family business born out of a vision to lift the standard of the garage door service and installation industry, took out both the business of the year and excellence in small business awards. I congratulate them and all the other winners: Beyond Best Before (excellence in sustainability), BFF 4 Change (outstanding community organisation), Quest Hotel Woollooware (outstanding visitor experience), Valeo Technology (excellence in innovation), Marketing Jar (outstanding new business), Brandshake (excellence in micro business), Betty's Burgers Miranda (excellence in large business and evolve business of the year) and Contour 3D (inspirational business of the year). As the Chamber says each of these winners represents the best of what our business community stands for: creativity, resilience, and commitment to making a difference.

### SUTHERLAND SHIRE BUSINESS CHAMBER

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I recognise the Sutherland Shire Business Chamber for its impressive work on behalf of the Shire's business community. With 35,000 small businesses across the region the Chamber plays a valuable role supporting local enterprise through regular advocacy, networking, and education events, including the 'Shire Shark Dive' for aspiring businesses as well as participating in various local committees to help shape our local economy and community. It is remarkable that our local Chamber has being named the Outstanding Local Chamber award at the Sydney Business Awards for the last two years. Building on this success, the Chamber is to be congratulated for planning and holding the inaugural Southern Sydney Business Awards this month to recognise outstanding achievements among our local businesses. I acknowledge the work of the Chamber's board does aroto build a connected and active business community in the Shire: president Jeanne Zweck and fellow directors Kamen Tsonev, Deborah Power, Laura McLachlan, Verity Woodward, Damien Vella, Rob Stanley-Jones, Pamela Wood, Mitchell Smithson and Tim Jensen. They are drawn from a membership group which has contributed to building a strong and relevant representative organisation for businesses in the Shire.

### ROTARY CLUB OF CRONULLA 75TH ANNIVERSARY

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—It was a bittersweet night on 17 May as I joined members and supporters to celebrate the Rotary Club of Cronulla's 75th anniversary. The mixed feelings were because the party to reflect on the fantastic service of members over so many years also marked the end for Cronulla Rotary as a club - but hopefully not the end of involvement of its members in Rotary. I've been fortunate as local MP to join the club on many occasions and have always been impressed by the dedication of its members. Whether it be running fundraising barbecues or events for local and overseas causes, cleaning up the beach, giving time to help the learning and development of school children, there's an impressive list of achievements of which to be proud. A special recognition for Rotarians is being awarded a 'Paul Harris Fellowship'; four members were well deserved recipients on the night, Lyn Bates, Ellen Klees, Margaret Johnson and Jean Smith. I thank the last and past members of the club - our community is better for their dedication to service over 75 years. It won't be the same at local events without a Cronulla Rotary barbeque.

### QUEST ORANGE

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I would like to add my congratulations to those flowing in for business owner Amy van de Ven after Orange's Quest was named Best of the Best Hotels in Tripadvisor's Travelers Choice Awards. Quest Orange took the number one spot for Australia after it gained a 4.9-star rating from 440 reviews in the annual awards which identify the year's top-rated hotels world-wide. Opened in October 2019, Quest Orange's success is driven by its enigmatic and energetic owner with Ms van de Ven at the forefront of its day-to-day operation. This is not the first time Quest Orange has scored a major gong, in 2023 it won three major Quest franchise awards, including the inaugural Quest Guest Experience Achievement award. This award places Quest Orange in the top one per cent of TripAdvisor's 1.6 million hotel listings world-wide, no small achievement. Orange is carving out a reputation as a food and wine destination with its beautiful seasonal weather providing a perfect escape. Having quality accommodation is a huge part of the visitor's experience and I congratulate Quest Orange, and Ms van de Ven, on providing just that.

### LACHLAN THUAUX – STARS OF ORANGE

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I rise to recognise the outstanding community spirit and performance of Lachlan Thuaux, known affectionately as "Chewy," who took part in the 2025 Stars of Orange charity event for Cancer Council NSW. Lachlan wowed the crowd with his electrifying rendition of The Greatest Showman, earning him the title of Best Performance on the night. Beyond his stage presence, Lachlan's participation was driven by a genuine desire to support those impacted by cancer - raising vital funds to support cancer research, prevention, and patient support services. A well-known local identity with a big heart, Lachlan is always ready to lend a hand or take centre stage for a good cause. His commitment to community fundraising and his willingness to step outside his comfort zone for a greater purpose exemplify the best of what it means to give back. The Stars of Orange event raised tens of thousands of dollars this year, thanks in part to Lachlan's spirited involvement and the generous support of our local community. I congratulate Lachlan Thuaux on this well-deserved recognition and thank him for using his talents and humour to shine a light on such an important cause.

### GEOFF HAMILTON

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, never has the cliché 'his blood is worth bottling' been more applicable than in the case of Orange's Geoff Hamilton. In May this year, Mr Hamilton made his 175th blood donation. That means he has been rolling up a sleeve for more than 40 years and by doing so, Lifeblood estimates he has saved the lives of up to 525 people. Now retired from a career in accountancy, Mr Hamilton made his first donation at the former Blood Bank in Prince Street, part of the old Orange Base Hospital. That was

in 1981. There are 100s of reasons people make the choice to donate blood, or plasma, but the people these donations help rarely have a choice as recipients. They may be the victims of trauma, may be battling illness such as cancer, there are any number of reasons and most are life-threatening. The value to our community of Mr Hamilton's simple act of turning up at Orange's Lifeblood in Kite Street every three months, for an hour, is immeasurable. Opening a vein for a 'couple of Fredos and a milkshake' to help others is priceless and I thank Mr Hamilton for his commitment.

#### **EASTER PET PHOTO COMPETITION - TRINITY HO**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to recognise the Easter Pets and Teddies Photo Competition recently held in the Ryde Electorate - a celebration of creativity, community spirit, and cuteness. Among the many wonderful entries, I take particular pleasure in acknowledging the submission from Trinity Ho. Their photo of a beloved pet bunny - set against a backdrop of lush greenery and scattered chocolate eggs - was nothing short of spectacular. The scene's composition, detail, and warmth were incredibly well done. Trinity wrote about adopting their bunny three years ago during Easter, sharing how its soft, fuzzy fur and playful nature have brought joy and smiles to all who meet him. That affection was beautifully captured in their entry and reminded us of pets' special role in our lives. Thank you, Trinity, for participating and sharing your story with our community. Your entry was a highlight of this year's competition and a wonderful expression of Easter joy in Ryde.

#### **EASTER PET PHOTO COMPETITION - VICKI BOUZIANIS**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in acknowledging the joy brought to our community through the Ryde Electorate Easter Pets and Teddies Photo Competition. This light-hearted initiative invited residents across Ryde to share photos of their furry friends and cherished teddies in festive Easter style. One particularly memorable entry came from Vicki Bouzianis, who submitted a delightful photo of her dog, Louis, dressed as a lamb. Vicki shared that Louis is a pet therapy dog and often visits young and elderly clients. She lovingly calls him her "little bunny" and chose the outfit to bring even more joy to those he meets. It was a heartfelt submission that truly captured the spirit of the season. I thank Vicki for participating and sharing Louis' excellent work with the community. Her contribution was not only creative but also a reminder of the comfort and happiness our pets can bring. Thank you to all who entered the competition - you made Easter in Ryde that little bit brighter.

#### **EASTER PET PHOTO COMPETITION - YOUSSEF AND HOUDA ZEYNOUN**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in recognising the success of the Ryde Electorate Easter Pets and Teddies Photo Competition. This light-hearted initiative brought together families across our community to share joy and creativity through their cherished pets and cuddly companions. I especially acknowledge the delightful entry submitted by Youssef and Houda Zeynoun, who shared two enchanting photos of their pet rabbit. In one, the rabbit - affectionately described as "the sweetest bunny closest to being the real Easter bunny" - was dressed cleverly as a strawberry in disguise. They wrote that this was to conceal her true identity as "a real life Easter bunny rabbit." Their humour and imagination brought a smile to many, and I thank them sincerely for taking part. The Zeynouns, and all participants, made this competition a success through their warmth and community spirit. It is a small but meaningful reminder of how connected and creative the people of Ryde are. Thank you to everyone who got involved and helped make Easter just that little bit brighter in our electorate.

#### **MS CAROL JAMES**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise Ms Carol James. Ms James is the owner and Director of Carol James Real Estate, with over 35 years of experience in the industry. She is not only a respected figure in real estate but also a dedicated community leader and volunteer. Alongside her many years as a Goulburn Mulwaree Councillor, Ms James has actively contributed to many programs across the community, including the Goulburn Mulwaree Youth Council, Rotary Club, Hospital Consultation Committee, Suicide Prevention Network, and the local Community Drug Action Team. Her passion for service was recently acknowledged at the 25th Anniversary Awards Night in Sydney, where she was honoured for 25 years of commitment to the Community Drug Action Team. Ms James exemplifies what it means to serve. Her energy, compassion, and leadership continue to make a lasting difference across our region. Thank you, and congratulations.

#### **MS KATHY ROBERTSON**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise Ms Kathy Robertson. Ms Robertson was recently nominated as a finalist for the 2025 Australia Day Award, Citizen of the Year in the Upper Lachlan Shire. A resident of Binda, Ms Robertson has been recognised for her significant service to the communities of Binda and Crookwell. Ms Robertson is the owner of the Binda store and provides a substantial amount of her time to



volunteer groups, which include the Binda Hall, Binda Public School P&C and the Binda Progress Association. Ms Robertson has led many fund-raising activities and community events, which undoubtedly has had a positive effect upon the community. Ms Robertson is a dynamic force within the village, with an undeniably motivated spirit to support the community. I thank Ms Robertson for her remarkable contribution to the Binda and Crookwell communities and congratulate her on her well-deserved nomination.

#### **HARRY SKELLY**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise Harry Skelly. Harry was recently nominated and announced the winner of the 2025 Australia Day Award, Crookwell Young Sportsman 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 has demonstrated his admirable characteristics through his mentorship and leadership in his role as School Captain in 2024 of peers and younger students. 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 undertaken sporting umpire roles. I congratulate Harry on his well-deserved award and recognise his significant contribution and commitment as a role model and leader that he undertakes within the sporting and school community.

#### **WOLLONDILLY CONSTITUENTS' SPECIAL BIRTHDAYS**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I am pleased to note the remarkable constituents of Wollondilly who have reached impressive milestone birthdays so far in 2025. My heartfelt congratulations to Mrs. Dawn Halsey of Bargo, who celebrated her 90th birthday on May 6. Mrs. Enid Nemes of Bowral marked her 100th birthday on May 5. Mr. Norman McGhie of Thirlmere reached his 100th birthday on March 25 and I was so pleased to present Norm with Seniors Week Local Achievement Awards earlier this year. Mr. Howard Lewis of Bowral celebrated his 100th birthday on March 10. Mrs. Nena Rinaldi of Burradoo turned 95 on February 10. Mrs. Doreen Stewart of Menangle reached her 100th birthday on March 1st and Mrs. Esme Paterson of Bowral also celebrated her 100th birthday on February 14. Mrs. Carmel Gibbs of Razorback marked her 90th birthday on February 1. Mr. Hans Joachim Schneider of Bowral turned 100 on January 16. Mrs. Ivy Challinor of Bowral, was born on February 13, 1919, making her a remarkable 106 years old. I was honoured to attend Ivy's birthday celebration earlier this year, with her family and loved ones. Congratulations and many happy returns.

#### **RYAN KING**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Congratulations to Ryan King of Thirlmere, who has been named in the Australian Men's National Softball Team, the Aussie Steelers. Ryan is the Duty Manager and Lifeguard at Wollondilly Community Leisure Centre at Picton, and will travel to Canada in July to compete in the 2025 WBSC Men's Softball World Cup, proudly representing Australia at this elite level of competition. Ryan has played softball for over 20 years. His selection in the national team marks one of the greatest achievements of his sporting career — the result of years of hard work, commitment, and passion. Playing shortstop, one of the toughest and most demanding positions on the field, Ryan has proven himself as a key asset to the Aussie Steelers. In addition to the World Cup in Canada, Ryan is also set to compete at the World Games in China, where we wish him luck as he represents Australia. Congratulations, Ryan. Wollondilly is cheering you on as you take your skills to the world stage.

#### **BRIAN COATES**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—There is a remarkable mural on the wall of the Rural Fire Service Hall in Hill Top, honouring the brigade's longest serving volunteers Brian Coates and John Matters. It is a spectacular painting and a moving dedication. Brian was a respected and long-serving member of the RFS and I was saddened to hear of his passing this month. Brian contributed over 75 years of dedicated service to the RFS after joining as a teenager. Rising through the ranks, he served as Deputy Captain, Senior Deputy Captain, and Captain, offering decades of leadership and mentoring. Brian's operational knowledge and understanding of local fire history were unmatched. He served on the District Bush Fire Management Committee for over 10 years, and led critical operations during the 2000–2001 and 2019–2020 bushfire seasons. His efforts helped protect numerous lives and properties during some of the most devastating fire events. In recognition of his service, Brian was awarded the National Medal (4th Clasp), RFS Long Service Medal (6th Clasp), National Emergency Medal, and the Premier's Bushfire Citation. My heartfelt condolences to the Coates family, especially Ian and Michelle, and to all Brigade members. Brian, you will be missed.

#### **SHAPING YOUNG MINDS FOR 60 YEARS**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—What began as a humble timber building in Greenhill with just 22 children has, over 60 years, grown into a stronghold of Aboriginal education, culture, and community support

in the Macleay Valley. Today, Dalaigur Preschool alongside its sister site Scribbly Gum support 100 children with the dedication of 25 passionate staff. The services offered by Dalaigur extend well beyond the classroom. Families can rely on the preschool for daily transport, hot meals, regular health checks, and access to dental and hearing clinics. These wraparound supports are life-changing, especially in the early, formative years of a child's development. Most importantly, Dalaigur ensures that Aboriginal children grow up with a deep sense of connection to culture, country, and community. When a child is proud of who they are, it shapes their entire path forward. From its early days, built by church volunteers and supported by the Save the Children Fund, to its transition to self-management and the incredible outreach programs that followed, Dalaigur's story is one of perseverance and local leadership. Congratulations on this milestone.

