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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 7 May 2015

The Speaker (The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock) took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION AMENDMENT (VALIDATION) BILL 2015

Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.

ASSENT TO BILL

Assent to the following bill reported:

Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Validation) Bill 2015

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

The SPEAKER: Order! Generally in this Parliament 10 minutes has been enough time for the giving of notices of motion. It is early on in this term, but I give a word of warning that in future I may impose a word limit on motions in order to allow all members to proceed in the allotted time. I ask members to consider that. To those members who have criticised others about the length of their motions, I recall a bipartisan motion that was double the length of any other motion I have heard. The member for Fairfield will remember that. For me, it set a clear precedent. But, given the fact that the giving of notices of motions exceeded 10 minutes today and two members who wished to give notice of their motions were unable to do so, I put members on notice that I may consider imposing a word limit in future.

HUNTER, CENTRAL COAST AND SYDNEY STORM DAMAGE

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) [10.13 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Expresses its sincere condolences to the families and friends of Robina MacDonald, Colin John Webb and Brian Alexander Wilson of Dungog, and Anne Jarman of Gillieston Heights, who all passed in the recent storm and flood events in the Hunter.
- (2) Acknowledges the hardship felt by the families affected by the devastating storms in the Hunter, Central Coast and Sydney areas.
- (3) Expresses its gratitude to the workers and volunteers of the emergency services, SES, network power companies, and the efforts by the community in the clean-up efforts following those recent storms.

On Tuesday 21 April the Hunter region experienced one of the worst storm and flood events in its history. In my electorate of Upper Hunter, Ms Robin MacDonald, Mr Colin Webb and Mr Brian Wilson passed away as a result of the horrific tragedy that rocked the community of Dungog and the wider electorate. On Thursday 23 April Mrs Anne Jarman also passed away while attempting to travel from Gillieston Heights to Maitland in the electorate of Maitland. No-one expected the storms to bring such devastation, and the ferocity with which the water inundated the town of Dungog in mere hours surprised even the longest-term locals. During the storms

many truly heroic deeds were carried out without fanfare or thought of one's own safety, just an instinctive will to save another's life. At the time of the storms residents of Dungog knew it was something big—different from storms and floods gone by. In fact, it was to be recorded as a one-in-100-year flood event.

People were scrambling to contact others whilst endeavouring to understand and deal with their own situations. Robin MacDonald spoke by phone to Tim Irwin in the early hours to warn him about the impending flood. Tim went about waking neighbours and ensuring their safety. In the meantime, his parents' business, Reliance Motors, was being inundated with water. To put some perspective on this, during the June 2007 long weekend floods—commonly called the "*Pasha Bulker* weekend"—floodwater in the Reliance Motors building reached around 18 inches. During the recent event it reached eight feet. As a result, everything in the building as well as a business that had been operating for more than 60 years was destroyed. Little did Tim know at the time that the person who warned him of the impending disaster was to die just hours later.

On Thursday 23 April the Premier, Deputy Premier, Minister for Emergency Services, State Emergency Service commissioner Adam Dent and I toured the affected areas of Wyong. During the visit we had an opportunity to meet with our wonderful emergency service workers and volunteers, community volunteers, council staff and residents who were affected by the floods and storms. In Dungog four homes were washed away, around 80 were inundated and around 25 were made uninhabitable. Communities are still isolated, and I thank them for their extreme patience in these very trying times. Of course, the saddest result of the event was the loss of life. Some vulnerable members of our community either could not gather sufficient mobility to save themselves or, in the case of Robin MacDonald, died trying to save a beloved pet dog.

Robin MacDonald was an active member of the Dungog community. She was a member of the Dungog Bush Fire Brigade, joining in 1985 and serving until August 1992. It was very much a male-dominated organisation back then, so Robin was really doing something unique. She moved her membership when the State Emergency Service [SES] became active in the Dungog shire. That was where she really came into her own. In 2011 Colin Webb moved to Dungog to be closer to his family, who lived at Ashtonfield near Maitland. The Allison Court unit was one of the only bricks-and-mortar homes he had resided in since his youth. He was extremely happy there.

Brian Wilson was born at Mayfield in September 1942 and was the youngest of 10 children. Brian's parents were battlers and lived in the Newcastle area all their lives. Brian was a Vietnam veteran. Those who served in Vietnam know that it would have been a life-changing experience. For some there was isolation when they returned and others lived with demons and stresses every day. Brian never spoke of his time in Vietnam. He was active in the Dungog RSL Sub-Branch when his health was good. Anzac Day was always very important to Brian, as were the annual Lions Club Diggers dinners. Brian moved to Dungog through his trade as a boilermaker. He was employed to sandblast the pipeline. From an article in the *Maitland Mercury*, dated 23 April, I read:

Anne Jarman had planned to duck into Maitland for some milk. It was only going to be a quick trip. Her neighbours had tried to talk her out of it, but the strong-willed great-grandmother refused to listen. Mrs Jarman, 86, never came home. Her small silver Ford Focus was no match for the fast flowing floodwaters that swept it from Cessnock Road into the deep waters that covered grazing land at Gillieston Heights.

These are a few short words to remind us all that people matter—people who live ordinary lives and leave an extraordinary impression on our communities. We are saddened by their deaths yet heartened by the selfless acts of our emergency service personnel, neighbours and volunteers who care for each other, particularly in our times of greatest need. We owe them all our greatest respect.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [10.19 a.m.]: My electorate of Charlestown and the entire Hunter region recently suffered from a natural disaster the like of which has not been experienced in living memory, as an east-coast low crossed our coast. The sky was grey and ominous; Lake Macquarie was brown and frothing. High waves battered our foreshores causing flooding and damage. Boats shook violently, with some breaking their moorings and sinking. Winds reached speeds of up to 135 kilometres per hour and unending rain saw Lake Macquarie peak at just over one metre above its normal level. According to the NSW State Emergency Service [SES], this storm event is shaping up to be one of the largest—if not the largest—in the history of New South Wales. Enormous thanks go to the hundreds of local SES members working in the Hunter, as well as the hundreds from outside the region.

The most destructive storm ever to affect the region's electricity networks also left some of our residents in the dark for more than a week, and about half of the Hunter lost power at some point. I commend

the tireless and courageous efforts of the emergency services, the emergency staff of Ausgrid and Hunter Water, and the countless volunteers and council staff who continue to work for the benefit of our communities. I commend also the work of the charities in the non-government sector that are ably supporting people across the Hunter who are affected.

The community spirit that has been on show is inspiring and demonstrates the resilience of our communities and the dedication of our volunteers. Hunter Water has worked tirelessly to restore services to suburbs across our city, as uprooted trees broke water mains and cut supply to suburbs. Hunter Water has now restored water to all but a few residents of the region. The force of the floodwater from this event can be seen in the photographs of Hunter Water's main overland pipeline, which has stood for almost 100 years but was easily brushed aside by this destructive storm.

In the era of social media, Facebook and Twitter have played a significant role in disseminating information about school and road closures, as well as water and power supply updates, and services provided by charities and other organisations supporting people who are affected. The experience of people in my electorate of Charlestown was repeated, and even amplified, across the region. The deaths of elderly residents—one in Maitland and three in Dungog—have touched us all. I express my condolences on behalf the residents of the Charlestown electorate to the friends and families of those deceased persons. I think Dungog has particularly touched a nerve in us all. A beautiful and well-loved district in our region is now facing a terrible recovery.

In affected areas such as Gillieston Heights, which has been cut off for a considerable time, the experience is similar to that of Dungog, with loss of life and property losses. The residents of Gillieston Heights held a makeshift Anzac ceremony. They were unable to travel to Maitland for Anzac Day so they staged an Anzac ceremony on what became known as "Gillieston Island". School students in Gillieston Heights are still not able to travel to school by bus due to road closures. They are now into their third week of being unable to get to school. Houses in Wallalong in the Port Stephens electorate are still flooded. Drainage problems are causing immense difficulties for the residents of Wallalong.

If the work required to bring the post-storm status of my electorate of Charlestown back to normal is significant, the work required in Dungog is hard to comprehend. I am proud that councils from across the regions have unanimously offered the assistance and guidance of senior staff members to Dungog Shire Council. The Hunter region will take significant time to recover and heal from recent events. I am pleased that a disaster recovery committee has been established so that all the affected people across the region can be informed and kept up to date with the services being provided and directly feed into decisions that are being made as to where services are provided. Our task is to ensure that the community is better prepared in the future as events such as this massive event in the Hunter become more frequent.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) [10.24 a.m.]: While I stand here as the Minister for Emergency Services, having spent my second and third weeks in the role working alongside the State Emergency Service, the Rural Fire Service, other emergency service agencies and particularly the communities of the Hunter Valley, I pause to make one observation about why I am taken by the devastating losses in the Hunter Valley. Australia is a multicultural society. However, the first culture was its Indigenous peoples. One great thing the Indigenous peoples gave us was the notion of sacred sites. One does not have to be an Aboriginal Australian to have a sacred site. As the member for Cessnock knows, my sacred site is the Hunter Valley. My great-great-grandfather and great-great-uncle joined the military from Cessnock, where they were coalminers. My wife and I spend a lot of time in Port Stephens.

Being part of and seeing the devastation of the 2015 storms was particularly devastating for my family. My father spent a week without power. Those who have lobbied me about power can rest assured that I get it from my father from 6 o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock at night. This loss affected so many families that it will take some time to recover. The loss is even more devastating for the member for Upper Hunter, whose electorate suffered loss of life. As I have told communities across the Hunter, we can replace roads, houses and food but we cannot replace people. So one lesson we take away from these storms is that mitigation is very important. The Productivity Commission is looking into that. It is very courageous—to borrow a phrase—but we need to ensure that in any way possible we mitigate future loss of life as a result of a natural disaster.