#### **LOCAL WOMAN'S FINAL ACT OF GENEROSITY**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Following Shane Phillip's passing, her family honoured her final wish - to donate the proceeds from the sale of her personal belongings to a cause close to her heart: the United Hospital Auxiliaries Dorriggo Branch. Shane's quiet generosity and lifelong commitment to the wellbeing of others has made a lasting impact. Through her family's actions, her values of care, compassion, and community service live on. Her donation will go directly toward improving patient comfort and care at Dorriggo Hospital, a place where she gave so much of herself over the years. I commend the United Hospital Auxiliaries Dorriggo Branch for facilitating this heartfelt request. Shane Phillips' legacy is a powerful reminder that generosity does not end with our time, but it continues to ripple through the lives of those we leave behind. Her final act will help countless others. On behalf of the community, I extend my deepest thanks to the Phillips family for their selflessness, and I honour Shane's memory as one that will continue to inspire us all.

#### **HONOURING HARRY BLYTH**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—On April 21, we farewelled Harry Blyth, a man who never sought the spotlight, yet whose legacy will shine in the Macleay Valley for generations to come. Harry was best known as the co-founder and builder of the Falklands Golf Club near Hampden Hall. What he and his beloved partner Margaret created on 130 acres was much more than a golf course, it was a place of connection, competition, and camaraderie. For decades, Harry's tournaments, including the exclusive Kelpers Cup, brought people together from across Australia, New Zealand, and the UK. But what set Harry apart was his depth of character. A skilled mechanic, builder, and woodworker, he also had music in his soul. He raised over \$20,000 for local health causes through the Kempsey Bowling Club. Legends like Harry are the heart and soul of the Macleay. They host the fundraisers, keep the traditions alive, and leave behind something meaningful for the next generation. The Macleay Valley is richer, stronger, and more united because of men like Harry Blyth. May his memory be a reminder of what one life, lived quietly but generously, can achieve.

#### **GREG HILE**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Greg Hile, who recently celebrated 40 years of service at Valley Industries in Taree. Greg started on the 29th of October 1984 and has worked across many areas of the organisation, including the Timber factory and Valley Linen. Greg lives with a disability and is turning 70 in October, but that hasn't slowed him down. He currently works three days a week and is known around the site for his positive attitude and strong work ethic. I had the pleasure of meeting Greg during a recent visit to Valley Industries, where his long-standing presence and contribution are clearly respected by both staff and his fellow supported employees. Forty years with the same employer is a rare milestone and one that deserves to be acknowledged. I thank Greg for the role he has played in the success of Valley Industries and for being a valued part of our local workforce.

#### **MARK WILLIS**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Mark Willis for reaching an incredible milestone, 30 years of service with Valley Industries. Mark began his journey in 1995, operating industrial saws in the timber factory cutting pegs. From there, he moved into retail, working at the Valley Vintage op shop when it was still based at the Whitbread Street factory. Since then, Mark has played a steady role through the store's transitions, including moves to Pulteney Street and now Chatham Avenue. Mark says taking the job all those years ago changed his life, and he still enjoys putting in a good day's work. His quiet reliability and strong work ethic have made him a valued part of the team and a friendly face to customers. I congratulate Mark on this well-earned milestone, and thank him for everything he's contributed over the past three decades.

#### **TIM WELSH**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Tim Welsh, known fondly as "Mr Valley Industries," who this year celebrated an incredible 40 years of service. Since 1985, Tim has been a driving force behind Valley Industries, supporting people with disability across our region. He's seen the changes

in the sector, from the early days right through to the introduction of the NDIS. Through it all, he has remained hands-on, whether it's in the factory, the nursery, or out on the ground, helping participants thrive through work and support. Tim is admired by his team, his peers, and the supported employees he works alongside. They say you couldn't find anyone more genuine. His knowledge, steady presence, and ability to keep things going in the tough times have shaped Valley Industries into what it is today. I thank Tim on behalf of the Myall Lakes community and the many lives he has touched. Forty years is no small feat, and his contribution will be remembered for many more to come.

### **HARBORD HARLEQUINS CELEBRATE 25 YEARS**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—I'd like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Harbord Harlequins Junior Rugby Club on their 25th anniversary. What began over a few sangas at a local BBQ between Manly locals Graeme Hodge, Geoff Waterworth, and Michael Harradine has grown into one of the Northern Beaches' great community success stories. Recognising an opportunity to grow the game locally for kids aged 5 to 12, the trio - with the support of the Manly Marlins, local businesses, and passionate volunteers - founded the club in 2001. Adopting colours inspired by nearby surf clubs and schools, the Harlequins quickly established themselves as a club with heart, spirit, and style. Now based at Denzil Joyce Oval in North Curl Curl and boasting around 250 players, the club has become a leading force in junior rugby. They've helped develop stars like Wallabies Reece Hodge and Langi Gleeson, Waratahs Max Douglas, Harry and Teddy Wilson, and many local Marlins and Mermaids. On June 21, the club will celebrate its 25th anniversary with a gala dinner at the Manly Pacific Hotel, featuring Wallaby greats Adam Ashley-Cooper and Drew Mitchell. Congratulations to all involved and here's to another 25 years.

### **KIM WILLIAMS**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to recognise and sincerely thank Kim Williams for his extraordinary service to our community as he steps down from his role as Area Manager of One Meal Northern Beaches. From the very beginning, Kim has helped grow One Meal Northern Beaches from the ground up. In both his capacity as both Board Member and operations lead, Kim has worked tirelessly to support those doing it tough in our local community – from coordinating weekly community meals and food hamper deliveries to building partnerships with local organisations to deliver real outcomes. It is no exaggeration to say that Kim's influence has had a transformative impact on countless lives in my community and beyond. His work is a powerful reminder that hardship doesn't discriminate - and that compassion, dignity, and community should be extended to all, regardless of circumstance. On behalf of a very grateful community, I thank Kim for his dedication and the legacy of kindness, leadership, and service he leaves behind. The strength of One Meal Northern Beaches today is a direct reflection of the heart and quiet determination Kim brought to the role.

### **SHANE WHITFORD**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—I'd like to acknowledge Shane Whitford for his thoughtful and generous initiative in support of the Calvary Mater Newcastle oncology nurses. Beginning in June, Shane will run 200 kilometres over the course of the month to raise funds for the nursing team who cared for him during his cancer treatment. His aim is to give back to those who brought comfort and compassion to patients during long and often difficult days. Nurses play an important role in supporting patients through both the emotional and physical challenges of treatment, and Shane is determined to give something back to recognise the difference they make. His efforts shine a light on the impact of kindness, resilience and the power of community support in recovery. The challenge is also part of Shane's own rehabilitation, making this not only a fundraising effort but a personal milestone as well. This is a thoughtful and community-minded way to acknowledge the dedication of our healthcare workers, and I commend Shane for his commitment. I wish him the very best as he begins his challenge in June, and I thank him for highlighting the important work of the Calvary Mater oncology team.

### **CLEAR SKY AUSTRALIA**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—A wonderful partnership between Lake Macquarie Landcare and local disability support provider Clear Sky Australia is making a meaningful difference in our community. Together, they're delivering hands-on horticulture experiences at Booragul's Umali Barai-ku Centre, where participants engage in gardening and land maintenance activities. From planting and weeding to potting seedlings and tending to fruit and vegetable trees, volunteers are gaining valuable experience while contributing to the care of our natural environment. The program is not only supporting the work of running a local nursery and regenerating natural areas—it's also building essential skills. Participants are developing practical abilities like tool use and plant care, alongside important life and employment skills such as teamwork, communication

and reliability. Just as importantly, the program is helping to build social connections and self-esteem. It is creating a space where people feel supported, included and proud of the work they're doing. Thank you to Lake Macquarie Landcare and Clear Sky Australia for creating an inclusive and empowering opportunity for people to grow—both personally and as a part of our community.

### **LAKE MACQUARIE WRITE HERE FESTIVAL**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—From May 16 to 18, Lake Macquarie came alive with literary inspiration as the Write Here Festival brought together some of Australia's finest authors and emerging voices for three unforgettable days. Organised by Lake Macquarie City Council, the festival welcomed readers, writers and lovers of storytelling from across the region. The festival offered a wide range of workshops, author talks and unique literary experiences. Highlights included Tom Keneally in conversation with Scott Bevan, a must-see discussion with one of Australia's most celebrated authors. Graeme Simsion, bestselling author of *The Rosie Project*, also shared insights into his writing journey. Attendees set sail with Magdalena Ball for a floating writing workshop, while Reece Hignell and Jennifer Wong explored the connection between food, culture and storytelling. Fans of suspense enjoyed a compelling crime writing panel featuring Michael Robotham, Darcy Tindale and Jaye Ford. The festival created a welcoming and engaging space for people of all ages and interests to connect through stories, ideas and creativity. Thank you to Lake Macquarie City Council for supporting our region's literary culture and providing a platform that celebrates the joy and power of the written word.

### **PETER KEPPIE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—25 Years of Dedicated Service** It is with great pride and admiration that I recognise Acting Deputy Captain Peter Keppie for his 25 years of dedicated service with Fire and Rescue NSW, proudly serving Station 308 in Grenfell since joining the then NSW Fire Brigades on 15 September 1999. Throughout his distinguished career, Peter has been an invaluable asset to both Fire and Rescue NSW and the Grenfell community, consistently demonstrating exceptional commitment, leadership, and professionalism. In recognition of his steadfast dedication, Peter has been awarded several prestigious honours, including the Fire and Rescue NSW Long Service and Good Conduct Medal with one Clasp, highlighting over two decades of exemplary service. He has also received the National Medal and Clasp, acknowledging his courageous and diligent efforts in protecting the community through times of emergency. Peter's exceptional service during the 2019-2020 Bushfire Emergency earned him both the Premier's Bushfire Citation and the National Emergency Medal, reflecting his outstanding contribution during one of Australia's most challenging natural disasters. I thank Acting Deputy Captain Keppie for his invaluable service and leadership, which continue to inspire the entire Fire and Rescue NSW family and the Grenfell community.

### **NSW AMBULANCE CELEBRATES 130 YEARS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—The Temora Ambulance Museum has played a vital role at the recent celebrations for the NSW Ambulance, as the service marked a significant milestone, celebrating its 130th anniversary this month. Historical vehicles and artifacts made their way from Temora to Sydney Olympic Park for this memorable occasion. Held at the NSW Ambulance State Operations Centre, the service's dedication to providing world-class care was recognised at a special ceremony. The event featured a rescue demonstration by the Special Operations Unit paramedics, a display of vintage ambulances, and the launch of a permanent timeline exhibition, highlighting key moments in NSW Ambulance history. The ceremony, hosted by NSW Ambulance Chief Executive Dr. Dominic Morgan, was attended by over 100 staff members and NSW Ambulance legacy members. Today, NSW Ambulance answers over 1.2 million Triple Zero calls annually and operates with more than 7,500 staff. With a fleet of over 1,800 vehicles, staff travel approximately 55 million kilometres by road each year, continually ensuring timely, life-saving care across New South Wales. This anniversary serves as a reminder of the dedication, resilience, and service that NSW Ambulance has provided to the community for over a century.

### **HANDS-ON WORK EXPERIENCE FOR CLONTARF ACADEMY STUDENTS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Students from years 10 and 11 from Narrandera Clontarf Academy recently worked on a live worksite with Nick Brett, owner of Bundy's Plastering in Ganmain. It was a valuable opportunity for the students to explore different trades and pathways, inspiring them to consider and understand various possibilities for their futures. Narrandera Clontarf Academy aims to support young men in developing skills and confidence for their future careers, and this worksite visit was a valuable step in their journey. The day was informative and engaging with students genuinely interested and enthusiastic, asking questions about the processes and professional ways to achieve the desired results. Under Nick's guidance, students could use some of the equipment and participate in practical techniques to better understand what the plastering industry and potential career opportunities could be. Seeing people like Nick Brett willing to host and

mentor the students is wonderful. The hands-on experience is always the pinnacle of learning, and putting previous learning into practice was an invaluable experience for the boys.

#### **YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2025 - SUNNY MORRIS**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Congratulations Sunny Morris on being named one of the Inner West Young Citizens of the Year! Sunny is a dedicated and compassionate leader who has made a meaningful impact through her active involvement in multiple initiatives. Sunny has been a vocal advocate for mental health and equity within the NSW Youth Parliament. She has also organised a Gender Affirming Clothes Swap during the MCA WorldPride x Genext Festival, to help promote inclusivity and support for the LGBTIQ+ community. Her dedication extends to her work with the Trans Justice Project and raising awareness around climate change. Beyond activism, Sunny has shown strong leadership among the students at Dulwich Hill School of Visual Arts and Design and within the creative sector through her engagement with Shopfront Youth. Sunny's constant commitment to supporting young people, promoting social justice and passion for creating positive change and fostering equity is incredibly inspiring. Congratulations Sunny! I cannot wait to see what you do next.

#### **SENIOR CITIZEN OF THE YEAR – JO BLACKMAN AND PHIL NANLOHY**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Congratulations to Summer Hill's own Jo Blackman and Phil Nanlohy on being named Inner West Senior Citizens of the Year! Jo Blackman is a passionate community leader, environmental advocate, and tireless volunteer. She has founded and supported numerous local environmental groups, including the Greenway Birdos citizen science group and the Marrickville Peace Group. Jo also plays a vital role in our community by providing respite care and mental health first aid to those in need. Thank you, Jo, for your unwavering dedication to environmental activism and the wellbeing of others. Phil Nanlohy is a founding volunteer of the Inner West institution Reverse Garbage, and 50 years later, he continues to serve on its Board of Directors. Phil also runs leather and woodworking workshops, generously sharing his skills with the community. As a long-time educator, he mentors new teachers and encourages the reuse of resources in the classroom. Thank you, Phil, for your incredible contribution to Reverse Garbage and your lifelong commitment to sustainability and education. A heartfelt congratulations to both Jo and Phil on this well-deserved recognition!

#### **JOZEFA SOBSKI HONORARY DOCTORATE**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Congratulations to Jozefa Sobski on receiving an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Technology Sydney for her many years of outstanding service to education and women's rights. A fierce advocate, trailblazer, and leader, Jozefa has dedicated decades to championing gender equity, driving systemic change, and empowering generations of women through education. As a former senior public servant and co-convenor of the Women's Electoral Lobby, her work has shaped public policy and challenged the status quo. Her passion for social justice has never wavered, and her voice has been instrumental in advancing the rights of women across NSW and beyond. This Honorary Doctorate is a fitting recognition of Jozefa's tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to equity, dignity, and opportunity for all. Not only dedicated to improving the lives of women across the country, Jozefa continues to serve her community as Vice President of the Haberfield Association. Congratulations Jozefa and thank you for your lifelong dedication to building a fairer, more inclusive society.