I offer to the House some vital statistics because, although they are simply numbers, they reflect appropriately the energy, the effort, the mateship and the support that was offered to the community in the Hunter Valley in 2015. There were 21,500 requests for assistance, 5,000 calls to 000 and 170 flood rescues.

A flood rescue is a dangerous operation undertaken by a SES volunteer. We have people in Australia who are prepared to risk their lives, without any thought of compensation or reward, to save someone else, and 170 of those rescues occurred in 2015. I more than anyone was sad to hear that many communities lost the opportunity to commemorate Anzac Day, but Hunter Valley residents had their own Anzac Day 170 times. At 170 locations in the Hunter Valley Australians were prepared to risk their lives to assist their friends and neighbours.

There is support on offer. Most importantly, we will be highlighting to the communities of the Hunter Valley that we are there for them to provide counselling and financial support. There will be loans; there will be assistance; there will be grants; there will be opportunities for councils to access money. Four minutes will never be enough time in which to display my gratitude and thanks to the people of the Hunter Valley. We are surrounding them with a wall of prayer and support. We will get through this and make the Hunter Valley an even better place in which to live.

Pursuant to resolution, business interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

Pursuant to resolution inaugural speeches proceeded with.

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! On behalf of the new member for The Entrance, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery this morning of Senator for New South Wales Deborah O'Neill; former member for Dobell Michael Lee; former member for Gosford Marie Andrews; former Building Workers Industrial Union of Australia [BWIU] secretary Tom McDonald; former Pastrycooks Union secretary Bob Singh; and local government representatives, family, friends and supporters of the new member. I welcome you to the Legislative Assembly today.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) [10.30 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Mr Deputy-Speaker, I congratulate you on attaining the office of Deputy-Speaker in this Parliament. Twenty-three years ago, in 1992, I had recently moved to the New South Wales Central Coast. In that year I worked on my first Central Coast campaign for the Australian Labor Party. It was a by-election for The Entrance electoral district. The seat was then held by the Liberal Party for the Greiner Government.

At that by-election, Labor's Grant McBride achieved a historic victory over his opponent. The result of that by-election represented a rejection of Greinerism and the dry heartless economics that that government practised. Grant McBride went on to serve The Entrance electorate for 19 years before retiring at the 2011 election—an election which saw the Liberal Party return to The Entrance. At the 28 March election held this year the people of The Entrance voted once more against privatisation. They voted against changes to our TAFE system and they voted to return to The Entrance electorate the Australian Labor Party. I am very proud to have been elected by the people of the Central Coast in The Entrance electorate and to be sent to this House to represent them.

I also am mindful that I am in this place as a member of the Australian Labor Party, the oldest political party in this country—formed in 1891, in this State, by resolution of the New South Wales Trades and Labor Council. At an election held in that year, 35 Labor men were sent by the people of New South Wales to this House. One of them, James McGowen, was elected as their spokesperson. During a debate in this House on tariffs he sought to explain the new political force that had come upon the scene in New South Wales that would change forever politics in this land. He said to his opponents, "The Labor Party are ... state socialists ... more or less." He went on to explain what this meant using words that are as relevant today as they were 125 years ago:

The whole object of the Labor Party is for democratic legislation in the interests of the people. We believe almost to a man in these lines of the English writer Landor: Every government should provide for every subject the means of living honestly and at ease. We should bring out of every man as much utility as we can.

Those words are as good a guide as any to Labor's roles and politics. It is a rejection of the Liberal notion of economic freedom. It is as concerned with social and economic outcomes as it is with opportunity. It is a call for government engagement, not withdrawal from public life. It is this view of the world that guided Labor in the years that followed. It is this view of the world which has elevated the idea of fairness to the central place it has in this country today. And it is this view of the world which has led, slowly and by stages, to what is often referred to as the welfare state in this country.

I am a product of the Australian welfare state and the Labor movement that helped create it. It was public school teachers at the Whitebridge High School who first put the idea in my head that I might be able to

obtain a university education. It was free tuition received at the Newcastle university that gave me the professional qualifications in geology which are the basis of my ability to obtain work. And it was the income support I received from the State that allowed me to sustain myself during that period.

Growing up in Newcastle, I could not help but absorb a fondness for the labour movement and the part it played in my life. My father, Ray Mehan, is here today. He is a musician who plays drums and he played in bands every Saturday night. Most musicians in Newcastle also were members of the Musicians Union. The union would tour local schools to show students the different instruments they played. When they visited my school, Kahibah Public School, I recall the local union president, after he learned I was Ray Mehan's son, declare to the class that my father was the best jazz drummer in Newcastle. It made me very proud indeed.

Growing up in Newcastle, I also absorbed some of the anxieties and fears that swept our town as a result of the mass redundancies that occurred in the early 1980s as the steel industry closed, industrial production declined and unemployment and under-employment became a permanent feature in many people's lives, including some in my family. After retiring from the workforce my mother, Beverley Temple, who is also here today, told me that the age pension now provides her with a higher and more regular income than the casual wages she earned as a club worker.

After I finished my professional studies I obtained work as an engineering geologist, working mainly in Sydney but also in Newcastle after the 1989 earthquake. At that time, I appreciated the opportunity I had to return home as part of the recovery effort to help people deal with insurance companies and builders to ensure their homes were properly repaired and not just hastily patched together. By that time I had joined the Labor Party in 1989, and I was active in my union, the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers Australia. A growing interest in industrial relations led to a role as training officer and then an official role with the National Union of Workers [NUW], New South Wales branch. The NUW gave me the opportunity to represent working people on the Central Coast.

My fondest achievement during that period was negotiation of equal pay for female workers at the Nana's Apple Pie factory. At that time—and this was only in the late 1990s—Nana's was owned by the American multinational Simplot. The membership and I were genuinely surprised at the resistance shown to our reasonable claim. We prevailed only after industrial action and with the assistance of the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission, but prevail we did. It confirmed for me the need to have a strong and regulated industrial relations system to ensure fairness in our workplaces.

It was also during that time that I, along with Brad Stewart of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union [AMWU] and Rod Jarman of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union [CFMEU], rebuilt the Central Coast Trades and Labour Council—a group that went on to coordinate the campaign against the Howard Government's WorkChoices legislation in the lead-up to the 2007 Federal election. The Central Coast region comprises the local government areas of Wyong shire and Gosford city councils. It is located between the Hawkesbury River to its south and Lake Macquarie to its north. The original owners of the land are the Darkinjung peoples, and I want to pay my respects to those peoples and their elders here today. I also want to acknowledge the traditional owners of this place, the Gadigal people.

Five electoral districts are located wholly or partly within the Central Coast region: Gosford and Terrigal to the south, my own electorate of The Entrance at its centre, and Wyong together with parts of Swansea to its north. The Entrance electorate is defined by its geography which has created a number of distinct communities, each with its own character and, more importantly, its own needs. It is a marvellous place to live. We have a coastal strip, our own national park, the Tuggerah Lakes and a very pretty university campus. It has many of the benefits of a large city while retaining a relaxed country lifestyle. The Entrance electorate and the wider Central Coast has, politically, always been contested ground.

The Entrance electorate has only existed since 1988 and since then has been represented by four different members from both major parties. It is incorrect to say, as the first member for The Entrance did, that "the Central Coast has always been looked upon as a Labor stronghold". Let us be clear: Before 1962 the Central Coast was conservative territory. But in that year, Ray Septimus Maher, who was also Speaker of this House, won the newly created seat of Wyong for Labor. Steady population growth on the coast saw the boundaries of coast seats change regularly, as did the party holding those seats.

By 1988 continued strong population growth saw the creation of my own seat of The Entrance. At the election held that year, Bob Graham won the seat for the Liberal Party and became the first member for The

Entrance. Bob Graham held The Entrance electorate for one term before his defeat at a by-election ordered by the Court of Disputed Returns in 1992. He went on to have a successful and continuing political career in local government as an Independent councillor on Wyong Shire Council. He has served as mayor and he remains a respected and dedicated worker for the community. In his inaugural speech in the place he said some fine things about his then Liberal Party colleagues. I spoke to him about these comments when preparing for today and I can assure this House and honourable members opposite that he has certainly changed his mind.

I have already touched on the 1992 by-election. It was indeed an historic moment. The election of Labor's Grant McBride signalled the resurgence of Labor in New South Wales under Bob Carr. Grant's place in Labor history is assured and it is right that he was referred to by Bob Carr as "McBride the magnificent". In 2011 Labor was swept from all of the Central Coast seats it held. In The Entrance electorate Grant McBride had decided to retire and I was selected by the party rank and file as Labor's candidate. It was a brutal experience. The Liberal win was comprehensive, and the Liberal Party's Chris Spence was elected the third member for The Entrance. Chris decided to retire from the seat following allegations made before an Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry. The impact of such things always falls heavily onto the family of elected representative and, for this reason, I wish Chris and his family all the very best.

Labor has always performed best when it holds regional seats. Mindful of our history, Labor approached the 2015 State election campaign on the Central Coast firmly resolved to fight as a team with the best interests of our region our first priority. This approach worked. Labor recovered all four Central Coast seats lost at the 2011 election. My Labor colleagues on the coast, Kathy Smith in Gosford, David Harris in Wyong and Yasmin Catley in Swansea, are determined to hold these regional seats for Labor as our contribution to the next Labor government in New South Wales.

I wish the new Liberal member for Terrigal, Adam Crouch, all the very best. While our political views are irreconcilable, Adam, I do commit to work with you in the interests of the people of the Central Coast. I also acknowledge the campaign run by our candidate for Terrigal, Jeff Sundstrom. He ran a fine campaign and gave Adam a real fight.

Since 2005, and on my application to the New South Wales Geographic Names Board, the Central Coast has been officially recognised as a region in its own right. This has allowed us to measure progress on the coast against other parts of New South Wales. It has strengthened and confirmed our regional identity. It has also highlighted areas that we desperately need to address. Our region continues to have an unemployment rate above the State average. Unfortunately, unemployment on the coast has increased since 2011.