#### **CONTOUR3D**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—3D-printed housing promises to be the future of tackling the housing crisis, thanks to Contour3D and the completion of NSW's first ever 3D-printed, sustainable social housing project. On Wiradjuri Country stands two brand new, modern, two-bedroom homes, showcasing the promise of 3D-printing as an effective and affordable solution to deliver much needed homes throughout the state. We are proud to see this collaboration between Aboriginal Sustainable Homes [ASH], Contour3D, and the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office [AHO] come to fruition as part of the Minns Labor Government's \$224 million Essential Housing Package, which includes a \$10 million investment into the Modern Methods of Construction [MMC] program. The provision of well-designed, quality homes that are fit for purpose and delivered quickly is a promise of the NSW Labor Government. I congratulate and thank Contour3D for their work assisting the delivery of critical housing infrastructure promised by the Minns Labor Government.

#### **BETWEEN 2 CREEKS FILM PREMIERE**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces)**—I recently attended the world premiere of 'Between 2 Creeks' – a locally produced short film that explores the history the site of Bundaleer Estate, a social housing estate in Warrawong. Located on the foreshore of Lake Illawarra, on land located between two creeks, including Minnegang Creek, construction of Bundaleer Estate was completed in 1986. The film, produced by Nikke Gladwin from EdUPlay and Phil Crawford from Co Equal, in collaboration with Melissa Andrews and Maria Corsiglia from Barnados and Wollongong City Council, wonderfully captures

the history and spirit of the Bundaleer community. Narrated by children of Bundaleer, the film explores the extensive history of this estate from pre-European settlement to today and surrounding areas through the eyes of children that currently live and play there. A special mention goes to the young stars of the film including A-Jay, Jaziah, Jordan, Abby, Lucy, Amieah, Saige, Amethyst, Serenity, Rhivar, Caleb, Anthony, Taj, Lani, Lucas, Raymond, Lizzy, Kaitaia, Zara, Tikinau, Bishop, Laylah, Levi, Scarlet, Ayla, Tyleek, Akesa, Lazairith, Sione, Beni, Jett, Layken, Tykiera, Zane, Orcun, Myles, Dylan, Shelley, Victoria, Leteyah, Cooper, Jessica, Chris and Harry. Congratulations to everyone who was involved in the production of this film.

#### **ROTARY CLUB OF TURRAMURRA CHANGEOVER 2025**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Tuesday 17 June 2025 the Rotary Club of Turramurra will conduct their official changeover for 2025. The Rotary Club of Turramurra is a vital organisation that initiates several community minded projects, from fundraising, service delivery and volunteering. They conduct a wide, robust and thoughtful portfolio of work. I recognise the outgoing 2024-25 leadership team led by President Helene Bruncker, Paul Rickard, Warren Soos, Anne Walker, Mark Hedges, Rebecca Matanle, Sue Rice, Julie Owens, Dallas Booth, and Pam Pritchard. Thank you for your service and commitment to our community. I recognise the incoming 2025-26 leadership team led by President Anne Walker, Paul Rickard, Warren Soos, Michael Owen, Maureen Owen, Mark Hedges, Rebecca Matanle, Sue Rice, Helene Bruncker, and Pam Pritchard. I have every confidence they will continue the exemplary service to our community under Rotary International's 2025-26 motto, "Unite for Good".

#### **ST IVES HIGH SCHOOL YEAR 12 LEADERS 2025**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I recognise St Ives High School's Year 12 leadership team for 2025. Thank you for your service and commitment to a wonderful and vibrant school community. Established 1964, St Ives High School's motto is "Optima Optime", translating to, "The best possible things in the best possible ways". I trust this motto is instilled in the students, and that it will stay with them for the rest of their lives. I recognise School Captains Rhys Hibbert and Yesim Kalaycioglu; Vice Captains, Daris Ziaei, and Yasmin Awny; prefects Claire Belbin, Amelia Choudhury, Adam Imamura, Mahan Mohsenzadeh, Eleanor Robertson, Noga Shmueli, Eliot Winter, and Matthew Yuen; and Sports Captains Clare Key, Lauren Robson, Amy McKessar, Kyra Lindsay, Juliana Diosa Tirado, Oscar Bai, Daniel Lawrence, and Jayden Michaels. Thank you for exercising leadership to better the experience of all the students, teachers and staff at St Ives High School. I recognise Principal Tracey Casey for her ongoing dedication to public education by leading a team of devoted teachers and staff that help students reach their potential. I am very proud to represent St Ives High School in the Parliament of NSW.

#### **BRIGIDINE COLLEGE LEADERS 2025**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I recognise Brigidine College Leaders in 2025. Thank you for your service and commitment to a wonderful and vibrant school community. The Brigidine College motto "Fortiter et Suaviter" challenges all students to be "Women of Strength, Women of Gentleness". I recognise School Captain Emi Wallis; Vice-Captain Caroline Cuda; Senior Captains Liv Carson, Briella Chung, Josie Crocker, Sienna De-Fina, Roxy Hathorn, Luci Hudson, Olivia Lisle, and Summer Woods; Year Ambassadors Milly Atkinson-Dicandilo, Liv Belger, Anna Ferguson, Amelie Hill, and Kelina Vasquez Buzzolini. House Captains, Indy Mellers, Matilda Saunders, Megan Jeremy, Star Howell, Charli Marks, Elleni Turkovic, Daisy-Sky Raaff, and Caity Wilson; Ministry leaders Talia Ellis and Christine Kim; Social Justice leaders Bella Ringrose and Sigrid Veidners; Academic, Cultural and Project Captains Scarlett Miles, Lily Wearne, Charli Senanayake, Sarah Lanyi, Deana Little, Georgia Potts, Summer Rowland-Smith, Ruby Hills, Jaime Hamilton, Grace Osborne, Keilana Stoten, Georgie Calleia, Georgie Thomas, and Olivia McGrath; and Sports Captains Ava Thomas, Claire Cornes, Alicia Danielian, Imogen Webber, Audrey Draper, Georgia Luca, Georgia Benson, Jimena Blanco, Jessica Surjan, Marta Donald, Arianne Wong, Freya Lugg, Mia Links, Hannah Charlton, and Chloe Cogan. Thank you for all that you do in exercising leadership.

#### **BRYCE CROSSWELL**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Bryce Crosswell, from Corpus Christi Catholic High School, for shaving his dreadlocks at their Chisolm Showcase to raise funds for his cousin who has been in Sydney children's hospital receiving treatment for leukaemia. Bryce has already raised over \$26,000 from generous donors who got behind Bryce to support his shave in front of his high school classmates and supporters. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Bryce on this wonderful achievement.

**CHARLOTTE PREM**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Charlotte Prem, from Corpus Christi Catholic High School, and her Australian team that competed in the ICU World Cheerleading Championships in Orlando, Florida, United States of America in April 2025. Her TAAG team were awarded Gold at these championships. Charlotte was also nominated and chosen amongst several athletes to be the flag bearer for Australia. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Charlotte on this wonderful sporting achievement.

**JYE BROOKER**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Jye Brooker, from the Shellharbour Sharks Rugby League Football Club, for playing his 100th First Grade game for the club on 12 May 2025. What a fantastic achievement. Jye is also the Under 8's League Tag coach at the Shellharbour Sharks Junior Rugby League Club, mentoring future stars of the club. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Jye on this wonderful achievement.

**MRS THU HONG NGUYEN – VWA**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—I recognise Mrs Thu Hong Nguyen for her dedication to supporting our local community and her continued efforts in assisting those in need through her involvement with the Vietnamese Women's Association in NSW [VWA]. Mrs Nguyen arrived in Australia in 1990 to reunite with her family. Initially focused on family life, she later sought a greater sense of purpose by joining the VWA. Through the VWA, Mrs Nguyen provides invaluable support, offering a helping hand to members who need assistance with social and welfare services. She has also been instrumental in the VWA's operational work and contributes to various volunteering and charitable efforts. Mrs Nguyen has devoted time to learning the Dan Tranh, a traditional Vietnamese instrument. She has found meaning and happiness through social interaction and helping others. Her quiet dedication and tireless efforts to help others are truly commendable. I thank Mrs Nguyen for all the wonderful contributions she has made to our local community.

**DRAMA PRODUCTION OF THE LIFE OF TONY HOANG**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 25 May 2025, I had the pleasure of joining the local community to attend a drama production, Break Free, at The Potter's House Christian Church in Wetherill Park. The production tells the real-life story of Tony Hoang, a local who grew up in my Cabramatta electorate. Fifty years ago, when Vietnamese refugee settlement began in Cabramatta, new opportunities also brought about various social challenges. The now vibrant and thriving Cabramatta community, once known as the "crime and drug capital" Cabramatta has undergone a significant transformation, driven by effective policies, community resilience, and the collective efforts of its people. Tony Hoang's story in a number of ways reflects this change. The drama focuses on Tony Hoang's journey of redemption, resilience, and reform. Having tackled domestic violence, drug abuse, and crime, Tony has found a path to reform himself and now uses his experiences to help reform others. I congratulate Mr Tony Hoang and all the members of the cast and crew for their continued efforts in the drama production and thank them for the kind invitation.

**50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY SETTLEMENT IN AUSTRALIA IN NSW PARLIAMENT**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—The fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975 led to about two million Vietnamese fleeing their homeland in search of freedom; Australia welcomed over 100,000 and today is home to a thriving community of 335,000 Australians of Vietnamese ancestry. This year marks half a century since the Vietnamese community's settlement in Australia. On 7 May 2025, I had the great honour and privilege of serving as the hosting MP for a celebration of this historic milestone in our NSW Parliament, organised by the Vietnamese Community in Australia – NSW Chapter. It was an honour to be joined by Deputy Premier, the Hon Prue Car MP, who represented the Premier and delivered a wonderful speech on behalf of our NSW Government. I thank the Hon. Steve Kamper, Minister for Multiculturalism, for his vision and support. I also thank my Parliamentary colleagues for their presence and support. I congratulate Mr. Peter Thang Ha and the Vietnamese community on this successful event.

**TODD WHITE / ENERGI COMPUTING**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—Today, I would like to recognise Todd White of Energi Computing for his incredible contributions to our Central Coast education community. As the owner of Energi Computing, Todd has established a program that refurbishes old laptops for donation to school children in need. He gladly contributes his time, energy, and spare parts to restore laptops donated by corporate clients and the wider community, taking a sustainable approach that prevents laptops going to landfill. In an increasingly online world,

access to technology and the internet can have a major impact on student learning outcomes. Programs like this ensure that kids don't miss out on opportunities to learn and engage due to a lack of resources. For parents doing it tough in a cost of living crisis, Energi Computing's program can ease some of the financial pressure associated with schooling. I want to thank Todd for his innovative and thoughtful contributions to our community. I'm thrilled that this generous program will help so many young learners to shine.

#### LYN HATTON

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—With great pleasure, I would love to acknowledge a local superstar, Lyn Hatton. Lyn is a Point Clare local who regularly shows up at our office and drops off donation for We Care Connect. Sometimes, Lyn brings a friend to our office, and it means extra donations go to the children in need. Lyn spent more than 3 decades working for the NSW Government and she started working in the Department of Agriculture when she was 16 years old, in 1980. Although Lyn is retired, her love and contribution to better our society has not stopped. When Lyn was asked: "what's the inspiration for donating to We Care Connect regularly?", Lyn kindly responded: "I just think there are so many people out there that need help, so I just help whenever I can." Lyn's generosity and her beautiful personality light up our office whenever she visits us. Her presence at our office contributes significantly to the young recipients of We Care Connect and it inspires our team to work harder for our fabulous community. I thank Lyn Hatton for making our Central Coast a better place.

#### RICHARD GRIMMOND

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—I'm delighted to acknowledge Richard Grimmond for his unwavering commitment to our community across our beautiful Central Coast. For over two decades, Richard has been actively involved in Surf Lifesaving. Starting as a volunteer patrolling member in 2003, Richard has marvellously achieved 171 awards! With the current role as a trainer for the Ocean Beach Surf Club across many clubs, Richard has continued to dedicate his time to assist and mentor patrolling lifesavers in the team. Moreover, Richard is proudly the Award Leader for the Duke of Edinburgh Award program at Ocean Beach SLSC. Understanding the scarcity of volunteers in some branches, Richard has completed the Silver Medallion Aquatic Rescue course and has also participated in the Branch Silver Medallion Aquatic Rescue Program in order to assist other beaches. I was thrilled to learn that the ripple effects from Richard's kindness have brought him the title 'Surf Lifesaving Central Coast Trainer of the Year' this year. Richard's knowledge and his willingness to help others make him an important asset of Surf Lifesaving and our community across the Coast and I'm truly grateful for Richard's dedication and his love for our community. Thank you, Richard.

#### WILL MUNRO

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Will Munro 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. Will was awarded State Champion for the U15 Board Relay alongside Mitchell and Thomas Chalmers. This remarkable achievement demonstrates 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 Will 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.

#### XANTHE CALOV

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Xanthe Calov 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. Xanthe placed 3rd in the U17 Ski Race and was awarded State Champion in the U17 Ski Relay alongside Katy Rees and Kaleah Kingston. This remarkable achievement demonstrates 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 Xanthe 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.



**XANTHE MURRELL**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Xanthe Murrell 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. In the U10 Female Surf Race, Xanthe received 2nd with Swansea-Belmont Surf Life Saving Club. 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 Xanthe 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.

**BYRON BAY BOARDRIDER JUNIORS**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I commend Byron Bay Boardriders [BBB] junior team on their outstanding win at the Alley Boardriders tag team event in Currumbin over the Anzac Day weekend. In their first time entering the competition, the team surfed against the best young surfers from clubs spanning Coffs Harbour to Noosa and took out the final with a convincing ten-point margin. This contest, modelled on the prestigious Australian Boardriders Battle, tests not only skill but also teamwork, tactics and decision-making. Under the guidance of junior contest director Marc Smith, the BBB juniors rose to the challenge, competing across three heats in one day and showing maturity well beyond their years. Special congratulations to Levi Lowe, Jaya Suhendra, Jonny Tooth, Mali Adams and Leihani Zoric — an incredibly talented crew who are proving to be elite for their age group and a force on the regional surfing scene. Congratulations to the entire Byron Bay Boardriders club for fostering such exceptional young talent and supporting the next generation of surfers with skill, heart and community spirit.