Jobs in TAFE and WorkCover have been made redundant or moved to Sydney and Kellogg's has closed its Charmhaven factory and Blue Tongue Brewery its Warnervale plant. Wyong Council and Corrective Services have announced further job losses. There has been little good news over the last four years. But it need not be this way. The Wran Government showed what an activist approach to job creation on the Central Coast could do when it established an office of the planning department on the coast and built the infrastructure and industrial land needed to make the first serious reductions in unemployment seen in our area. The past four years have shown that we need more, not less, government engagement to generate jobs on the coast.

A lack of affordable housing is a growing problem on the Central Coast. The demand for homes which has spilled over from the Sydney region has forced the price of local houses to unprecedented levels and reduced the pool of available rental accommodation. An unofficial auction system has developed where prospective tenants are asked to pay rent in advance, meaning low-income earners are consistently outbid. An abundance of tenants means that an increasing number of landlords are declining to make reasonable repairs, safe in the knowledge that another tenant is never too far away.

Tenants on the coast have been ably represented by the Central Coast Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service [CCTAAS]; its staff are here today. For the past 10 years I have served on the management committee of the service and I want to acknowledge the good work done by our staff for the people of the Central Coast. This House must do more to address the need for more and better affordable housing in this State. The rights of tenants can be improved and I look forward to working with tenants advocacy services to improve tenants' rights, including addressing the issue of tenant databases, which in a tight rental market are being misused by the rental industry.

Last week I had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Retirement Village Residents Association [RVRA]. The growth of the retirement accommodation industry is a feature of the Central Coast. In

an effort to bring about fairness to the industry, the former Labor Government introduced the Retirement Villages Act 1999. Residents are seeking a review of the Act and its regulations to improve the rights of residents, and I look forward to working with them for a just outcome.

The campaign to win my place in this House has been supported by all the elements of the labour and progressive movement and many people of goodwill across the Central Coast. The three great Labor Party branches of my electorate have been the foundation of that success. By way of thanks, I want to acknowledge each branch and every branch member. Thank you. My own branch, the Ourimbah-Narara Valley Branch led by its president, Anne Sullivan, has been my home for over 20 years. The Tumby Umbi Branch, led by its president Bill Thompson, has always welcomed me to its meetings. Its growth over the past two years has been an example to us all. And lastly, The Entrance Day Branch, led by its indefatigable president Isobel Lowe, is the home of our veteran members.

These branches made a conscious decision following our defeat four years ago to immediately begin the work of rebuilding and readying ourselves for the 2015 contest. Working together, we coordinate our efforts through our State Electoral Council [SEC]. I pay particular thanks to the delegates and office bearers of my Executive SEC who have held our local party machine together. I make special mention of Des Moore, SEC president, and Kyle MacGregor, SEC secretary, during that period.

Our local branches have been well supported by the upper House parliamentary representatives allocated to the Central Coast. New South Wales Legislative Council member Greg Donnelly has attended so well to his Central Coast responsibilities that he is now considered something of a local. The office of Senator O'Neill has been a source of great strength for Labor on the Central Coast and it is a credit to party General Secretary Jamie Clements for allocating such a hardworking Labor woman to the Central Coast. I acknowledge also the role played by Kaila Murnain and Michael Buckland for their efforts coordinating our campaign across the Central Coast.

Parties have their own internal politics and processes. I have been fortunate to have had a number of close supporters and advisers at important moments during my career in the party. I mention a couple of them today, but by no means all of them. Tony Sheridan will long be remembered as one of the great Labor mayors; Vicki Scott, my dear friend and the most progressive councillor on the Central Coast; Kay Hawkins, a dear friend and former secretary of The Entrance Day Branch; and Maurie Lynch, my dear comrade, former Building Workers Industrial Union official and president of The Entrance Day Branch.

The role played by Central Coast Young Labor was critical to our ground campaign. I have been well served by this group of idealistic young men and women who walked hundreds of kilometres with me during the campaign to help me knock on the doors of more than 20,000 homes. I record my appreciation for their work and thank Liam O'Callaghan, Shane Gillard, Andrew Glasscock, Zac Harrison and Adam Hart for their efforts. They were helped also by Tony Grant and his masterful guerrilla poster campaign.

This fantastic ground campaign required coordination and leadership and here I was ably served by Peter Duggan. Peter is a graduate of one of our local public schools, Lisarow High School. I am fortunate to now have him on my staff. Rounding out the ground campaign was Marc Pooley. Marc has faithfully served the party and me for many years and he, too, has joined my staff. An office needs an expert administrator and I am well served by Catherine Wall who learnt her trade in the office of the former member for Gosford Marie Andrews. She has already established a fantastic office from which I can work. The success of my campaign relied on the goodwill of many people outside the Labor Party who have progressive views. Many helped but I mention two: Audrey and Tom McDonald, who are here today. They have been good friends and advisors for many years.

The union movement made a huge effort on the Central Coast during the election. Its opposition to the Government's plans to privatise, contract out and cut essential services greatly assisted me. I acknowledge the role played by Central Coast Community Union Alliance and my old friends at Central Coast Unions, particularly its secretary Debbie Westacott, Salim Barbar, and the many union members who door knocked in the electorate. Many of these are members of the Electrical Trades Union. I acknowledge also the work of the Lister boys, Paul and Ben, for their efforts on the Central Coast.

I am a member of the National Union of Workers [NUW], which was formed in 1907 by warehouse workers in the nearby suburb of Pyrmont. I reserve a special acknowledgement for that union and the support it

has given me within the party and during the campaign. The NUW has a strong tradition of demanding dignity for labour and the right to be heard by their employers. Its secretary, Derrick Belan, has continued the great traditions of that union today. I wish him and its members all the very best.

None of us in this place could pursue our role without family. It is a great comfort to have here today my mother and father who have travelled from Newcastle. But it is a special comfort to have my sons Tom and Charlie here to witness this event. My youngest child and most enthusiastic campaigner, Lily, could not make the trip. Her brothers should tell her that I miss her very much. My dear friend and partner Deanne McIntosh could also not be here today but she attended my swearing-in on Tuesday, and that was a very special moment.

I am eager to get to work for the people of The Entrance. I want to make The Entrance a better place to live, work and raise a family. But this will not happen without a conscious effort by the State to plan and build a community that will provide for all its citizens in the best traditions of the Labor Party. I thank honourable members, particularly those opposite, for the courtesy they have extended to me today to deliver my first speech. I also thank the office of the Deputy-Speaker and the parliamentary staff for welcoming me to this House. I look forward to working with you all for the progress of this State and the people of New South Wales.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): On behalf of the new member for Gosford, I acknowledge everyone in the gallery, especially the family, friends and supporters of the member for Gosford. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly. I call the member for Gosford.

Ms KATHY SMITH (Gosford) [10.57 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I thank the previous speaker, David Mehan, for doing the hard bit. He covered all the statistics for the Central Coast, which is always hard to get through. Standing here today is an honour that awes and inspires me. I hope that my deceased parents can see me and that they are proud of my accomplishments. I congratulate all my fellow members, returned and new, on their success at the recent New South Wales election. Let us hope together we accomplish much for the State of New South Wales in the next four years.

I have many people to thank who assisted me with my success, people who voted for me and placed a lot of trust and belief in me. I will be forever grateful to them for their support and I will ensure that I do everything in my power to live up to their trust. Marie Andrews, a former member in this Chamber, was my predecessor for many years in the seat of Gosford. It is my belief that if Marie had not retired when she did, we would not have lost that seat at the last election. Senator Deborah O'Neill and Marie have acted as formidable mentors and advisers and have given their support by making themselves available to answer questions at any time, day or night.

David Harris, now back here as the member for Wyong, supported me all the way and was an invaluable source in boosting me, maintaining my confidence and providing guidance and advice. I would not have made it without my campaign team, especially Jesse Corda, who is present in the gallery today. This young man made sure I was out there meeting people and making phone calls without let-up. Thank you, Jesse, for pushing me. Jesse is a young man to watch as his strength and commitment will take him from success to success in the Labor Party. Jesse was more than ably assisted by Rhys Zorro, another young fellow who knows how to motivate people and ensure that the job gets done, and he does it with a dry humour that brings laughter into the hardest of days. Thank you, Rhys. These two were ably assisted by others of the Young Labor movement; I am sure we have all met them. We had some extremely motivated and physical days, chasing around with the Young Labor Flying Squad when they hit the electorate running.

Also I had the incredible Michael Buckland coordinating my campaign, and what a great job he did, despite the frustrations I must have put his way. I owe much to Jamie Clements and Kaila Murnain and I thank them both for the faith they placed in me. Members from Unions NSW door-knocked in my electorate on three separate occasions; their anti-privatisation message was welcomed by all householders. Without them I would have had to do a lot more walking and a lot more talking. I thank each and every one of them. Of course, our new leader, Luke Foley, visited the Central Coast on a regular basis, showing genuine interest and commitment to the Central Coast. The Labor community on the Central Coast owes a big thank you to Linda Burney and Greg Donnelly for keeping the fires burning for us for the past four years and I take this opportunity to thank them on behalf of all of us.

Branch members were unwavering in their support and practical help and I thank them all. There are far too many to mention but we all know who they are. I have to make special mention of Genny Murphy, who unfortunately cannot be here today. Genny is the Secretary of the Peninsula Day branch of the Labor Party and

is a formidable lady. Genny has become a very special person to me since I decided to stand for election and I will be forever grateful for her encouragement and support. It was never too early in the morning and nothing was too hard for Genny. I thank Genny for her hard work and very special friendship. I thank also the staff here in Macquarie Street. Since arriving in a state of amazement and disbelief the Clerk and all the parliamentary staff have offered assistance with a smile and in a very helpful manner. From induction day to problems with my new iPhone, everyone has been tremendous. I thank Madam Speaker and her office for the warm welcome I received and also for her very kind greeting card.