**BEACON LAUNDRY, BANGALOW**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—I rise to acknowledge Beacon Laundry in Bangalow, which is celebrating its first year of operations as a jobs-focused social enterprise. In just 12 months, Beacon Laundry has created over 100 new jobs for people facing complex barriers to work — including those recovering from addiction, homelessness and long-term disadvantage. Twenty-six team members have already transitioned from the laundry into mainstream employment. Led locally by CEO Morag Roseby, the Beacon Laundry crew are proving that it's possible to deliver a high-quality commercial service while also supporting people to reconnect with work, community and a sense of purpose. Their business model has quickly secured nearly half the local laundry market, reducing the need for Byron's hospitality industry to send laundry out of the region. This is smart, inclusive, job-creating infrastructure. Employees describe their work as life-changing — providing stability, structure and a path toward recovery and independence. I commend Morag and the entire Beacon Laundry crew for creating opportunity, building community and setting a powerful example of regional resilience, compassion and social enterprise in action.

**EXCELLENCE IN YOUTH AWARDS – FARHAJ ALI**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I wish to extend my congratulations to Mohammed Farhaj Ali, who was recognised with a Youth Volunteer of the Year – Excellence in Youth Award at the 2025 Rotary Youth Excellence Awards, presented by the Rotary Club of Castle Hill. Farhaj is a proactive member of his community and a dedicated school prefect who has demonstrated remarkable vision and commitment to fostering leadership and collaboration among students. As the driving force behind the Prefect Afternoon Tea—an inter-school event involving nearly 150 student leaders from across Sydney—Farhaj has shown exceptional leadership and organisational skill. Farhaj has personally managed the complex logistics of this event, coordinating venues, liaising with multiple schools, and ensuring a seamless experience for all attendees. Farhaj's leadership has not only strengthened inter-school relationships but has also inspired ongoing student-led initiatives across the region. His efforts have created a lasting impact, fostering a culture of collaboration, inspiration, and service among his peers. I am proud to acknowledge Farhaj's outstanding contributions to youth leadership and community engagement, and I congratulate him on this well-deserved award.

**EXCELLENCE IN YOUTH AWARDS – HARRY MCMAHON**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I wish to extend my congratulations to Harry McMahon, who was recognised with a Youth Volunteer of the Year – Excellence in Youth Award at the 2025 Rotary Youth Excellence Awards, presented by the Rotary Club of Castle Hill. Harry is a dedicated role model and an active member of

the Hills ANZAC Committee, where he fosters connections between generations and honours the legacy of service by contributing significantly to commemorative community events. At school, Harry is a valued member of the School Action Group, supporting initiatives that promote a respectful, inclusive, and proactive student culture. His leadership reflects a strong commitment to community wellbeing and embodies the Rotary values of service and integrity. Harry leads with humility, compassion, and quiet strength, making him not only a reliable team member but also a motivating presence who uplifts and inspires those around him. Through his service, Harry not only honours the past but also helps build a more connected, thoughtful, and caring future. I am proud to acknowledge Harry's achievements and thank him for his contribution to our community.

#### **EXCELLENCE IN YOUTH AWARDS – HAYLEY MATHIE**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I wish to extend my congratulations to Hayley Mathie, who was recognised with a Youth Performing Artist of the Year – Excellence in Youth Award at the 2025 Rotary Youth Excellence Awards, presented by the Rotary Club of Castle Hill. Hayley is an outstanding performer and a talented leader. As Vice Captain at Galston High School, she combines academic excellence with a passion for the arts, inspiring her peers through her dedication and creativity. A gifted singer and Musical Theatre performer, Hayley has appeared in eight productions with Sydney Youth Musical Theatre, holding lead roles in her school's productions of *Annie* and *The Addams Family*. She has also represented her school and community in *Pulse Alive*, *The Arts Unit*, and as a member of the Australia Day Choir, performing at the Sydney Opera House. For four consecutive years, Hayley has proudly sung the national anthem at the Kenthurst Rotary Australia Day and ANZAC Day Ceremonies, showcasing her talent and community spirit. I am proud to recognise Hayley's remarkable contributions to the performing arts and thank her for inspiring others through her leadership and service.

#### **NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—Last week was National Volunteer Week, Australia's largest annual celebration of volunteering. I thank and commend all volunteers in my electorate of Badgerys Creek and the 4.3 million volunteers across all of NSW for their outstanding service to our respective communities. Their passion, commitment, and hard work uplift our communities every day. They lend a hand in times of need to support vital initiatives and make a real difference. The theme of this year's National Volunteer Week is 'Connecting Communities', which highlights the power of volunteering to bring people together. I thank and commend all volunteers and wish them the very best as they continue their outstanding service to our community and beyond.

#### **SILVANA VASHISHT**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate and commend young Oran Park local Silvana Vashisht for her success in the field of artistic roller skating. Silvana recently competed in three events at the Autumn competition held at Hawkesbury Indoor Stadium on 29th and 30th March 2025 and achieved second place in both the Figures Rising Star Level 2 and Freeskating Rising Star Level 2. These outstanding results are reflective of her passion and hard work in the sport, which is demonstrated through her commitment to travelling from Oran Park to Emu Plains weekly to train. I recognise the assistance and commitment of Silvana's parents in support of her artistic roller skating journey. On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I wish Silvana continued success in the field of artistic roller skating and in all her future endeavours.

#### **ANYTIME FITNESS – GLENMORE PARK**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I thank and commend Anytime Fitness Glenmore Park for hosting a Breast Cancer Fundraiser in aid of the National Breast Cancer Foundation. The event took part on 3rd May 2025 at Anytime Fitness' Glenmore Park premises located at HomeCo Glenmore Park Town Centre. Through their outstanding work and the generosity of the community, a total of \$5,164 was raised, which will go towards world-class breast cancer research to help National Breast Cancer Foundation in support of their vision of zero deaths from breast cancer. I particularly thank and recognise Riley Farlow, Event Organiser and Personal trainer, for organising the successful event which included an Amazing Race to a Cure Challenge, a raffle and a pink morning tea. I commend all involved in supporting this important initiative and wish Anytime Fitness Glenmore Park and their members the very best.

#### **WAVERLY REPAIR CAFE**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—We would like to acknowledge the Boot Factory and Waverley Council for hosting their Repair Café event on Neighbour Day in March. The event was held in the beautifully restored heritage building in Bondi Junction and invited locals to bring broken or damaged items to be repaired by skilled volunteers, free of charge. The day offered attendees a chance to learn about the rich history of the Boot Factory and included music and engaging activities. As part of a series held throughout the year, the Repair Café

initiative not only helps keep items out of landfill but also fosters sustainability and strengthens community ties. Thank you to everyone involved in making this meaningful event possible.

### **GREEN FAIR**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—We would like to acknowledge Clovelly Child Care Centre for celebrating its 40th Birthday with the annual Green Fair, a family-friendly event that embodies the centre's commitment to sustainability and community engagement. Since its establishment in 1985, this not-for-profit institution has provided a happy, safe, and sustainable environment for children. The Green Fair features a variety of activities, including food stalls, market produce, live music, and a many raffle prizes. Thank you to everyone involved in organizing this wonderful celebration, fostering community spirit, and promoting sustainable practices.

### **FESTIVAL OF DEMOCRACY**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—We would like to acknowledge the Parliament of New South Wales for hosting the 2025 Festival of Democracy on April 15. This event is designed to introduce children to the importance of democracy through creativity, storytelling, and interactive experiences. The day highlights learning through guided chamber tours, arts and crafts workshops, mock committee hearings, and even hands-on lessons in voting with the NSW Electoral Commission. With historical character actors, behind-the-scenes videos, and opportunities to engage with Legal Aid NSW, this immersive festival is a unique chance for young minds to explore democratic values in a fun and engaging environment. Thank you to all involved in making civic education so accessible and inspiring for the next generation of Australians.

### **BATHURST HOCKEY CLUB**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—The Junior Team of the Year Award was recently announced at the Bathurst District Sport and Recreation Council Annual Sports Awards and one of the nominees was the Bathurst Hockey Association. For many years hockey has been one of the strongest sporting codes in the City and the District and that tradition has continued with the U12 Team. These young players have been together as a team for some 3 years, and during this time have gone on to win the prestigious Tamworth Carnival, both York Cup and the Kim Small Carnivals with games conducted indoor and outdoor. Also winning at the Western Region Carnival several members of the squad played in their School teams at various Carnivals and the PSSA Australian Carnival, where two of the girls were selected to represent NSW at the PSSA Australian Carnival. It was through these outstanding levels of skill and success that the Bathurst Hockey Club's U12 Team were winners on the night and I congratulate them not only their success but on their outstanding contribution and commitment to Hockey and their success as a very young team.

### **BATHURST PANTHERS U14 LEAGUE TAG TEAM**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—The Junior Team of the Year Award, recently announced at the Bathurst District Sport and Recreation Council Annual Sports Awards included as one of the nominees, the Panthers U14 League Tag Team. The team were undefeated Minor Premiers and Premiership winners in 2024 and having been runners up in previous competitions this was their year of success. Leading the girls to victory was Coach Emma Duke and eight of the girls were representatives at the Group 10 JRL level along with their Coach and Steve and Vanessa Clarke. Attaining such a level of success is achieved only through a consistent team approach and a very focussed goal of striving to give of your best and I congratulate the U14 League tag Team on their nomination.

### **BATHURST PANTHERS U16 LEAGUE TAG TEAM**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—The Junior Team of the Year Award was recently announced at the Bathurst District Sport and Recreation Council Annual Sports Awards and one of the nominees was the Panthers U16 League Tag Team. Success for the team came in 2024 where they were the minor Premiers and then went on to win the Premiership. This was the final year for the team as juniors who have been together for around 10 years but have never made the finals. The team are well respected and professional and are recognised as young men who have brought pride in their achievements by the Panthers Club. Members of the Team have also seen representative status in the NSW Country U16 team selections and the Western Rams Andrew Johns and Laurie Daly Greater Western U18's squad. This is a team which has produced some very talented representative players and role models to the Panthers Club and they are truly deserving of their nomination. Congratulations to the Bathurst Panthers Junior Rugby League U16 Tackle Team and I wish them every success in their future endeavours.

## 2025 ASIA PACIFIC TOUCH YOUTH CUP

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport)**—Congratulations to three outstanding young Maitland Redback players who represented Australia with distinction at the 2025 Asia Pacific Touch Youth Cup held in Redcliff, bringing home international honours. Brandon Cox played a key role in the Australian Men's 18s team's 6–3 victory over New Zealand in the final, scoring two tries in a standout performance. His teammate, Harry Lidbury, was recognised with the coveted coaches award—an acknowledgment of his leadership, consistency, and commitment throughout the tournament. In the Mixed 20s division, Bayley Tranter helped Australia to a dominant 11–5 win over New Zealand in their final, rounding out a golden tournament for our local athletes. I extend my congratulations to Brandon, Harry and Bayley—you've made Maitland proud on the international stage. We look forward to seeing where your talent and hard work will take you next.

## GEMALLA DE BEUZEVILLE-HOWARTH

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport)**—Congratulations to Gemalla de Beuzeville-Howarth, who was announced as Maitland's 2025 Young Woman of the Year by the Hunter River Agricultural & Horticultural Association at the Maitland Show. It was an honour to be there on the night to see Caoilfhionn "Caylin" King hand over the sash to Gemalla, a powerful moment of young women celebrating and supporting each other in our community. Gemalla is an accomplished young woman, a freight train driver, a postgraduate student, and a passionate historical dressmaker. Her talents span technical expertise, academic pursuit and creative expression. Gemalla is also deeply committed to preserving our region's rich rail heritage through her work with heritage locomotives like the 5917 "The Picnic Train" in Paterson, and proudly serves as a Second Person, someone who assists the train driver, with Sydney Rail Services. A former Rotary Youth Exchange student, Gemalla continues to give back to her community in many ways. She is a shining example of leadership, service, and passion. Congratulations Gemalla on this well-deserved honour.

## LISA DUHIG

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport)**—Congratulations to Lisa Duhig of Lochinvar Rovers Football Club—an extraordinary local mum, volunteer and community leader—who I had the honour of recently presenting with a Community Service Award on behalf of Premier Chris Minns and the NSW Government. It was a joy to celebrate with Lisa on Mother's Day, a time to honour the love, generosity, and strength that mums bring to our communities every day. Lisa is modest about her contributions—but those who know her work understand just how transformative her leadership has been. Over the past decade, Lisa's energy and commitment have driven remarkable growth at Lochinvar Rovers. Under her guidance, club registrations have soared to over 500 players across 49 teams, and the grounds have undergone a much-needed transformation. When I was presenting Lisa with the award, she didn't miss the chance to let me know about a few more things the club needs—but that's exactly what makes her such a passionate advocate. Congratulations to Lisa, thank you for everything you do to nurture, inspire and support those around you. You truly make Maitland, and especially Lochinvar, a better place to live.

## STEVIE RIZZO'S LOVE FOR THE SPORT OF BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—Congratulations go to eleven-year-old Stevie Rizzo who has fallen in love with the martial art sport of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (BJJ). Stevie has been practicing BJJ since she was four years old and trains almost every day for up to two and a half hours at Honour Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Grafton, coached by Professor Henry De Campos. In addition to that, once a month Stevie makes the trip to the Gold Coast where she trains under the guidance of Professor Daniel Carlos De Almeida and coach Marley Grieves. Having recently earned her yellow belt, Stevie has been offered a once in a lifetime opportunity to travel to Brazil in June, and train at the prestigious BJJ College Jundiai in Sao Paulo, before competing in the Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Kids National Championships. What a remarkable achievement Stevie and I wish you all the best for the Championships in June. Your focus, determination, and the hard work you are putting into the sport you love is truly an inspiration. Well done Stevie!

## KATHRYN MCKAY - COMMISSIONER'S COMMENDATION

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to NSW RFS Clarence Valley District Communications Captain Kathryn McKay. Captain McKay has been recognised with a Commissioner's Commendation for Service in the 2025 NSW RFS St Florian's Day awards. Since becoming a member of the Glenugie Brigade in 2014, Communications Captain McKay has advanced through various roles, including Deputy Captain, Community Engagement Officer and RFS Representative. Within the Clarence Valley Communications Brigade, she has served as Communications Senior Deputy Captain, Brigade President, Incident Management Team Officer, and currently holds the role of Communications Captain. With

Communications Captain McKay's leadership, the communications brigade has progressed from handling basic messages to becoming highly skilled in communication management. Communications Captain McKay has led advanced training programs and outreach programs on Computer Aided Dispatch, has developed new communication protocols and has organised many team building and skill building activities. Additionally, Communications Captain McKay has integrated Computer Aided Dispatch with Incident Management Team systems, assisting to streamline overall processes. Communications Captain McKay's expertise in leadership and dedication in conjunction with her collaboration and teamwork skills have evidently impacted the Clarence Valley Communications Brigade positively. Well done and congratulations on the well-deserved recognition.

#### **GLOVES ON THE GREEN**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to Louis Hambly, founder, and operator of Black Rifle Boxing. Black Rifle Boxing opened its doors in March 2024 and is based in South Grafton. The gym offers training and sparring sessions laying a solid foundation in preparing athletes for competition opportunities. On Saturday, 26 April 'Gloves on the Green' presented by Louis and Black Rifle Boxing was held on the green at the Wooli Bowling and Recreation Club. This was a highly successful, crowd pleasing, sell-out event, with athletes from Northern NSW, South-East QLD, Central Coast and other parts of Australia coming together to compete. There were 16 bouts each being three two-minute rounds, held under a 'big top' style marquee complete with boxing ring, corporate and general seating, a ring announcer, lighting along with sound and music by Jempire Events. Local businesses were in good support getting behind this debut event by way of sponsorships and were in good attendance, along with the large vocal crowd as the local heroes battled in the ring. Well done again Louis on putting together such a wonderful event and supporting the growth of boxing, you truly are an inspiration.

#### **RECOGNITION OF FLETCHER RICHARDSON**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of Guyra's Fletcher Richardson, for being chosen to represent Australia at the Junior Trench World Cup being held in Germany at the end of this month. The Guyra Gun Club member has secured his spot on the Australian Junior IFFS Trench Word Cup Team, by shooting 120 out of 125 targets at a qualifying event in Melbourne. I congratulate Fletcher for securing a spot on the Universal Trench Team, where he will compete in Rome in July, as well as a position on the Australian Glenshield Junior Team, which will travel to New Zealand in January 2026. To add to Fletcher's already impressive list of accolades, Fletcher has also been named in the 'talented squad,' for Shooting Australia. I commend Fletcher for his dedication and commitment to his sport of shooting and on his many well-deserved awards. Good luck in Germany, Italy and New Zealand – the Northern Tablelands is right behind you, and we're backing you in for 2028 Los Angeles Summer Olympics!

#### **BALL IN THE HALL**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the community of Upper Horton on the success of the Ball in the Hall event held recently. Funds raised during this black-tie event went directly to support their local Pony Club, with the night comprising dinner, entertainment and charity auction, where those attending dug deep to support the cause. I congratulate all involved in this initiative, for their foresight and can-do attitude, giving back to their club and showing that Upper Horton may be a small community, but it one with a big heart! Thank you to the Pony Club committee members Ben and Kate Green, Victoria Corcoran, Rachel Caskey, along with special thanks to Brianna Mack, each for their tireless efforts in staging the ball. Thank you also Duncan's Bus Services for transporting guests, Imperial Motel Hotel for catering, entertainers One Fun Band, auctioneer extraordinaire Riley Gibson and to the many sponsors who generously donated items for the auction, each contributing to a wonderful evening. I commend the community on lending their voluntary support to this cause, giving generously of their time, resources and expertise to ensure the event went off without a hitch – the community spirit in Upper Horton is indeed inspirational.

#### **MORAY PASTORAL COMPANY**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Moray Pastoral Company of Guyra on being honoured with the esteemed title of Most Successful Merino Exhibitor at the 2025 Sydney Royal Easter Show, adding to their many accolades in this arena. I congratulate James Stewart of Moray Pastoral Company on this impressive award, along with winning back-to-back accolades over the past few years for fleeces produced. This year the company also won the Australian Council of Wool Exporters Perpetual prize, the Cliff Friend Perpetual Award and the Thomas Farquhar Hodgson Memorial Perpetual Trophy; Likewise last year the company won the Most Successful Merino Exhibitor for the 2024 show; in 2023 were awarded the David Merriman Hodgkinson Memorial Annual Trophy for grand champion Merino Fleece, champion Merino ram fleece and the NSW Wool Selling Brokers Association Award; similarly in 2022, winning the Cliff Friend Perpetual Award at the show. Such recognition is a testament to many years of refining production, hard work and enduring

commitment to delivering superior fleeces. I commend James on his great success exhibiting at the Sydney Royal Easter Show over the years and on his significant contribution to the Australian wool industry.

#### **BILL PHILLIPS**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Trangie born and raised Bill Phillips was recently presented an award for being the State's longest serving Justice of the Peace. Bill has served as a Justice of the Peace for 50 years and is one of the earliest Indigenous JPs in the state. Bill is a dedicated advocate for Aboriginal rights, and his work as a Justice of the Peace inspired a lifelong commitment to improving justice outcomes for First Nations Communities. Bill was also the chairperson of the Central Region Aboriginal Lands Council and on numerous other committees. I would like to congratulate Bill on reaching an incredible milestone of 50 years of service as a Justice of the Peace. Your unwavering dedication to justice has had a profound impact on the community, particularly in advocating for the rights of First Nations people.

#### **SHANE CARTER COBAR COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENT**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Cobar High School Principal, Shane Carter has been recognised for 30 years of service in teaching in the Cobar community. Mr Carter has been an asset to not only the school but the community over his time since graduating and has worked with over 450 teachers during his tenure. His passion for sports and the community is highlighted with his coaching time and his involvement in the construction of the iconic Cobar sign. I applaud Mr Carter on his dedication and commitment to education in a remote community and look forward to continuing to see his legacy in the accomplishments of the students for many more years to come. Congratulations to Mr Carter for 30 years of service to education in Cobar.

#### **DORY**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—Dory is an amazing local volunteer who has helped to support women at the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter for over 13 years. Dory worked as a children's nurse for many years and when she retired, she began looking for opportunities to help other people. She came across an ad to volunteer at the shelter and quickly answered the call to action. Since then, Dory has folded thousands of sets of sheets, cooked many meals, assisted with knitting groups and cleaned the centre. She considers herself an extra pair of hands for the women at the centre and is ready to help in any situation. Dory values the connections that she has made with the other volunteers at the centre as has found a real sense of purpose by giving back to the community. She has interacted with many women throughout her time, where she has seen the positive impact that the shelter has had on them. I would like to thank Dory for her commitment to protecting the women in our community and for helping to provide them a warm place to come in hard times.

#### **BETH**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—Beth is an outstanding volunteer who helps women in crisis at the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter. Beth began her time as a volunteer after looking for an activity that could give back. She enjoys facilitating a hands-on experience for the families. This often includes cooking lessons or craft work. Beth thinks of herself as an extra pair of hands, ready to support these families whenever needed. Beth enjoys knowing that she is helping to make a difference in someone's life. She feels that she provides support to the women and children at the centre, while gaining a sense of joy by giving back to them. Outside of the shelter, Beth helps to organise a clothing drive through her local golf group. These much-needed clothes are provided to families in need to help them get back on their feet after tragic circumstances. This effort to rally her friends and family speaks volumes about Beth's care and passion to help those in need. I would like to sincerely thank Beth for all her hard work and extend that thanks to all the volunteers at the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter.

#### **MICHELLE PUHL**

**Ms JACQUI SCRUBY (Pittwater)**—Michelle Puhl is a truly inspiring person who is a committed member of the State Emergency Service. Michelle became involved with the SES during COVID, during which time she felt a sense of helplessness and a drive to better her community. At first, Michelle was nervous to participate in the training, as she had never done anything like it before. Michelle soon found that she was a very capable team member and felt motivated to get other women involved with the organisation. Michelle is constantly keeping an eye on the changing weather conditions along the Northern Beaches. This speaks volumes about her commitment to answer the call for help whenever our community needs it most. She recently deployed to Cyclone Alfred-affected areas to help clean up flood-stricken towns and to provide hope to those who had lost everything. I would like to thank Michelle for her dedication to the SES and to helping those in our state when they need it most. We are so lucky to have you as part of our community.

### SERBIAN EASTER COMMUNITY DANCE

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—On the 2nd of May, I had the privilege of joining the Serbian community at Bonnyrigg Sports Club for their annual Easter Dance—a vibrant celebration of Orthodox Easter and a proud expression of culture, faith, and togetherness. For many in the Serbian community, Orthodox Easter is a deeply spiritual time marked by family gatherings, traditional foods, church services, and the symbolic cracking of eggs. A unique part of the tradition is the colouring of eggs using natural dyes—most commonly onion peels—alongside flowers and leaves pressed onto the shells and wrapped in stockings to create beautiful, intricate patterns. What made this event truly special was its openness—an opportunity to share these cherished customs not just within families, but with the wider community. In a place as diverse as ours, gatherings like this remind us of the power of cultural exchange. Thank you to the Serbian community for your warmth, generosity, and for keeping tradition alive in such a joyful and inclusive way.

### MACARTHUR FC MEDAL NIGHT

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—It was a real privilege to attend the Macarthur FC Annual Medal Night on May 5th at Campbelltown Catholic Club. What a season it's been for the Bulls—both on and off the field! Their biggest highlight? Taking out the 2024 Australia Cup for the second time, a huge achievement that now sees them heading to the Asian Cup to represent Australia at an international level. That's not just a win for the club—it's a win for our whole region. A massive congratulations to all the winners including Kealey Adamson for claiming the Macarthur Medal after an outstanding season. The Bulls continue to be more than just a football team—they're a powerful symbol of South-West Sydney's strength, talent and community spirit. Their Bulls in Schools program has also gone from strength to strength. I dropped in to one of their holiday sessions in Carnes Hill during the most recent school holidays and saw more than 100 kids getting involved—for free! Great to see a club giving back and building up the next generation. Go the Bulls!

### BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY FESTIVAL

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—It was an honour to join the Buddhist community at Freedom Plaza in Cabramatta for the Vesak Day Festival—also known as the Celebration of Buddha's Birthday—organised by the Australian Chinese Buddhist Association and Prajna Monastery, with support from Fairfield City Council. Vesak is one of the most important days in the Buddhist calendar, marking the birth, enlightenment, and passing of Gautama Buddha. It's a time of reflection, compassion, and renewal. It was a privilege to witness the Bathing of the Buddha ritual, which is a powerful tradition symbolising the cleansing of our hearts and minds from negativity. Events like this matter because they bring people together—no matter their background or religious affiliations—to learn from each other and build mutual respect. Vesak is a chance to reflect on values like compassion and understanding that resonate across cultures. Thank you to everyone who made the day possible. In a diverse community like ours, these shared experiences help us connect in real and lasting ways.

### EXPLORE & DEVELOPMENT ANNANDALE - ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY BOOK LAUNCH

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—I would like to commend Explore & Develop Annandale for the launch of their new book, which documents their evolving journey of embedding the Acknowledgement of Country into the life and culture of their childcare service. This important milestone reflects years of thoughtful reflection, learning, and commitment to acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, perspectives, and connection to Country. The book stands as a testament to Explore & Develop Annandale's dedication to reconciliation and cultural respect within early childhood education. Their launch event held earlier in the week brought together educators, families, and community members to celebrate this collective achievement and ongoing journey. A special thank you to Su Garrett and Melanie Elderton of Explore & Develop Annandale, and community members Aunty Tracey Linn Bostock, Jessica Staines and Madeleine Gill for leading this work with such heart and integrity. Their contribution to fostering cultural understanding and inclusion in early education is both commendable and inspiring. It was wonderful to be able to attend the launch and see the impact of this work first hand.

### SUSTAINABLE URBAN LIVING: ECOLOGY-DRIVEN RENEWAL FOR SYDNEY

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—I would like to acknowledge the Committee for Sydney, in collaboration with Placemaking NSW, Macquarie University, and the Power of Public Spaces project, for hosting a visionary and timely event as part of their Global Speaker Series: Sustainable Urban Living – Ecology-driven Renewal for Sydney. The event featured renowned Spanish urbanist Salvador Rueda Palenzuela, whose transformative Superblocks model has reimagined how cities can prioritise people, ecological systems, and public space. It was fantastic to join in on the workshops to reimagine the development of key areas of Sydney like White Bay to centre safer streets that focus not just on cars but on moving people, as well as prioritising green space, public

transport, accessible amenities and housing that people can afford. A special thank you to the Committee for Sydney and all event partners for fostering this critical dialogue. Bringing global thought leaders together with local expertise helps shape a more sustainable, thoughtfully planned and connected future for Sydney.

#### **BALMAIN ASSOCIATION "FIRST LANDSCAPES" PROJECT LAUNCH**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I would like to acknowledge the work of the Balmain Association, who recently launched their 'First Landscapes' project at the Balmain Watch House as part of their celebrations of their 60th year in our community. 'First Landscapes' is a project which demonstrates the Balmain-Baludarri community's commitment to genuine and full reconciliation. It does so by bringing together multi-disciplinary perspectives; from the arts, the environment and the local Indigenous community to collaborate on the ways we could make our community one of connection and healing. This fantastic event, supported by the Australian Heritage festival, was an opportunity for meaningful reflection and I thank the Balmain Association for extending me an invitation. I would like to give my sincere thanks to all members of the Balmain Association who worked to bring this great event to life and all the project's participants. Special thanks to Lisa Tatman, the Arts & Culture Chair at the Balmain Association for her hard work in this initiative, and to presenters Ray Stevens and Peter Cooley from IndigiGrow.