Since campaigning began my husband, Peter, has turned grocery shopping into a fine art. His fantastic efforts in the kitchen have allowed me to give up cooking entirely. Peter, I thank you for your patience and support but now I have been elected it is not going to let up at all; nothing much is going to change. My children and grandchildren have been neglected as I became too busy to catch up with them. They too have been supportive and I know are very proud of me. They are all here today and I thank them all from the bottom of my heart. I have here my son, Richard, and his wife, Ellie, his daughter, Georgia, my number one grand-daughter, the firstborn, my daughter, Janet—Christopher, her husband, could not be here—and their children, Ali and Joshua. Thank you, guys. I love you all dearly.

My background is working class through and through. I was born in Sheffield, England, the city known for its steel mills and cutlery. It was also renowned for the smoke and dirt that spewed out of those mills, although I believe they have cleaned up their act now as one after another of those mills has succumbed to overseas manufacturing. Both my grandfathers served in and survived the First World War, although survived may be a misnomer. As with so many others, that conflict left them damaged and the effects of it went to the graves with them. My maternal grandfather in particular was affected very badly and I do not recall him uttering more than a couple of dozen words in all the years that I knew him.

At the outset of World War II my parents were too young to be called to military service and by the time my father did reach enlistment age he had already been instructed by the government to become an employee in the protected occupations of the steel industry. He was told he was to undertake an apprenticeship as an electrician. On leaving school my mother became a cashier and secretary at Woolworths, which was an elite position by local standards. After the war my father worked long hours helping to establish a business being set up by a former Royal Air Force pilot with his demob pay. The business consisted of only the two of them and there were many times when we would not see my father for days on end as they worked tirelessly to make a go of things.

Towards the end of his life dad told me that he regretted ending up working in an office for a living as the business was growing and expanding; he would have preferred to work outdoors but at that time that was the prevailing attitude. That generation scarred by depression and war believed they should be grateful to have a job and beholden to the people employing them. Many years before dad had lectured me on changing jobs so often even though each change was a positive one. Work was not supposed to be enjoyed but was to be undertaken come what may to ensure the care of your family.

I think it was this attitude that led to my own view towards work. I do not work for people; I work with people. However, I do work for money; I have always worked for money. My parents were dedicated, giving people. They toiled hard all their lives to provide for their children but it was taken for granted that the older children would leave school as soon as possible to help provide for the family. I am the second eldest of six children and we were fortunate, I think, when my father accepted a transfer to a new company acquired by his employer. My parents decided we would up stakes and move to the beautiful spa town of Buxton in the Peak District of Derbyshire.

In the village we moved to we had an outdoor type of upbringing with the moorland beginning only a matter of metres from our house on a Roman road which continued on over the moors on its long way north. My friends and I and our dogs—and in one case horses—spent our time wandering and exploring the countryside. But in the true country way I married young. While I was in hospital following the birth of my son, Richard, I was told by my father that the family had decided to come to Australia. In the end my husband and I and our brand new son came along too. Ten of us came and now, many years later, it would take me quite a while to sit and count how many we have become. We are all over the place now.

I said earlier that I think we were lucky to have moved to the countryside in England but prior to this move my parents had already decided we could have a better life in Australia and they were in the process of planning this when the transfer offer was made. At that time I was only very young and when my parents broke

the news to me that we were going to Australia I was so excited by the prospect that I immediately ran to the local library to find reading material to learn about this new, exciting and relatively unknown place. In fact, it was so unknown to me that when the only book I could find was entitled *Australasia* I thought I had hit pay dirt—although I must say that it did not answer many of the questions I had about Australia.

Following in my parents' footsteps I spent my working life office bound but through choice and in positions I enjoyed, which was just as well as my third child, Janet, was only 12 months old when my marriage essentially came to an end. After the breakup of the marriage, I was the breadwinner for my children and me and apart from rare periods when my first husband would contribute financially, I did it alone. There was no child support agency in those days. I loved being with my children as we built our lives together and we had much fun and laughter, as we still do today. We really do make a great team, guys.

My career has been in business administration and management and this is how I came to meet my second husband, Peter. We married in 2001. Peter and I moved to the Central Coast following the sale of a very successful business established by Peter in 1985. We decided we were too young to retire but did not want to tie ourselves down to the obligations of full-time work so we decided to move to the Central Coast and buy a property on acreage to operate as a bed and breakfast. In this way we could go travelling or do what we wanted when we did not feel like working. In 2003 we purchased the perfect property in Empire Bay. After a 12-month battle to obtain a licence to operate we welcomed our first guests.

Disillusion had set in while fighting bureaucracy and as Peter had begun to take on consulting work in his area of expertise we decided to sell up and move to a smaller house at Umina Beach. This gave me greater opportunity to pursue other interests and led to my full transition into consumer advocacy. Earlier, in 1996, I had been diagnosed with cancer and during treatment I had become aware of an elderly lady who had to travel from Wyong to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital for radiotherapy treatment each day for six weeks. She travelled by bus and train, and what torture that must have been for her. I was living in Hornsby at the time of my diagnosis and I was fortunate enough to be able to afford private radiotherapy treatment only 10 minutes away from home and my place of work. Silly or not, I was left with a feeling of guilt knowing that this much older lady was having to struggle to travel for treatment while I could be driven for mine without any effort on my part.

On moving to the Central Coast, I was appalled to find that the only change to the local situation concerning radiotherapy treatment was the establishment of a private facility. However, that facility cost cancer patients thousands of dollars if they were to have treatment locally rather than travelling for public—that is, no cost to patient—treatment. As we were in a low socio-economic area, this was an impossible situation for some and many people were incurring debt to pay for treatment. That debt would mean many years of repayments and many years of depriving themselves in order to make them. Others were forgoing this lifesaving treatment altogether in the hope that the doctors were wrong.

Being a person who always spoke up for the underdog and who took on the battles of those not able to fight for themselves, it was inevitable that I would do something to draw attention to this dreadful situation and a group of us began campaigning for the provision of public radiotherapy locally in 2006. It was an intense campaign, and it was only me and my very loyal and beautiful friend Kimberly Bates who continued through to the end. We had support from the then members for Wyong and Gosford, David Harris and Marie Andrews. In April 2010, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Premier Kristina Keneally came to Gosford to announce joint State and Federal funding of more than \$38 million for the construction of the Central Coast Cancer Centre, which of course included the public radiotherapy facilities for which we had battled so hard. On that day I had been discharged from hospital following the removal of a mouth cancer for less than 24 hours and Mr Rudd must have thought I had a very unusual way of speaking.

The Prime Minister praised the actions of consumer advocates for bringing the problem to the Government's attention. He pointed out that even though politicians think they know what is needed by the community this knowledge does not always tally with what the public really wants. It had been made very clear to us by senior politicians at both State and Federal levels that without the public action the Central Coast would not have been in the running for public radiotherapy for many years. As I recall, we were number seven on the list, so public advocacy works. Today I am pleased to report that the number of people on the Central Coast receiving lifesaving radiotherapy has increased dramatically—I understand by about 22 per cent. This is not the number of people deciding to be treated locally rather than travelling for treatment; this is an increase in the number of people who previously would not have had any treatment.

It is impossible to say how many of these people would have missed out or who would not have survived under the previous arrangements. However, statistics demonstrate what a tremendous investment by

the Labor Government in cancer survival this public facility has been. So, fellow members, let us all listen to the public advocates in our area when they come to us with an issue. Many lives may be helped. The radiotherapy campaign on the Central Coast also introduced to me broader State and national issues that were in need of cancer consumer advocacy. Cancer directly affects one in three of us, but many more indirectly when our friends and family are impacted by this disease. While I had been campaigning on the Central Coast I had also been working as a consumer advocate with the Cancer Voices movement in Australia.

Cancer Voices is the largest truly independent, non-funded cancer consumer organisation in Australia. I became the chair of Cancer Voices NSW as well as an executive committee member of Cancer Voices Australia. During my time with Cancer Voices, many battles were fought and won at both State and Federal levels. There is still much to be done in the cancer area, but I came to realise that the time had come to return to my own backyard and to work to the best of my abilities to continue to improve the lives of people on the Central Coast. There was never any question but that that would be done with the Labor Party.

Gosford must surely be of the most diverse electorates in the State, with a range of communities with very different needs. It has a history to be proud of and a lifestyle that is to be envied. I do not intend to give a history or geography lesson, David has already done that very ably. Rather, I will discuss some of its myriad concerns. It encompasses the beautiful seaside communities of Umina, Ocean, Ettalong and Pearl beaches alongside the fishing community of Patonga, and the mountain communities of Somersby, Mangrove, Kulnura, to Peats Ridge Mount White. We have the small river communities on the Hawkesbury River and the larger more urban communities of Woy Woy and Gosford city and its surrounding suburbs. All these areas have different and very real needs that must be addressed. No one community can be considered more important than the others, and there is a lot of work to be done to ensure the best outcomes for the majority of people. It never ceases to amaze me how decisions can often be made in favour of those making the loudest demands rather than taking the route that will benefit the largest number of people.

Over the past four years this has occurred in a number of cases in my electorate where expenditure is being made on projects that benefit only a small number of people. In one case, \$7 million has been spent on a pedestrian underpass that I have yet to find one resident who will speak in favour of let alone walk through. This project has been foisted on them at such a high cost. They do not want it. I would like to question the wisdom of a few projects. Hopefully I can meet with the Minister concerned to discuss possible redirection of funds to related projects in the electorate. One of the projects involves \$45 million that has already been committed for a vehicle underpass that will run alongside the pedestrian underpass. We will see who uses it.

The condition of local roads is appalling, and nowhere more so than on the Woy Woy Peninsula, an area which has approximately 35,000 residents and which attracts many tourists. I am hearing reports of, and in fact have spoken to, elderly residents who feel isolated in their homes because they fear walking to bus stops along roads without footpaths. The roads are merely hard strips with crumbling edges. We have a new local saying that I have heard recently: "We used to drive on the left, now we drive on what's left." Young parents pushing strollers and the disabled cannot walk in safety and mums and dads are concerned about their children walking alone in the path of oncoming traffic. Isolation will surely lead to depression and other related health problems. That is a very expensive outcome for a lack of investment in roads.

Coal seam gas extraction in water catchment and food production areas is a great concern to 99 per cent of local residents. Assurance should be given by this Government, and adhered to, that coal seam gas will never be extracted from this region until such time as it is proven to be safe and viable, and the Chief Scientist has reported to this end. The Labor Party has set the precedent on this issue and I call on this Government to follow suit. Gosford city itself has been declining for many years, and unless a cohesive plan is developed and approved for the city as a whole, it has been said by some working in the town planning profession that it may never shake off the death throes it appears to be suffering.

One Sunday morning recently I tried to get a cup of coffee in Gosford, but no cafes were open. I could not get a cup of coffee in this once-thriving town. We have a chronic housing shortage and a rapidly growing homelessness problem. We have an official youth unemployment rate of 24 per cent. However, welfare organisations put this at closer to 40 per cent. With the demise of TAFE on the Central Coast much opportunity for our young people to train for meaningful employment has been lost. We have a school retention rate of 6:10. Something does not quite equate. Why would anyone move the opportunity of further study or vocational training at TAFE from the people who need it most on the Central Coast and attach it to an organisation many miles away in the Hunter region? It may not make much sense but that is exactly what has happened under this Government. Those are just some of the reasons that prompted my decision to enter politics.

The Central Coast has long been a forgotten entity—an appendage to the Hunter or northern Sydney regions, a poor cousin, an also-ran. In the lead-up to the election, promises were made by this now re-elected Government to recognise and respect the Central Coast area as a stand-alone region, which—as David pointed out—it had been declared some years ago. The members representing the electorates of Wyong, The Entrance and Swansea and I will be closely monitoring the situation. We will be working as one unit to ensure the best possible outcomes from all the commitments made by those opposite in the lead-up to the 2015 State election—for example, promises in the region of \$1 billion were made during that campaign.

This investment will be warmly welcomed by each of the approximately 320,000 residents on the Central Coast. I note that the re-elected Government has already axed the position of Minister for the Central Coast; we now only have a Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter and Central Coast to look over us. I hope that is not a sign of things to come. As I said earlier, there is much to be done. I stood for election promising to do the best I possibly could for the people of Gosford. Today I reaffirm that promise to every resident in the electorate of Gosford. I will work with them for the betterment of the people of the Central Coast. Thank you.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of families, friends and supporters of the member for Port Stephens. I welcome you all to the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of New South Wales to listen to the inaugural speech of the new member for Port Stephens.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) [11.28 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Parliamentary colleagues, friends and family, thank you for your warm welcome. I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered, the Gadigal people, and pay my respects to their elders past and present. I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the land I now represent in this Parliament, the Worimi people, and pay my respect to their elders past and present. I am humbled and honoured to stand in this Chamber today as the new member for Port Stephens. Might I add to Madam Speaker's list of firsts—unfortunately she is not presently in the Chamber—I am the first woman to represent the electorate of Port Stephens in this place.

Port Stephens is a place of great beauty, inspiration and history. It stretches from Tea Gardens-Hawks Nest in the north, to the Hunter River and Tomago in the south; from the rural beauty of Dunn's Creek in the west, to the stunning Tomaree peninsula and Broughton Island in the east. Port Stephens is blessed with natural beauty. It has the most beautiful beaches in New South Wales, pristine coastal habitats, and is world renowned for its dolphins and koalas. I am proud to say that we have the largest marine park in New South Wales, a great Labor achievement.

Port Stephens is positively brimming with potential. Port Stephens' potential was recognised early in Australia's history. In 1899, land on the northern side of the bay was identified as one of 40 potential sites for Australia's first capital. The site is now known as the lovely hamlet of North Arm Cove. Tanilba House was built by convicts from 1837, and at the same time the National Trust-listed Tomago House was being built by the Windeyer family, in Tomago. Fort Tomaree played an important role in Australia's east coast defence during World War II, and in Boomerang Park, in Raymond Terrace, Federation was celebrated, light horses trained for the Boer War and our troops marshalled for both World Wars. Today, Port Stephens has a diverse economy spanning from hospitality and tourism to heavy manufacturing; from primary production to aerospace endeavours.

It is with a great deal of pride that I can class as one of my neighbours the Royal Australian Air Force Base at Williamstown. The RAAF Base employs 3,500 people, with most of the servicemen and servicewomen posted to RAAF Williamstown choosing to live in Port Stephens. Their involvement in our schools, sporting and volunteer organisations makes my community stronger. Port Stephens is very fortunate to host not only the RAAF but also Newcastle airport. They are significant contributors to the local economy and the Hunter. So you can see, in addition to its breathtaking beauty, the people of Port Stephens have a lot to be proud of.

But like many people who live in Port Stephens, I did not grow up there. It is a place where people choose to live. Almost nine years ago, immediately prior to the impending birth of my third daughter, Lily, my family and I moved to Medowie, a town in the heart of Port Stephens. Medowie is a community of about 9,000 people and is largely populated by young families. We moved from Newcastle to Medowie with a view to returning to a simpler way of life—a back-to-basics program, if you like. We now have 26 chooks, an unkempt vegie garden and two crazy dogs. On my way home, I usually get to wave at our local kangaroos. It is a place where I quickly felt at home, because I grew up in country New South Wales.

My father was a public school principal; my mother was also a teacher, professions that are not only vocations but also a lifestyle choice. Whilst they chose to shape young people's lives, it also meant a few moves for our family. We started out in Mulwala on the New South Wales-Victorian border, then moved to Tumut and ended up in Albury. I was schooled in the local public schools and I enjoyed all the benefits of a public school education—an education that allowed me entry to the University of Sydney to study arts and law.

My parents have been public education advocates for as long as I can remember, with my father opting to take positions in areas of disadvantage and my mum being a TAFE teacher. It should come as no surprise that I bring that same passion for equality of access to education to this role. My parents came from different sides of the track. My mum's mother grew up on the waterfront in Rose Bay and married a Macquarie Street doctor who was a University of Sydney medallist in medicine. We would visit them when they lived in Wagga Wagga, where my granddad, Dr Kenny, had established the first radiology practice.

My dad's father, Bert Washington, was a battler. Having left school in Leeton at the age of 14, he went to work in a gold mine at West Wyalong. He was "on the wallaby" during the Depression, ending up on the show circuit where he spent much of the rest of his life. He was, literally, a showman or a "showie". Whilst education is the great equaliser, so is war, and both my grandfathers enlisted in the army and served in Papua New Guinea. I loved visiting Poppa during Christmas school holidays because I got to work the clowns in his backyard show at Ettalong Beach, graduating to the merry-go-round when I was considered responsible enough.

From across the generations, from both sides of the track, the importance of hard work and respect was instilled in me, values that stood me well in my professional career as a lawyer and, I believe, will continue to do so in my role in Parliament. Throughout my professional career, there were many people who gave me opportunities that I am very grateful for. The late Tony Dutton was the best lawyer I have ever known—hardworking with a great intellect, humility and humour. I also thank Catherine Henry, my former partner, for her generosity and understanding.

Many people would be aware of the recent storm which smashed the Hunter and other areas. Port Stephens was one of the areas declared a natural disaster zone. The sheer length, breadth and extent of the harm were astonishing and unprecedented. My heart goes out to those who have lost loved ones, suffered the loss of their homes and their families' income and those who continue to suffer in other ways from the harsh hand that Mother Nature dealt. I give my heartfelt thanks to the local State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service volunteers for their extraordinary efforts and bravery during the emergency and recovery stage of this natural disaster.

The natural environment in Port Stephens is something my community values. However, our area is at risk of overdevelopment. I recognise the efforts of the community group Voices of Wallalong and Woodville in representing their community's interests until, ultimately, the Independent Commission Against Corruption acted on their concerns. I also recognise the efforts of the Boomerang Park Action Group, Say No to Sandmining in Bob's Farm, Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association, Williamtown and Surrounds Residents Action Group, South Tomaree Community Association and the Port Stephens EcoNetwork. The sheer number of groups that have formed in Port Stephens is indicative of the difficulty our community has had in having its voice heard in the face of developments that risk quality of life and environmental sustainability. The number of community action groups in Port Stephens is also a reflection of the level of concern within my community about the lack of transparency, accountability and integrity in planning decisions and processes at a local and State Government level.

The concern is not without foundation. My community has been touched by the ICAC, and I am very grateful for it, not because political opponents have come undone but because it has shed light where it was needed and, in doing so, allowed people to live their lives free from harassment. Corruption is not just a theoretical concept, or something you read about in the newspaper that brings politicians down. It hurts people and it hurts communities; and it has been hurting people in my community for too long. I will respect the trust placed in me by my community. I will act with integrity and I will continue to stand against corruption in all forms and on all fronts.

Other challenges being faced by the people of Port Stephens are like those in many other rural and regional communities in New South Wales. We have a dire need for mental health support, particularly for our youth. There is a dire need for better access to vocational training, TAFE and jobs. Unemployment in Port Stephens is at crisis point, with the unemployment rate being more than double the State average. There is a dire need to increase local health services, improve public transport and increase support for people escaping domestic violence, together with the need for more affordable housing.