#### **CARLINGFORD ROTARY CLUB - ANNUAL CLUB SHOWCASE**

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping)**—I acknowledge the Carlingford Rotary Club for their 2025 Annual Club Showcase. Held on May 20th at the Viking's Sports Club in Dundas Valley, the event provided a valuable opportunity to connect with community members and discuss initiatives and projects done by the club. I had the privilege of attending the showcase and meeting with rotary members whose passion and dedication to service were evident throughout the event. An Annual Club Showcase is important for a Rotary Club as it celebrates achievements, engages the community, recognises volunteers, attracts new members, strengthens partnerships, and inspires future initiatives, all while demonstrating the club's ongoing commitment to service. The showcase highlighted the club's wide-ranging contributions in community, international, youth, and vocational services throughout Carlingford and neighbouring areas. I congratulate the Carlingford Rotary Club for its remarkable contributions to the suburb of Carlingford through local initiatives, youth programs, and humanitarian efforts, all while strengthening community spirit and Rotary fellowship.

#### **ALIVE 90.5 HARMONY WEEK**

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping)**—I acknowledge Alive 90.5 FM for their commitment to celebrating Harmony Week 2025 and promoting cultural diversity across North-Western Sydney. As a community radio station serving the Epping community, Alive 90.5 FM has been a vital voice for locals since 1992. Through engaging broadcasts and active social media outreach, the station plays a leading role in fostering cross-cultural understanding. By honouring a wide range of cultures—including those from Latin America, Croatia, the Cook Islands, Italy, India, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities—Alive 90.5 FM highlights the rich cultural fabric that shapes our region. The station's efforts during Harmony Week 2025 provided a meaningful platform for celebration and connection, helping to bridge cultural divides and strengthen social cohesion. Their promotion of unity serves as a powerful reminder of the value of inclusion in everyday life. I commend Alive 90.5 FM for their leadership and dedication to building a more connected Epping. Your efforts are appreciated, and I look forward to the continued impact of your work.

#### **SHIRLEY WEHBE & FAMILY - CANCER RESEARCH BREAKFAST**

**Ms MONICA TUDEHOPE (Epping)**—On Tuesday, 20 May 2025, I had the privilege of attending Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, an important cancer research fundraising event hosted by Shirley Wehbe and the Wehbe family at their residence in Oatlands. Despite overcast skies and persistent rain, the atmosphere was one of unity and generosity as hundreds gathered under marquees to support the Cancer Council. This annual event, held in memory of the late Ray Wehbe, has grown into one of the largest morning tea gatherings in the region, with more than five hundred attendees. Shirley Wehbe and her family, together with Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral, the Maronite Ladies of the Gospel, the Making a Difference for Christmas Committee, and the Australian Blouza Association, created a morning of community connection and purpose. The event was a testament to the Wehbe family's continued impact in our community. An additional fundraiser held at Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral further strengthened the cause where funds raised had been dedicated to cancer research. I acknowledge the Wehbe family and all participants for their efforts in raising funds to support cancer research.

#### **LYLA RICHARDS**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—"Enjoy what you've got right in front of you", "enjoy the people not the things" and "live with no regrets", wise words from a very wise woman, namely Lyla Richards who, on the 17th May 2025, celebrated her 100th birthday. I had the pleasure of meeting Lyla recently at Kilpatrick Court



Residential Aged Care in Toronto, where she is a popular and inspirational resident. She is known for her warmth, wisdom and vibrant spirit. I really enjoyed chatting with her and hearing about the shenanigans she and her friends get up to, particularly at bingo! Lyla is originally from New Zealand but embraced Australia as her home after falling in love with our country after a holiday visiting family. Her life has been filled with adventure, from choir performances to raising four children and cherishing her role as a grandmother, especially the joy she found in driving them around. Even now, she thrives on friendship, shared stories, colour therapy, knitting, and reading. Lyla is living proof that life is what you make it. I once again wish Lyla a very happy 100th birthday.

#### **FOOD SHARE CUPBOARDS ROLLING OUT IN THE TWEED SHIRE**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Recovery, and Minister for the North Coast)**—CONGRATULATIONS to Michael Maloney on his initiative to roll out eight brand new food share cupboards across the Tweed Shire, starting with Carmen Stewart's cupboard at her home in Murwillumbah. Tweed Valley Weekly Editor Jonathon Howard wrote an article detailing how food share cupboards are encouraging community connection through sharing locally grown produce between neighbours. Michael's rollout of cupboards is being funded with a grant from ITV's Tweed Community Initiative Fund. Carmen has been a longtime supporter of free food sharing is well known for her capacity-building community activities with the group It Takes A Town, and the free fruit trail in Murwillumbah in 2017. Jonathon's article noted that Carmen is raising her family with a practical demonstration of neighbourly charity. "These small local actions build goodwill and create community connection," Carmen told The Tweed Valley Weekly. "We feel honoured to take part and help share food in our street." The article went on to quote Therese Krix, who has noticed through her role hosting the Front Fence Free Food Share 2484 Facebook group an interest in free food sharing expressed by residents. Older cupboards are located in Murwillumbah and Uki.

#### **KYOGLE TOGETHER NOURISHES LOCALS EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Recovery, and Minister for the North Coast)**—I WISH to commend Kyogle Together on its new sustainable food rescue program - Nourishing Kyogle – which brings together businesses, producers and home gardeners to support local people experiencing food insecurity. An article in The Indy Northern Rivers related how Foodbank's 2024 Hunger Report revealed that two million Australian households are experiencing severe food insecurity and do not have enough to feed their families. Kyogle Local Government Area is in the top five areas in the state experiencing food insecurity. Kyogle Together's General Manager Lea Hine said food waste and food insecurity are two sides of the same coin. "While fresh, edible food often goes to waste, many individuals and families in the Kyogle region struggle to access affordable nutrition," Lea said. "Nourishing Kyogle bridges this gap by rescuing surplus food and redistributing it to those in need." Nourishing Kyogle is supported by the Environment Protection Authority and the NSW Government. Kyogle Together's refrigerated ute picks up food donations and delivers them to local food relief programs, community meals and individuals in need. Since its inception, this innovative program has rescued and distributed half a tonne of food, or the equivalent of 1,400 meals.

#### **LISMORE SAMSON FITNESS CHALLENGE IN ITS 15TH YEAR**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Recovery, and Minister for the North Coast)**—I WISH to congratulate organisers on the tremendous success of the 2025 Lismore Samson Fitness Challenge, now celebrating its 15th year of raising funds for the Our Kids charity. A shout-out to Team Samson – Jason Clarke, Jason Honeyman, Luke Hoolihan, Kylie Newton, Samantha Gordon and Rebekka Battista – who devoted many hours into making the 2025 Samson the best yet. Congratulations to the hundreds of competitors, volunteers including the 41st Battalion Royal NSW Regiment, and a long list of sponsors on their participation in the event held at Lismore's Hepburn Park on March 1. A special mention also goes to MC Janet Bowden for keeping the schedule of gruelling challenges running smoothly. Our Kids helps sick children receive medical care locally. Funds raised this year will go towards the purchase of medical equipment to help with the treatment of retinal issues in premature babies. Thanks to the Samson Naming Partner NBN News; Our Kids platinum partners Southern Cross University, Hurfords, See Civil, Connect Business Solutions, North Coast Petroleum, and We Hire; and media partners NBN Television, ABC North Coast and the Lismore App. Another 54 Samson sponsors also got behind this year's Challenge.

#### **HARIRI CHICKENS**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to congratulate Hariri Chickens for winning the Fast Food/Takeaway Shop category at the Australian Small Business Champion Awards and recognise their long time dedication to providing good service, and chicken, to the community. Mohamad 'Moe' Hariri, owner of Hariri Chickens, prioritises consistency and quality, ensuring every meal reflects his unwavering standards. His dedication to excellence fosters customer loyalty and love for his brand. Moe is committed to quality, willingly covering extra costs to ensure his customers receive uncompromised meals. During shortages, he paid triple for

lettuce and later more on potatoes rather than settling for lower-quality alternatives. Moe plans to expand his business by opening a second shop soon, with more to follow. However, he prioritises quality over rapid growth, ensuring he never takes on more than he can properly manage. Again, I congratulate Hariri Chickens for winning the Fast Food/Takeaway Shop category at the Australian Small Business Champion Awards and recognise their long-time dedication to providing good service to the community.

#### **JOAN MARIE FITZGERALD 100TH BIRTHDAY**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to offer my congratulations to Joan on her remarkable 100th Birthday milestone. Joan grew up in Sydney during the great depression and through World War 2. Armed with her diploma from St Patricks Business College, she travelled to and worked through the UK and Ireland in 1952 and 1953. She attended the Coronation parade for Queen Elizabeth II and married an Irishman, Oliver Aloysious (Alo) Fitzgerald, eventually settling in Portarlington, Ireland, where they started a family with three children. In 1961, Joan, Alo and their young family emigrated back to Australia where she and Alo (until his untimely death in 1973) brought up their three children. Joan juggled a series of jobs as a single mother to raise, and tertiary educate her children. Throughout her life and to this day, Joan has the ability to charm everyone who comes in contact with her with her wit and stories of a life well lived. In 2018 Joan moved from her house in Hurstville to St Patrick's Green Kogarah, as one of the first residents, where she has many friends and lives an independent life.

#### **GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I wish to recognise and commend Georges River Life Care for their outstanding and unwavering commitment to supporting vulnerable individuals and families across Kogarah. For years, their dedication to delivering compassionate, practical assistance has had a profound impact-providing food relief, counselling, crisis support, and pathways to recovery for those facing hardship. One of their most significant initiatives, the upcoming Sleeping Rough 2025, annual event shines a spotlight on the often invisible issue of homelessness. By inviting the community to experience just one night without shelter, Georges River Life Care is not only raising critical awareness but also generating vital funds to support those at risk of or experiencing homelessness. This event reminds the community of the importance of empathy, action, and social responsibility. The organisation's tireless work has strengthened the fabric of the community and fostered a spirit of care, inclusion, and resilience. I honour their leadership and ongoing efforts to restore dignity and hope to those who need it most. I encourage all community members and local businesses to support the cause and stand in solidarity with the organisation as they continue to lead change where it matters most.

#### **JACKIE STERNFELD**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I commend Jackie Sternfeld, Fundraising Coordinator for the Artarmon Public School P&C, for her extraordinary contribution to her school community. Jackie has raised more than \$60,000 through her tireless efforts coordinating fundraising initiatives for Artarmon Public School. Her dedication, creativity and persistence have made a significant and lasting impact on the school's ability to enhance learning resources, upgrade facilities and support student wellbeing. Fundraising at this scale does not happen by chance — it takes careful planning, strong community engagement and countless hours of volunteer effort. Jackie has led this work with energy and heart, rallying parents, teachers and local businesses to achieve outstanding results. Public schools thrive when communities come together, and Jackie embodies the spirit of what a strong and active P&C can achieve. Her work is helping to build not just a better school, but a stronger and more connected community. On behalf of the Willoughby electorate, I thank Jackie Sternfeld for her remarkable service and congratulate her on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **FIRE STATION OPEN DAY**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—Willoughby Fire Station hosted a successful and engaging Fire Station Open Day on 10 May 2025, welcoming local families to learn about fire safety and meet our emergency services personnel. The event welcomed local families into the station to learn about fire safety, meet the firefighters, and see firsthand the equipment and vehicles that help keep our community safe. These open days are more than just educational—they build vital connections between our emergency services and the communities they serve. It was a great sausage sizzle too! The Willoughby team went above and beyond to make the day informative and welcoming, inspiring young minds and showcasing the professionalism and dedication of our Fire and Rescue NSW personnel. On behalf of the Willoughby electorate, I thank the entire crew for their service and for opening their doors to the community in such a meaningful way.

#### **WILLOUGHBY PARK COMMUNITY PLANNING**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—Willoughby Park was the site of a recent community planting day on Saturday 10 May, bringing residents together to green and beautify one of our most loved public spaces. This

family-friendly event brought residents together in a shared effort to green and beautify our local environment. Participants worked alongside Council's green spaces team, learning practical gardening techniques and helping to revitalise one of our most loved community parks. Events like this do more than improve our public spaces - they foster connection, encourage environmental stewardship, and strengthen the bonds of our neighbourhood. I thank Rachel Maldonado and the team at Willoughby Council for their work in making the day such a success, and I commend the many volunteers who gave their time and energy to support our local environment. I was proud to be there with my son!

#### **CHINESE AUSTRALIAN SERVICES SOCIETY HARMONY WEEK CELEBRATION**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, Minister for Sport, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism)**—I rise to commend the organizational efforts and participation of the Chinese Australian Services Society (CASS) in the Harmony Week celebrations. CASS has been a beacon of support within my community that has worked hard to foster social cohesion and provide essential services including aged care, health, child, disability and vocational training services. Recently, CASS participated in Harmony Week with their Harmony in Diversity performances which included dances, choir, and instrumental ensembles. The festivities included Tai Chi, Aboriginal dance, Vietnamese singing, Line dance, Bollywood and Guitar ensemble performances. Although being founded on unity within the Chinese community, it is clear to see that CASS has a deep respect and appreciation of other cultures. I commend CASS for this event and all of their efforts in my community.

#### **NEW POLICE RECRUITS FOR ST GEORGE**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, Minister for Sport, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism)**—I congratulate and welcome the new recruits joining the St George Police Area Command. There are many ways to serve our community. These officers have chosen a path that demands courage and sacrifice. Every day, they put themselves at risk to help keep us safe. St George has recently welcomed eleven outstanding young men and women as probationary constables. After months of intensive training at the Goulburn academy, away from home, they've earned their place with grit and determination. The 2025 intake is the largest for the NSW Police Force in more than a decade. I am proud that so many new recruits will now begin their journey here in St George. These young officers are choosing a life of public service, responsibility, and purpose. I commend their commitment and thank them for stepping forward. I wish them every success in what will be a fulfilling career of service.

#### **VOLUNTEER LIFESAVERS**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—With the conclusion of the Surf Lifesaving NSW Volunteer Lifesavers Patrolling Season on April 28th this year, I would like to recognise and thank the many volunteer lifesavers in the Tweed Electorate. These dedicated volunteers do an invaluable job of patrolling our beaches and keeping swimmers and beach users safe. We are blessed with beautiful beaches in the Tweed, but our coastline can also be dangerous. The presence of volunteer lifesavers on our beaches provides safe and monitored places for swimmers to enjoy the beach. As always, I encourage all swimmers to swim between the flags. Thank you our volunteer lifesavers for your service to our Tweed communities, your contribution to keeping us safe is greatly appreciated.