And yet, in Port Stephens, these challenges have been exacerbated by decisions made by a government that would appear to have very little understanding of what is happening in rural and regional New South Wales. In Port Stephens, in the past four years, we have seen community psychology services shut down; the local domestic violence refuge defunded then propped up at the last minute in a lesser form; and our local community college lose funding to deliver the courses where we have a skills shortage, in aged care and child care.

The decision to centralise services may make sense on paper to bureaucrats, but it often makes no sense whatsoever when it is applied in rural and regional communities. The Government's so-called reforms, Smart and Skilled and Going Home Staying Home, have only hurt my community. As a proud member of Country Labor, I pledge to be an advocate for rural and regional communities in this place. Each of us has issues that sit higher in our hearts. One of these for me, having been a health lawyer, is the right of all people living with disabilities to have greater autonomy and choice. The National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] is landmark legislation because it enshrines in law the concept of choice. The New South Wales launch site of the NDIS was in Newcastle so I have witnessed firsthand its promise and its pitfalls.

I believe it is incumbent on all members of this Parliament to ensure that the aims of the NDIS are met and that real choice is delivered to people living with disabilities. It would be a shame if at a Federal level we talked the talk while at the State level we do not walk the walk. In my view, the Government's plans to completely privatise State-run disability and homecare services risks the success of the NDIS in New South Wales and places the most vulnerable people in our communities at risk. As a member of the Fifty-sixth Parliament of New South Wales I hope to contribute to the success of the NDIS as it is rolled out across the State.

Another issue close to my heart, and closer to home, is the fight for a public high school in my home town of Medowie. So many people have now heard about "Medowie High School", and it does not exist!

Mr Ryan Park: I want to hear about it again.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I know the member for Keira wants to hear more about this. This has been a longstanding battle. For the past eight years, I have stood alongside members of my community and fought for our children's right to have access to local public secondary schooling. Land was designated for a high school in Medowie, and purchased by the Department of Education in 1983. To this day, the land remains untouched.

As we in the Labor Party know, education is key to ensuring equality of opportunity. Any barriers to accessing education should be minimised. Currently, we have 1,000 children being bussed out of my community daily just to access public secondary schooling. And yet the Government does not think there is merit in the proposal to build a local high school. Perhaps the Government needs to look at the election result. Better still, they should have taken heed of their own representative in Parliament. On 1 June 2010, former member for Port Stephens Craig Baumann addressed this Chamber as follows:

I speak today about one of the most important issues in my electorate: the need for a high school in Medowie.

On this, I could not agree with Craig Baumann more. The only reason I am standing here today is that so many people contributed to this long-running campaign to return Port Stephens to Labor. Some of the people who contributed have travelled to be here today, and I thank them so much for making the effort. I am delighted to be sharing this experience with them. I will start with the people who were there from the start: thank you to my mum and dad, Bert and Leslie Washington, for your unwavering and unqualified love and support over my entire life. Whilst there were no doubt times when you were uncertain about the direction in which I was headed, you have instilled in me values of social justice that are with me to my core.

To my patient and caring husband, Andrew Hardy, and my three beautiful daughters—Phoebe, Tess and Lily—I love you all dearly and I thank you for your willingness to join me on this adventure. Thank you to my big brothers, Stuart and Damon Washington and their amazing families. I am delighted to see my nieces, Ava and Ruby Washington, here today. I owe my thanks to someone special who could not make it here today: the Hon. Bob Martin. He was the first member for Port Stephens and a wonderful Minister for Fisheries in the first Carr Government. I thank Bob and his wife, Margaret, for their unwavering support and friendship, and I hope they are enjoying their travels. They even helped me doorknock in Anna Bay.

A huge thank you to Sophie Cotsis, MLC, and Courtney Houssos, MLC, for their support and guidance over a number of years. I also thank New South Wales Labor Party General Secretary Jamie Clements and

Assistant General Secretary Kaila Murnain, who believed that we could secure Port Stephens for the Labor Party. A very special thank you to Luke Foley, for being a regular visitor to Port Stephens, and John Robertson before him. Thank you also to the members of the Parliamentary Labor Party and their staff, who were always on hand to give advice, together with the many shadow ministers who made the effort to visit Port Stephens, including the former shadow Minister Steve Whan.

I turn now to the local champions—the branch and community members who worked so hard. From the very beginning, branch members were unified and unwavering in their support. Prior to the election, I recall driving home from a branch meeting almost in tears because I was overwhelmed by everyone's kindness and generosity. I feel like I now have an enormous family in Port Stephens and I look forward to sharing this experience with them all over the coming years.

I am glad to say that there are now too many branch members to name individually, but I would like to mention a few: Grant Kennett, Fred and Glenis McInerney, Jim and Lois Morrison, Grahame and Elaine Froment, Alex Smith, Fran Corner, Bay Marshall, Ivor Blanche, Bobbie Antonic, Jenny Battrick, Roz Armstrong, Helen McLean, Lynn Lockett and Nancy Hosking. I must make special mention of Graham Blythman and Gail Armstrong, and I wish them well for the future. A special thank you to the indomitable Frank Ward, OAM—champion letter writer, former Port Stephens councillor and amazing advocate for women's rights. Brian Crooks is another champion letter writer and an enormously hard worker.

Thank you also to Councillors Peter Kafer and Geoff Dingle. There are also too many community members who helped me to name them all. I mention Tom Lacey and his dog, Penny, from Raymond Terrace. He drove around with my poster attached to the back of his mobility scooter for months. To all the people who put up signs and got politically active for the first time in their lives, I say thank you so much. Thank you also to Unions NSW and to the dedicated members of the Public Service Association [PSA], the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association [NMA], the NSW Teachers Federation, the Electrical Trades Union [ETU], the Rail, Tram and Bus Union [RTBU] and the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union [CFMEU] for all their assistance.

Finally, I thank my hardworking campaign team. From the outset, and against the odds, we campaigned hard and achieved the unexpected. Giacomo Arnott, thank you for your commitment over such a long campaign. Thank you also to Ruby Porter for your positive energy and hard work. My final thank you goes to Jay Suvaal for pulling everything together in the critical last few months of the campaign. Everyone's efforts combined saw us achieve what Sportsbet and the local media did not see coming—an almost 20 per cent swing to overcome a 14.7 per cent margin and a win for the party of fairness, equality and social justice: the Labor Party. For the people of Port Stephens, my message is simple: I will work hard to ensure that our community gets its fair share. I will work with the local community and with the Government to ensure its election commitments are delivered for my community. I will always give my local community the respect it deserves.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I congratulate the member for Port Stephens on her inaugural speech and welcome her to the bearpit. I am sure she will find herself working with a few clowns in here as well.

Pursuant to resolution notices of motions (general notices) proceeded with.

HUNTER, CENTRAL COAST AND SYDNEY STORM DAMAGE

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [11.50 a.m.]: I join the new member for Upper Hunter in supporting this motion. The motion reads:

That this House:

- (1) Expresses its sincere condolences to the families and friends of Robina MacDonald, Colin John Webb and Brian Alexander Wilson of Dungog, and Anne Jarman of Gillieston Heights, who all passed in the recent storm and flood events in the Hunter.
- (2) Acknowledges the hardship felt by the families affected by the devastating storms in the Hunter, Central Coast and Sydney areas.
- (3) Expresses its gratitude to the workers and volunteers of the emergency services, SES, and network power companies, and the efforts by the community in the clean-up efforts following those recent storms.

We all offer our thoughts and prayers to those who have been affected. The storm which impacted these communities has been described as a one-in-100-year storm. All of us on both sides of the House thank the wonderful State Emergency Service [SES] volunteers, but we also acknowledge the efforts made by SES volunteers from Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria.

This morning the Minister for Emergency Services spoke in the House about aspects of the storms and about the massive efforts made by AusGrid, Hunter Water and local councils to bring the communities back to where they were prior to the storm. I thank the Minister for his assistance in briefing me, as the shadow Minister, and the local members who were newly elected at the time. When the storms hit, about nine new members had been members of Parliament for only six days. They were caught up in the storms and, as we all know, it was very difficult for them to contact members of their communities.

As the shadow Minister, it was extremely difficult for me to contact the members representing Port Stephens, Maitland, Cessnock, Charlestown, Swansea, Newcastle, Wyong and Gosford and I know how hard it was for them to contact members of their own communities. I place on record my vote of thanks to them for, in adversity, putting others before them. I thank the new member for Upper Hunter for bringing this motion forward. We all want to do our best in times of adversity, but imagine being a member in this place and not having access to power or information when people are knocking on the door asking for further assistance and information.

I also place on record our thanks to the Rural Fire Service [RFS] and NSW Fire and Rescue for their assistance during the storms. It is unfortunate that such tragedies occur but they bring people together and we will work together to ensure that people get back to where they were prior to the storms. We also need to think about those families who have lost loved ones in the storms. The images in the Sydney metropolitan media of the torrent going through Dungog will leave lasting scars in our memories, and we offer our condolences to those people who were mentioned in this motion by the new member for Upper Hunter.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.54 a.m.]: I speak on this motion not only as a member of Parliament and a representative of an area who knows only too well the horrific and catastrophic effects that weather can have in a large rural electorate, but also as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier. The Premier visited the area during this tragic time of extreme weather across the Hunter. The Premier said he was "absolutely mortified" at the catastrophic damage that had occurred throughout this one-in-100-year storm.

As the Minister for Emergency Services noted yesterday, an intense low-pressure system between 20 and 22 April brought with it tragedy and damaging conditions in Dungog and Gillieston Heights. I am sure I speak on behalf of all members on this side of the House when I say that in New South Wales we are incredibly lucky to have 80,000 State Emergency Service [SES] volunteers who place their own lives in danger in the worst of conditions to ensure the safety of the communities they serve. When we are snug inside our homes and are very, very comfortable and we see on our televisions screens those incredibly professional people, whether they be in the orange suits of the SES or in the glowing yellow uniforms of the Rural Fire Service [RFS], we must remember that they are volunteers—they are giving up their own time, in some cases moving away from their businesses, giving up personal finances, leaving behind their families, and putting their own lives in danger.