#### **CELEBRATING LOCAL TALENT: REMY FAINT NAMED ARCHIBALD PRIZE FINALIST**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I want to celebrate the outstanding achievement of former Mosman High School student, Remy Faint, who has been selected as a finalist in the prestigious 2025 Archibald Prize. Remy's portrait, titled Ramesh (with mask), depicts renowned Sri Lankan-born Australian artist Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, a fellow finalist in this year's Wynne Prize. Remy and Ramesh share a longstanding friendship and mentorship, with Remy describing their relationship as a meeting of minds where their different life experiences, ages, and cultural backgrounds help them both grow. This recognition places Remy among a distinguished group of artists, selected from an impressive 904 entries, to be showcased at the Art Gallery of New South Wales from 10 May to 17 August 2025. Remy's achievement is a testament to the strength of public education and the nurturing of young talent within our community. I commend Remy for his dedication to his craft.

#### **VASILISA SEROVA NAMED NSW RUSSIAN LANGUAGE AMBASSADOR**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Congratulations to Vasilisa Serova, a Year 10 student at Mosman High School, on being named the NSW Russian Language Ambassador by the NSW Department of Education. Vasilisa was selected for this prestigious honour from a competitive pool of 85 students across New South Wales. Her appointment is a testament to her exceptional dedication to language learning, her academic achievement, and her leadership in promoting cross-cultural understanding. As the NSW Russian Language

Ambassador, Vasilisa will have the opportunity to represent the state in encouraging the study of Russian and the value of learning additional languages. Vasilisa's success is a proud moment for the school, her family, and our wider community. Her leadership and enthusiasm for language learning are an inspiration to other young people. I extend my warmest congratulations to Vasilisa and wish her every success in this exciting and important role.

#### **MOSMAN CRICKET CLUB PLAYERS' PLAYER AWARDS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Congratulations to the outstanding players of Mosman Cricket Club, whose exceptional performances throughout the season were recognised at the recent Players' Player of the Year awards. These prestigious awards carry special significance, as they are voted on by teammates who acknowledge the players who consistently lead by example, inspire their teams, and perform at the highest level week in and week out. This year's winners demonstrated remarkable commitment and skill across all grades. In the Metro Cup, Karan Koul stood out with 26 wickets at an average of 14.12. In 5th Grade, Nick Slack earned recognition for his 12 wickets at an average of 26. 4th Grade's Aidan Boulton was exceptional with 369 runs at 30.75 and 13 wickets at 17.92. Ed Bernasconi in 3rd Grade was outstanding with 24 wickets at an average of 16.63. 2nd Grade's Matt Junk contributed with 25 wickets at an average of 24.48, and in 1st Grade, Matthew Moran impressed with 459 runs at 41.73, including two centuries, alongside 21 wickets at 30.29. Your dedication, teamwork, and remarkable achievements have made Mosman Cricket Club proud. Congratulations on an exceptional season, and we look forward to your continued success!

#### **EIGHTH ANNUAL OLMC WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP FORUM**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—There is something truly special about Our Lady of Mercy College's annual Women in Leadership Forum. It's a powerful moment where the school community celebrates the amazing accomplishments of women in various fields. For me, the real magic lies in seeing the impact their stories have on the current students -demonstrating that their aspirations have no boundaries. This year, as part of the 8th annual forum, I would like to recognise a few incredible women: Georgie Nichols, Chief Revenue Officer at Mama Mia; Jacqueline Connor, Architect at SJB ; Dr. Kate Patterson, Director at the Centre for Veterinary Education, University of Sydney; and Jaynee Wehbe, former OLMC Head Girl and now the Global Creative Director at Triangl. Jaynee's journey, studying something completely unrelated to her current career, is a reminder that following your heart can also reap rewards. I would also like to recognise the Gabby Fleming and Ashwini Aravinthan for emceeing the event. Your hosting truly elevated the evening. I look forward to seeing more girls, from OLMC and beyond, achieving great things. Thank you, OLMC, for making this forum a tradition that inspires us all.

#### **MIHIKAA SINGAL**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—It is a genuine pleasure to be able to recognise Mihikaa Singal this National Volunteer Week, a bright and enthusiastic Parramatta local who joined my office as a volunteer in February 2025. Mihikaa is currently pursuing her Masters of International Relations from the University of Sydney. Over the past three months, she has become a familiar and welcome presence, showing up every week with a willingness to pitch in wherever needed. Volunteers like Mihikaa help keep the wheels turning, especially when things get busy or unpredictable. From managing administrative tasks to learning the ropes of how a state electorate office operates, she has approached everything with curiosity, professionalism and good humour. Mihikaa has been such a steady hand that this month, we welcomed her on board as a Short-Term Relief Electorate Officer - a step up that speaks volumes about her commitment and capability. She has also joined me at community events, capturing moments and taking notes on the go. Mihikaa, thank you for your energy, initiative and cheerful presence. It has been wonderful having you as part of the team! Thank you for choosing us.

#### **NEVER MISS A BEAT THIS HEART WEEK 2025**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—This year, from the 5th to the 11th of May marks Australia's National Heart Health Awareness Week. It was great to meet some of the team in Parliament to chat about the importance of getting a heart health check. The Heart Foundation is urging Australians to "Never miss a BEAT" with their heart health. You can get a Medicare-subsidised 20-minute check-up with your GP to assess your risk of a heart attack or stroke. It's important to raise awareness of the risks of heart disease and starting a conversation about reducing heart health risk. It is alarming that Australia's leading cause of death is heart disease, and one Australian experiences a heart attack or stroke every 4 minutes. The Heart Foundation has a wealth of online resources, with extensive information on healthy eating, exercise and habits, on First Nation's health and accessing medical help for heart disease. Thank you to the Heart Foundation and to Heart of the Nation for your extensive advocacy for this issue, it is a tremendous contribution to public health.

### AUSTRALIAN MARONITE COMMUNITY NETWORK

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I acknowledge the incredible generosity and community spirit shown at the recent Charity Dinner hosted by the Australian Maronite Community Network in support of cancer research at the Institute of Academic Surgery, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. It was a privilege to attend and speak with so many members of the Maronite community—whose warmth, resilience and deep sense of service were on full display. The evening was not only a fundraising success, but also a powerful reminder of the strength and unity of our multicultural society. Special thanks go to the AMCN organisers, the generous donors, and Associate Professor Charbel Sandroussi for his moving words and dedication to saving lives through research and surgery. AMCN is a proudly proactive and community-driven organisation that has been quietly achieving great things since its formal registration ten years ago. At the event AMCN reflected on its impressive achievements, which range from fostering unity and connection within the Australian Maronite community to providing vital financial support to those in need—both in Australia and in Lebanon. I thank everyone involved for their commitment to a better, healthier future. It was an honour to be part of such a special night.

### ST FLORIAN'S DAY AND INTERNATIONAL FIREFIGHTERS DAY

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—Firefighters celebrate 4 May as St Florian's Feast Day as well as International Firefighters' Day. This has been a tradition among Firefighters for more than 150 years. I want to recognise firefighters at local fire stations who were honoured for heroic actions on St Florian's Day 2025. Chester Hill Fire Station's Brendan Ford and Craig Smart who both received a Unit Commendation for Meritorious Service. Wentworthville Fire Station's Cheyne Jobson, George Gittany and Alexander Egan who all received a Unit Commendation for Meritorious Service. Yennora Fire Station's John Duff, Mathew Morrison and Karen Moore who all received a Unit Commendation for Meritorious Service. I know that every day our firefighters demonstrate extraordinary bravery, putting others first as they carry out their firefighting duties. I am proud of these exceptional people and their commitment to protecting our community and NSW. I thank the firefighters who were recognised, and their colleagues, who do what they do to keep us safe.

### GRANVILLE TRAIN DISASTER - 48TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—On 18 January 2025, I joined many from the Granville community and far and wide to mark 48 years since the Granville Train Disaster—the worst rail tragedy in Australian history. We paused to remember the 83 lives lost, the hundreds injured, and the lasting trauma carried by families, survivors, and first responders. The events of 1977 left a permanent scar on our community—but also revealed its incredible strength. Locals ran toward the wreckage to help strangers. Emergency services worked tirelessly through unimaginable conditions. The rebuilt Bold Street bridge stands above a memorial wall that ensures the names and stories of those lost will never be forgotten. Each year, we gather not only to grieve but to honour the humanity and heroism shown that day. We remember the victims not as statistics, but as loved ones—mothers, fathers, children, neighbours—whose absence is still deeply felt. I pay special tribute to the Granville Train Disaster Association, including Meredith Knight, Gary Raymond, Barry Gobbe, Tina Morgan, and many others whose work ensures this tragedy is never erased from memory. Your commitment to truth, remembrance, and healing is a gift to our community.

### THE TEA COLLECTIVE

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—Becci Fowler from The Tea Collective is one of Newcastle's greatest success stories, from Mayfield to the QVB in Sydney. The Tea Collective's latest achievement is winning the Outstanding Specialised Retail Business category at the 2025 City Suburbs Local Business Awards. This win was unexpected for Becci from day dot. The Tea Collective was unknowingly nominated for this award and visited by secret judges before being named a finalist. With nine other finalists, Becci did not expect to win and had no speech prepared. But this accolade is no shock to me or to the many others in Newcastle that love the brews from The Tea Collective. Becci and her team are very deserving of this award and I'm sure it won't be the last.

### MEREWETHER SURF LIFESAVING CLUB

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—Our volunteer surf lifesavers are champions of the community, keeping everyone safe on our beautiful Newcastle beaches. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the long service of Merewether Surf Lifesaving Club members who recently reached milestone years in their membership. Mr Norman Rodgers, Mr Kevin Buckley, Mr David Hoar, Ms Rosemary Dan, and Mr Phillip Cooke have this year received their National Medal for 15 years of voluntary surf life saving at Merewether SLSC. 15 years is a massive achievement and so many lives saved in our beaches. Thank you. I also want to recognise Mr Iain Kelso, who has this year received his National Medal for 35 years of voluntary surf life saving at Merewether SLSC. What an impressive feat! Well done Iain, your dedication is inspiring.

**TONY AND CAROL ALLEN**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I would like to thank and congratulate Oatley residents, Tony and Carol Allen, who have received recognition locally as a part of National Volunteer Week, which is taking place this week. Since arriving from the UK in 2013, Tony and Carol have become champions for the local environment. Each month, they contribute to seven bushcare sites, removing invasive weeds, clearing rubbish and planting native species to restore and protect the local ecosystem. Their journey began with a simple walk through the bush and a neighbour's suggestion to get involved. Since then, both have shown up week in and week out, to lead by example in caring for our environment. Looking after our local environment is so important, especially when we live in an area as beautiful as this one. The St George area truly is a hidden gem in terms of its natural beauty. Tony and Carol's efforts have rightly earned them recognition and I thank them for their continued service. They set an example of how local action can help preserve our natural heritage for future generations.

**OZ ARAB MEDIA - GALA DINNER**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to thank and congratulate Oz Arab media, who recently held their 3rd annual Gala Dinner. It was great to be joined by my colleagues, Mark Speakman, Damien Tudehope, Tina Ayyad, Robyn Preston and Jordan Lane on such an important occasion.. Oz Arab Media has achieved so much over the last year and the Gala Dinner presented an opportunity to celebrate this. They are one of the largest Arabic media organisations in Australia, enabling Arabic-speaking individuals to read the news in their own language. In a world where information moves faster than ever, multicultural media plays an important role in ensuring no community is left behind. Organisations like Oz Arab media are often the places people learn about developing stories that impact their lives, from local stories to bigger issues going on overseas. I would like to thank the entire team from Oz Arab Media, including Remy Wehbe, Director and Co-Founder and Charbel Tadros, Media Manager. The work that you are all doing is nothing short of exceptional. I look forward to continuing to work alongside Oz Arab Media well into the future!

**LIONS CLUB OF LUGARNO - BIKE DONATIONS**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the Lions Club of Lugarno, who have shown their commitment to improving the lives of young people living with a disability in our community. The Lugarno Lions recently donated two disability-friendly bikes to four-year-old Chelsea and two-year-old Liam, allowing them to both experience the thrill of riding a bike for the first time. Chelsea, whose limited trunk control had prevented her from riding a bike, has now received a specialised Therapy Terrier Trike, thanks to a significant donation from the Lugarno Lions. This will allow her to ride safely, whilst also helping to build core strength and creating opportunities for social inclusion. I also recognise Liam, who is living with cerebral palsy. Liam received a Theraplay Imp Tricycle at a cost of \$8,531, with the Oatley Lions Club also contributing \$2000 to this fantastic cause. I would like to congratulate the team from the Lugarno Lions who made this possible. In particular, I would like to thank Greg English, a long-time champion of mobility projects, and President Mike Butler for their exceptional work.

**CENTRAL COAST WOMEN'S SHED**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It was wonderful to recently celebrate the one-year anniversary of the Central Coast Women's Shed (WSCC) on International Women's Day, 8 March, alongside 70–80 members and guests. The celebration was MC'd by Katherine Watkinson and we heard from Maree Salmon, a regular presenter, and attendee, who delivered a heartfelt speech on what the Shed means to her. We also heard from Sheridan Farmer of Shoebox Revolution, whose charitable work continues to uplift those in need across the Coast. The new Chair, Gretchen Miller, shared touching words (and a few happy tears), underscoring the powerful impact WSCC has had over its first year. Since opening, the Shed has grown rapidly, now offering six low-cost weekly workshops, with new groups forming, including a book club and bushwalking club. With over 8,000 Facebook members and hundreds attending workshops, it's clear this space is creating lasting connections. Congratulations to the Committee, volunteers, and every woman involved—your work is building a stronger, more connected Central Coast community.

**CENTRAL COAST GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I take this opportunity to congratulate Central Coast Grammar School on its 40th anniversary—a truly special milestone marked by a celebration of legacy, community, and vision. This momentous occasion honours the pioneers whose dedication built the foundation of CCGS, and the vibrant celebration reflected the heart of the school through inspiring performances and meaningful connections. I also extend our warmest congratulations to CCGS for being named an Excellence Nominee in two prestigious categories at the 2025 Australian Education Awards: Primary School of the Year (Non-Government) and Best Co-Curricular Program for the Cambodia Service Program. These nominations are a testament to the school's

unwavering commitment to nurturing students of strong character and purpose. The Primary School recognition celebrates a student-centred, evidence-based approach, where nature-rich learning environments ensure every child is known and empowered. The Cambodia Service Program exemplifies CCGS's dedication to experiential learning that fosters empathy, leadership, and global citizenship. To be recognised nationally in two competitive categories highlights the strength of CCGS's vision and its enduring impact on students and the broader community. Congratulations on 40 years of excellence and innovation in education.