When I represented the electorate of Hawkesbury, at one stage I calculated that we had the largest number of RFS brigades across the electorate, with just over 35 brigades in total and with one of the leading command areas of the SES at Wilberforce. I know only too well that many thousands of people in the area recognise that extreme weather causes the Hawkesbury River to flood and that bushfires occur—and across the Hawkesbury area we have certainly seen far too many of those—but I applaud and commend and will always support those brave men and women of our emergency services who time and again put their lives on the line to protect our lives and property.

This motion has bipartisan support, as it should, because the SES is an incredible group of people—80,000 in total. But it should be remembered that it was not just the SES volunteers putting their lives at risk; the RFS backed them up, as they do. There are thousands in the RFS who do the same wonderful work. These guys get together and they help people who are struggling. As someone with a family who had a metre of floodwater go through our property during the 1992 floods—the last floods in the Hawkesbury—I know only too well the catastrophic damage that weather events cause. When Warragamba Dam is above 90 per cent and all our local areas are at capacity with local flooding, we are only one low-pressure system over Goulburn away from

another flood in the Hawkesbury-Nepean. God, may it never, ever occur. I thank the member for Upper Hunter for bringing this motion to the House and I once again commend those brave men and women of the SES for the work they have done.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) [11.58 a.m.], in reply: I am very pleased that there has been significant bipartisan support for this motion. In closing the discussion I would like to point out a couple of things. On the Tuesday during the storm I was in Willow Tree meeting with drought-ravaged farmers. During that meeting I received phone calls and text messages saying that houses were being washed away and people in Dungog were dying. Willow Tree is only a 2½-hour drive away from Dungog. This was an extreme event in anyone's estimation and there is no doubt that the effects will be long lasting. On 4 May I received an email from Mr Craig Gardiner, who is still isolated in Torryburn, who said in part:

We are now into the third week where we have not been able to travel to our employment. Some residents have left Torryburn and are staying elsewhere, they have left the work of feeding their stock and/or domestic animals to others not able to leave. Some are not able to hand the work over to others so need to return each day. They do so at risk to themselves. One male resident is even crossing the Allyn river each day in a small dinghy. The river is still flowing quite fast with unknown submerged dangers floating down stream. When I talked to him about this tonight we discussed the dangers of crossing this way, his only comment was "I have to go to work or I will lose my house to the Bank ...

Yesterday I received an email from Principal Graeme Oke of Vacy Public School asking for us to help one of his students who is still isolated in Torryburn. He wrote:

A student in Year 2 at Vacy Public School, Brigitte Finlay, has been stranded in the Torryburn District since Tuesday 21 April 2015 when the Torryburn road bridge collapsed during the severe weather event ...

Food and other items are being sent across to the residents by flying fox. This includes school work which Brigitte's parents have requested ...

It seems unbelievable in this day and age that some sort of temporary structure can't be put in place to allow the residents to access the "outside world".

Those are just a few words from people who three weeks down the track are still suffering. It will take many months and in some cases years for people to recover. The Government and the community at large have a great deal of work in front of us to assist those people to return to some level of normality. I can only feel for those who are still suffering at this time. I know they have been very strong and resilient so far but there is a long, tough road ahead. I thank members for their contributions to debate on this motion.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

WALLSEND STORM DAMAGE

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.03 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that busy Minmi Road, Wallsend, was flooded during the recent storms.
- (2) Notes that the cyclonic winds and fallen trees caused damage to many homes and the closure of many schools.
- (3) Notes that most residents were without power for a number of days.
- (4) Notes the splendid work the SES and the Rural Fire Service did in the clean-up of storm damage.
- (5) Urges the Minister for Emergency Services to support the work of the SES and the Rural Fire Service.

On behalf of the people of Wallsend, I extend my condolences to the member for the Upper Hunter for the lives that were lost during the recent storms in his electorate and the Hunter region. In June 2007—the year I was elected—just in time for the Queen's Birthday long weekend the Hunter and Central Coast were smashed by a horrific storm. Wallsend was under water. Thousands of my residents were without power or communication for days and Wallsend small businesses were devastated.

It took too long for Wallsend to recover, but we eventually bounced back. As I have always said, we are a resilient lot. That is why I feel so humbled and privileged to have been given the opportunity to again serve

my wonderful community in my third term as the member for Wallsend. However, we cannot forget that we have begun this parliamentary term in the shadow of a terrible disaster. A number of crises have emerged from the disaster. Some of them have been resolved and some are ongoing. We will need to have many conversations about how we will recover and what we can do to mitigate future devastation.

Wallsend was not immune from the latest destruction. Though we avoided the large-scale flooding that other towns experienced, trees were brought down and a number of people went without power for days and weeks. Some houses were destroyed or severely damaged by falling trees, particularly in Birmingham Gardens, Jesmond and Rankin Park. In fact, one Jesmond constituent watched in horror as a tree in the yard outside his bedroom window fell down. Thankfully, his house was not damaged but it did cause other problems. Others were not so lucky. In Rankin Park a three-metre wide eucalypt tore through the home of Brett and Maxine Walker. The family was devastated and the images printed in the *Newcastle Herald* were shocking. Mrs Walker said:

It has come down and as it has smashed through the roof it has come down on top of us in the bedroom. It was horrific, just like a bomb.

In the first incident I described my constituent and his housemate made a call to the State Emergency Service [SES]. About the second incident Mrs Walker said:

We stood in a doorway and the fires came, they smashed the door in but couldn't get up the stairs but we were able to get onto the balcony and they got us out that way.

The contribution of emergency services personnel throughout the crisis was wonderful. As we begin to count the cost of the damage and the level of human suffering we must note that the SES fielded 8,500 calls for help in the Hunter. Hunter SES Controller Amanda Wilson said recently, "We're almost at the point where we can exhale." The SES was founded on 3 June 1955 following the devastating Maitland flooding. It is now 60 years old and has proven its mettle a thousand times. Just like people all over this State, the people of Wallsend owe a debt of gratitude to SES and Rural Fire Service personnel. Without their tireless work during the storm and afterwards who knows what would have happened. They certainly prevented a lot of further damage from occurring, which was wonderful.

Just one of the many stories of bravery that has emerged from this crisis concerns a young man named Josh Haigh. He is 16 years old and comes from a family of SES volunteers. He wanted to help out during this storm and he made a wonderful contribution. It was a great testament to that young man from the Hunter. I pay a debt of gratitude to all SES volunteers in the Hunter. I thank the SES for working hard throughout its 60 long years of operation. We hope that Newcastle City Council will undertake flood mitigation work in future. I am happy to help with that process and I am sure the State Government will be happy to help with improvements to the busy Minmi Road.

I will talk more about that road in future because it is very problematic for people living in the western suburbs of Wallsend. Once again, I thank everyone and pass on my condolences to the member for Upper Hunter. I also issue a warning to insurance companies. In 2007 recalcitrant insurance companies that were difficult to work with caused tremendous trouble in the Hunter. We lost a number of businesses in the Wallsend main street because of those difficulties. I warn insurance companies that they must look after our Hunter community because the community deserves it. We have a long way to go.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.10 p.m.]: Once again I am immensely proud to speak to the motion brought forward by the member for Wallsend. There may be some similarities to my previous contribution. However, it is worth reiterating my continuing support and that of the Government for the brave members of the State Emergency Service [SES]. On behalf of the Government I place on record my condolences and sympathies for the families who lost loved ones in the area, to whom the new member for Upper Hunter referred. That point should never be lost. When extreme weather events happen people sometimes, for whatever reason, risk life and limb by driving through floodwaters. I cannot emphasise strongly enough the importance of not doing that.

Recently I heard someone comment that our modern cars are much lighter in structure than they were and people should never attempt to drive them through floodwaters, which sometimes do not appear to be deep. Doing so can have catastrophic consequences, as we have seen. I express my sympathy and condolences to the families who lost loved ones. It should be pointed out that under this Government emergency services have received record budgets over the past few years. I never cease to be amazed by the wonderful quality equipment

and resources that our emergency services rightly have today. The SES in my previous backyard, the SES command centre at Wilberforce, has boats, as well as equipment that were used in the past to rescue large animals that had been flood bound. I am talking about cows and horses.

The SES is extremely adept at undertaking these particular procedures. But they are not something that people can learn at university or in college. Those procedures have been put in place by SES members in local areas who have, time after time when tragic events occur, rescued animals, people and vehicles that get caught in emergency situations. There are ways and means of being able to extract them and help them. Those particular procedures have been developed and put into practice. Now the resources speak for themselves. But the SES does not come cheap; it needs funding. In the 2012-13 financial year the State Emergency Service budget totalled \$79.8 million. I often say that every cent we spend on resourcing these people will ultimately help to save lives down the track.

In the 2013-14 financial year funding increased to \$84.3 million, and in this financial year, 2014-15, funding has increased to just under \$87 million. This is the biggest investment in the NSW State Emergency Service by any government in the almost 60-year history of the service. I acknowledge that specific milestone. The 2014-15 budget provides \$600,000 to implement inter-agency electronic messaging systems that will enable peer-to-peer electronic communications between the State Emergency Service and other public service organisations. So the Government is not only equipping and resourcing these organisations; it is embracing the latest technology, keeping people up-to-date with communications, which is so important.

As I have said many times in this Chamber, when the Hawkesbury River rises during a severe weather event, when Warragamba Dam has breached in the past—we have not seen that for almost two decades—ultimately flooding occurs very rapidly. There have been instances of dramatic loss of property and livestock, especially when farmers get caught out late at night. The river rises rapidly and their stock is in low-lying areas. The consequences are devastating. Embracing and implementing technology and supporting those organisations is money well spent. I am also advised that in the 2014-15 budget the Government is providing the SES with \$8.8 million, of which \$3 million is recurrent and \$5.8 million is capital for the replacement of communications equipment such as vehicle-mounted and hand-held radios, and replacement of other audiovisual and peripheral equipment.