#### **GUIDE DOGS NSW/ACT TEAM UP WITH RETURN & EARN**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the great work of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and commend the recent announcement of them becoming the official charity partner for the Return & Earn program across NSW from now until October. This fantastic initiative is a simple way to support both the environment and a life-changing cause. I recently had the pleasure of meeting up again with Jaynie Moloney, the Central Coast Community Engagement Manager of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, who introduced me to Solo—an adorable local guide dog from Terrigal. Solo is the new face of Return & Earn and will be featured on every kiosk across NSW, encouraging people to donate some or all of their recycling refunds to Guide Dogs. It costs over \$50,000 to breed, raise, and train just one guide dog, and every donation makes a real difference in helping Australians with low vision or blindness live more independently. I commend Guide Dogs Australia for their incredible work and encourage everyone on the Central Coast to support this wonderful cause. By recycling with purpose, we can help change lives and protect the environment at the same time.

#### **WOMEN OF BLACKTOWN 2025 - ANNE BENJAMIN**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Anne Benjamin for being recognised in the publication Women of Blacktown 2025, which acknowledges female changemakers and role models in Sydney's west. Anne is an accomplished writer, poet, researcher, consultant, educator, mother, wife, grandmother, sister and friend. A woman of faith, she is a recipient of the Papal Award of Dame of St Gregory the Great, and Honorary Fellow, University of Western Sydney. She has published extensively, with awards for poetry, short stories and non-fiction. Anne has served Catholic education for over fifty years as classroom teacher, teacher educator, curriculum designer, research and system leader, including as Executive Director, Catholic Schools Diocese of Parramatta. She has worked with Catholic educators in Australia, Papua New Guinea and Tonga. Anne is a vibrant contributor to the diversity of Western Sydney. Alongside her husband, Blacktown City Councillor Susai Benjamin OAM, she has developed a close affinity with Blacktown over many years. I would like to personally congratulate Anne Benjamin OAM on this wonderful acknowledgement, part of a wonderful celebration of the women who make Prospect Electorate, Blacktown City and Western Sydney such an amazing place to live and work.

#### **WOMEN OF BLACKTOWN 2025 - KATHIE COLLINS OAM**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Kathie Collins OAM for being recognised in the publication, Women of Blacktown 2025, which acknowledges female changemakers and role models in Sydney's west. Working at Blacktown Library in the 1970s, Kathie's life changed forever when she heard Gough Whitlam speak across the road at Bowman Hall, inspiring her to join the Labor Party and run for council. She was first elected in 2001 and served 5 non-consecutive terms on Blacktown City Council, working closely with local residents and supporting our Western Sydney community. Kathie also proudly chaired no fewer than six Council advisory committees during her time as Councillor. Born in Lake Cargelligo and a graduate of the University of Technology Sydney, Kathie was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 2008 and recognised for her extensive work in the community, local government and charities. I would like to personally congratulate Kathie Collins OAM on this wonderful acknowledgement, part of a wonderful celebration of the women who make Prospect Electorate, Blacktown City and Western Sydney such an amazing place to live and work.

#### **WOMEN OF BLACKTOWN 2025 - TRESA DIING**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Tresa Diing for being recognised in the publication, Women of Blacktown 2025, which acknowledges female changemakers and role models in Sydney's west. Born in Sudan, Tresa migrated to Australia in the late 1990s along with her six children, her husband's niece and her younger son, before being later joined by her son. As a single parent with little command of English when she arrived as a refugee, Tresa obtained Certificates IV in Community Services and Disability and Aged Care with the help of the Catholic Church and her local Prospect Electorate and Western Sydney community. Tresa has worked extensively as a volunteer with the Immigration office to help new migrant and refugee families settle in Australia, making a difference in people's lives and motivating her to continue her community work. She has helped to empower women, teaching important skills such as sewing and organising English classes for beginners. I would like to personally congratulate Tresa Diing

on this wonderful acknowledgement, part of a wonderful celebration of the women who make Prospect Electorate, Blacktown City and Western Sydney such an amazing place to live and work.

#### **ST ANDREW'S KINDERGARTEN**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to acknowledge St Andrew's Kindergarten, a local pre-school in Abbotsford that has been providing outstanding early education for our wonderful young people since 1973. For more than 50 years, St Andrew's Kindergarten has become a beloved part of our local community, ensuring that each child is offered the best start to their educational journey. They have created a welcoming environment where students are taught a love of learning, play, and are encouraged to grow socially. The success of St Andrew's is a testament to the quality leadership of Director Sue Nicholls and the hard-working staff of early childhood educators. I sincerely thank them for their commitment, patience, and care that they provide each day. Their dedication has created a nurturing and inspiring environment where children are eager to learn and are supported in all that they do. Thank you to all the staff, families and students at St Andrew's Kindergarten who have helped shape such a warm and welcoming learning environment for our young students. I wish them all the very best.

#### **VALE ANTHONY NORMAN ("TONY") RE**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—I acknowledge the passing of Mr. Anthony Norman Re, a man whose life leaves an enduring impression on our community. Tony passed away peacefully on 21 March 2025, at the age of 86, following a brief illness. Born in 1938, Tony was a devoted husband to Lyn for 64 years and a proud father to David, Jonathan, Margaret, and Stephen. Beyond his family, Tony was a dedicated member of the Bankstown community. The Bankstown Sports Athletics Club has lost a remarkable member. Joining in 1984, Tony was a long-standing figure, serving as President from 1990-1993 and honoured as a Life Member. His commitment earned him a Bankstown Sports Club Service to Sport medal. Furthermore, Tony was a dedicated member of the Australian Labor Party for 45 years, joining in 1980. He volunteered extensively and served in various executive positions in the Georges Hall branch, Bankstown state electorate council and Blaxland federal electorate council. Tony Re was a man of significant contributions, whose legacy of service and dedication will long be remembered. I extend my deepest condolences to Lyn and the entire Re family.

#### **ASPECT (AUTISM SPECTRUM AUSTRALIA)**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I was delighted to recently visit Aspect in Corrimal to see the children enjoying the autism-friendly water play playground equipment made possible through securing Community Building Partnership funding. This project represents a step forward in creating an inclusive and sensory-friendly outdoor environment for the students. The new water play equipment is designed specifically to provide a safe, engaging, and therapeutic experience, encouraging sensory exploration, social interaction, and physical activity in a way that respects the unique needs of each child. During my visit, it was heartening to see the excitement and joy the equipment brought to the students, highlighting the positive impact such thoughtful resources have on their development and well-being. This project not only enhances the playground but also strengthens the community's commitment to accessibility and inclusion. Aspect Corrimal's dedication to supporting children on the autism spectrum is truly inspiring. I extend my deepest gratitude to everyone involved—devoted Principal, Ms Rowena Perritt to the amazing staff and committed teachers and families at Aspect Corrimal—for their collaboration and vision. Together, we are building a more supportive environment where every child can thrive.

#### **MATT THORNTON**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to acknowledge NSW SES Hawkesbury volunteer Matt Thornton of Hawkesbury. Matt participated in a multi-agency team in the UK, representing NSW in the United Kingdom Rescue Organisation Challenge. The NSW team was successful in several challenges, including winning first place in both the Water Rescue Challenge and internationally in the trauma and vehicle extraction challenges. Mr Thornton participated in the road crash rescue team, utilising his skills to perform various challenges and tasks in each timeframe. One such scenario involved was for the team to retrieve two individuals trapped under overturned cars, remarkably completing the task in fourteen out of the twenty allocated minutes. Matt spoke highly of this experience, noting that some techniques and approaches learned by other participants are ones that he plans to utilise back in Hawkesbury, teaching fellow volunteers and aiming to enhance the services provided during emergency rescues. Congratulations to Matt and all NSW representatives who participated in this challenge. The work that the SES volunteers do is vital in the community, and it is very special that the skills and knowledge can be shared between nations to improve emergency service responses. Thank you, Mr Speaker.



### SARAH CASSIM

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Hawkesbury resident Sarah Cassim who supports Hawkesbury in a variety of ways, demonstrating her leadership skills and passion for community in all endeavours. Being a founder of Hawkesbury Women in Business, Sarah advocates for females to take part in professional roles, encouraging them to embrace their skills and ideas in the business and organisation field. The Women in Business organisation of Hawkesbury started with a few members and now has over 1000, with Sarah's dedication and passion being at the forefront of this achievement. In her time with community, Sarah has also shared that she advocates strongly for mental health support, pushing for hope, guidance and support to create long-term sustainable change in the community. On behalf of Hawkesbury, I congratulate Sarah on her achievements and advocacy for others. Her contribution to the Hawkesbury community has been stellar thus far and I wish her all the best in future endeavours. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

### RICHMOND PLAYERS

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the Richmond Players, a drama society in the heart of Hawkesbury. Operating for decades now, the organisation has provided plenty of entertainment and connection among community, evident through various awards received. Most recently, the team won the Arts and Culture award at the 2025 Australia Day Awards. In 1952, the Richmond Players was formed through the Richmond Branch of the Country Women's Association. From here, the group produced plays and musicals each year making it one of the longest, continually operating drama groups in New South Wales. Nowadays, the Players produce three shows each year and other special events for the community. They showcase amazing talents of residents within the district and encourage involvement of young people, particularly HSC students to assist in developing shows and increase their confidence in performing arts. Congratulations to the Richmond Players on receiving this award. Their ongoing dedication to the performing arts is an asset to the communities of Hawkesbury. I wish the Players all the best in their upcoming productions and endeavours.

### CUBBY COLLEGE CONCORD

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to sincerely congratulate Cubby College Childcare Centre on their well-deserved win at the 2025 Inner West Local Business Awards in the Early Childhood Centre category. Cubby College is a long day care centre located in Concord that has been recognised for their outstanding commitment to providing quality early learning for our young people. The dedicated team of educators at Cubby College have created a nurturing environment where students are given the best possible foundation for their educational journey. Early learning and childcare is such an important time for young minds and it is encouraging to see their creativity and curiosity flourish in a safe, happy and nurturing centre. I acknowledge Cubby College owners Mr & Mrs Daoud as well as Mr & Mrs Malek who operate the centre in partnership. I also acknowledge the entire hardworking team, including management, educational leaders, educators, chefs and admin staff. Their dedication to providing a learning environment where each child is encouraged to grow socially, emotionally, and intellectually is truly commendable. Congratulations to the entire Cubby College team on this well-deserved recognition. I wish them all the very best.

### PASTICCERIA PAPA

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to sincerely congratulate Pasticceria Papa on their well-deserved win at the 2025 Inner West Local Business Awards in the Bakery/Cake Business category. Pasticceria Papa is a locally renowned Italian-style Pasticceria that has become an institution in our local community. Pasticceria Papa creates amazing and fresh food everyday for its customers. From their delicious Italian pastries, cakes delicacies, desserts, pizzas, arancini, bread, focaccias, panini, and gelato – there is truly something for everyone! Since first opening their doors, they have expanded to two locations in Five Dock and Haberfield where everything is baked fresh daily. I acknowledge Mr Salvatore Papa and wife Josie, and their children Carmelina and Gianluca as well as Alex and Lucrezia Papa for their hard work and dedication in sharing the Italian cuisine and culture to our community. The success of Papa's is a testament to their commitment to providing outstanding customer service and producing quality Italian desserts. Congratulations to Salvatore, Josie, and the entire Papa's team of hardworking staff on this truly outstanding recognition, a second year in a row. I wish you all the best always.

### KIRRAWEE PUBLIC SCHOOL P&C

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I recognise the outstanding members of Kirrawee Public School's Parents and Citizens Association for their hard work and dedication to fundraising. The remarkable members of the Parents and Citizens Association go above and beyond in their efforts to raise funds in support of this wonderful school and its students. Not letting any opportunity pass, members of the Parents and Citizens Association were feeding the long lines of voters throughout the recent Federal election day with a mouth-watering

648 democracy sausages, 20kg of onions and tables full of sweets, raising over \$3,000 for the school. I take this opportunity to recognise the incredible members of the Parents and Citizens Association. I acknowledge Terri Papparizos, Sherri Cox, Jessica Chappell, Caitlin Riordan, Matt Riordan, Ceila Lalor, Claire Davidson, Ed Davidson, Kirsty Mcloone, Sophie Namur, Danielle Davey, Sue Christie-Cox, Zoe Dennis, Danielle Oxtan, Jacqui Yermeyev, Natasha Lingin, Sam Ericom, Jeff Patterson, Amy Murray, Nicole Humble, and Jess Lainson for their efforts. I commend the members of Kirrawee Public School's Parents and Citizens Association for their ongoing efforts to improve our community.

#### **BARRY HIGGINS**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge Barry Higgins of Sylvania for completing the powerful 40 For the Future Challenge. As part of the challenge, Barry pledged to take meaningful action for our planet in pursuit of a fairer future for all. He partnered with UnitingWorld—a highly respected charity that works alongside communities across the Pacific, Africa and Asia. On 12 April, Barry took on a 40-kilometre paddle, tracing an impressive route from Sylvania to Kurnell and then down the Georges River to Fitzpatrick Park. The remarkable effort was not only a personal milestone but also a moving act of support for Pacific communities adapting to the impacts of climate change. Building on the 20-kilometre paddle he completed last year, Barry raised over \$2,000 to support vital projects such as disaster preparedness, reforestation and sustainability farming. In doing so, he's also helped shine a spotlight on Australia's responsibility to support our neighbours and make meaningful action towards a more sustainable future. I commend Barry Higgins for his extraordinary efforts in raising critical funds and making waves for climate action.

#### **1ST TAMBOURINE BAY SEA SCOUTS**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—I wish to commend the 1st Tambourine Bay Sea Scouts for their pilgrimage to Splendour Rock for the ANZAC Day service to commemorate the Australian Soldiers of World War II. I extend my appreciation to the Scouts, their Leaders and families for keeping this noble tradition going.

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