There is an allocation of \$1.6 million, of which \$1.1 million is recurrent funding and \$500,000 is capital funding to better manage the increasing requirements and replacement of operational equipment. There is also an allocation of \$11.4 million, of which \$7 million is recurrent and \$4.3 million is capital expenditure to enable the New South Wales SES to continue to purchase and control a centrally managed operational fleet. Another \$6.2 million is allocated for discretionary funding support to operate and maintain all SES volunteer units across New South Wales. Some \$3.3 million has been allocated, of which \$2.7 million is recurrent and just over \$500,000 is capital to implement flood readiness measures.

Finally, \$2.4 million is allocated for ongoing support for the volunteer support package. This package includes the successful SES cadet program. Nothing is more important than educating young people. In my backyard many schools have already embraced these programs, in partnership with the SES and the Rural Fire Service. They run these programs to encourage teenagers and educate them about the preliminary basics they need to equip themselves with before they see tragedies and emergencies firsthand. I commend those particular schools. Finally, \$35.9 million has been allocated to continue the Government's commitment to protect bushfire-prone communities, at a time when we are talking about floods, and to invest in emergency services so that they can expand into those areas. I commend the motion and the work that the Government is doing to protect our communities.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [12.17 p.m.]: I support the motion of my colleague the member for Wallsend regarding the recent storms. I acknowledge her great work and advocacy for the residents in her community during this time. The motion notes that Minmi Road, Wallsend, was flooded during the storm, and the cyclonic winds and fallen trees caused damage to many homes and the closure of many schools. Students across the Hunter faced difficulties and were anxious in the adversity of the storms. Power was down for many days—some communities are still without power—and their water supply has been compromised. The member for Wallsend acknowledged, as did speakers in the previous debate, the wonderful work of the State Emergency Service [SES] and the services of the Rural Fire Service and NSW Fire and Rescue.

During this time the SES volunteers did an outstanding job. One thing the Minister mentioned this morning, which sticks in our minds, is that 170 rescues occurred. We must remember that these rescues are

carried out by volunteers who risk their lives to save people in that predicament. All of us would agree that we need to send the message to residents: When water is rising, as good as it looks, stay away. It is as simple as that. People do not have to be at the side of a riverbed to see the water rising, because in metropolitan areas, in causeways and in parks, people can see the water rising. While nature puts on a spectacular show, it is not the event that people want to be part of, so steer clear of it. The member for Wallsend mentioned Mrs Walker, who had a large tree fall through her house. I note that the State Emergency Service [SES] volunteers arrived very quickly to ensure the safety of Mrs Walker and her family.

During storms, residents need to be vigilant. A point that should always be brought home to our residents is that when storms and high winds occur, all fixtures and any loose items in the backyard should be secured. I do not know if anyone has seen a trampoline being lifted one or two feet in the air, but I certainly have and it is not a pretty sight. I urge people to secure everything they can. I also urge people to stay away from rising water levels. There is no doubt that we all love our trees, but during storms and periods of high winds people should stay well away from them because we do not know what has been compromised below the surface.

Whenever possible, people should not venture out and stand next to big trees. I appreciate that some people do so to seek shelter, but the message is very clear: People should stay away and keep their family away from large trees. Moreover, whenever possible stay home and, most importantly, listen to notifications and notices issued by the State Emergency Service and other emergency service crews. At the end of the day, they are the experts, not us. Punters who are at home and who may think it is safe to go out should listen to emergency service announcements because the last thing we want is loss of life.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [12.21 p.m.]: I commend the member for Wallsend for bringing this issue to the attention of the House. My connection with Minmi is that for many years my brother-in-law lived in Lenaghans Drive, Minmi, and I know the area quite well from visiting him. He lived at the end of Lenaghans Drive where the creek runs through Minmi, so coping with floods on a regular basis was part of his life and that is why he no longer lives there. It is good to see the member for Wallsend has been returned to Parliament. I have had some good times with the member for Wallsend, the details of which I will not go into now. Suffice it to say that the member for Wallsend is laughing.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I direct the member for Heathcote to return to the leave of the motion.

Mr LEE EVANS: Indeed. I express my thanks, as other members have, to the fantastic volunteers that we have in this great State. It is times such as we experienced recently that bring to our attention the volunteers who go out in bad weather and risk their lives. On some occasions, they risk their lives to try to save people who have been quite foolish. The member for Fairfield referred to people taking unnecessary risks. In my electorate, people continually drive over a weir that is subject to flooding. Despite water flowing very swiftly over the weir, they drive over it and they come a cropper. It is then left to personnel from the State Emergency Service [SES] and the Rural Fire Service [RFS] to place their own lives at risk by attempting to save those people.

I also express my thanks to the 80,000 emergency service volunteers who dedicate themselves to protecting lives and property. In particular I thank the personnel who assisted in response and recovery tasks as a result of recent storms. I also support the statement made by the member for Wallsend regarding the splendid job done by our emergency services personnel in places including Wallsend and Minmi. I reiterate that staff and volunteers of the State Emergency Service and the Rural Fire Service have the full and utmost support of the New South Wales Government. I take this opportunity to expand on some of the support provided by the Liberal-Nationals Government to the SES and RFS in recent years.

In previous years the Liberal-Nationals Government also provided the State Emergency Service with funding for enhancing community safety through the provision of additional community engagement officers. The Government also provided funds to recruit additional flood planners and ensure that each SES unit has child lifejackets. The Government also has ensured that many of the 9,000 New South Wales SES volunteers are trained and equipped to the highest standards, which enables emergency service personnel to provide a timely response to requests for assistance from communities such as Minmi. Over the past five years the Liberal-Nationals Government also has shown support for the Rural Fire Service. This financial year's total budget allocation for RFS expenditure is \$332.9 million, which was referred to by the member for Castle Hill.

Funding allocations for the Rural Fire Service in 2014-15 include an additional \$9.7 million for brigade stations and fire control centres, bringing the total allocation for 2014-15 to \$15.7 million. All members would

agree we should take off our hats to our brave staff and volunteers of the New South Wales emergency services who see us through when our luck has run out and trees have fallen. They are always there to help and it is always great to see them in their bright orange uniforms. I thank the member for Wallsend for bringing this issue to the attention of the House.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) [12.25 p.m.]: I thank the member for Wallsend for moving the motion. I thank the member for Heathcote for his bipartisan contribution to this debate, which was very well done. I also commend the member for Fairfield for his excellent comments. A fortnight ago the Hunter region was caught in the midst of one of the most severe storms in the Hunter's history. Tragically, it resulted in the deaths of seven people. I offer my condolences to the family and friends of those who lost their lives. With wind speeds of up to 135 kilometres an hour and cyclonic conditions persisting for up to two days, the region suffered extensive flooding and storm damage that included houses being swept away, countless trees being felled, and thousands and thousands of homes being without electricity—in fact, 220,000 homes.

Having been a member of the Newcastle City Council for six years and having been chair of the Newcastle flood risk management committee, I am only too aware of flood issues that face Wallsend in particular and Newcastle generally. Despite the widespread devastation, we saw the community spirit shine through in the form of our State Emergency Service [SES] men and women who selflessly volunteered to put themselves in harm's way to assist those most in need. At a time when such severe weather caused not only physical damage to our communities but also spread fear and panic, we saw those brave volunteers continue the tradition of what makes New South Wales and Australia great: They sacrificed their time and energy for the wellbeing of others.

They rescued people, covered roofs with tarpaulins and chopped down trees despite the conditions presenting a real risk to life and limb. I sincerely pay tribute to them. It is fitting that just days after the sixtieth anniversary of our State Emergency Service we pay tribute to the enormous effort made by SES personnel in responding to 8,500 calls for help in two weeks in the Hunter alone. In what SES personnel themselves describe as the largest emergency response effort in their history, we saw other volunteers meet the enormity of the challenge as well. We had fantastic responses from Ausgrid employees and we heard 1233 ABC Newcastle and local radio stations do a fantastic job again—just as they did in the June 2007 "*Pasha Bulker* storm".

I say to members of the SES and other volunteers as well as police officers, ambulance crews, doctors and nurses, who have pulled together in this time of crisis, that we certainly salute them. They provided hope and reassurance through their professionalism and courage, which prevented further loss of life. As the member for Newcastle, I offer my deepest appreciation on my own behalf and on behalf of my constituents. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [12.29 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend that notes the impacts of the recent east coast low on so many communities stretching throughout vast regions between the mid North Coast right down to the Illawarra, but clearly having a devastating impact on the Hunter and Central Coast areas over which it hung for so long. Clearly part of the problem was that because it was slow moving its strong impact focused for a long time on regions in the Hunter and Central Coast. It caused immense damage. It was the largest single response ever required from the State Emergency Service in respect of the number of requests for assistance, which reflected the heavily populated area over which this east coast low sat for that extended period. Therefore, so many homes and businesses were impacted by this extreme weather.

Like previous speakers have said, I pay tribute to the volunteers who commit themselves to serving our community. Their commitment is present each and every day, week and year, much of which time is spent in training, preparation, coordination and away from the limelight. As they had put in the time, they were able, well equipped, well trained and well prepared to serve their communities in these times of crisis. I commend them not only for their magnificent work in a time of crisis in recent weeks but also for their commitment, patience and perseverance that has led them to this point over years of preparation. It is only through that long-term commitment that New South Wales has a high standard volunteer force protecting it.

The member for Castle Hill alluded to the potential for significant weather damage to a huge catchment if such an east coast low had, in fact, sat a little further south. If it had extended across not only the Sydney metropolitan area and the Illawarra but also the broader catchment of the Hawkesbury-Nepean rivers system it would have been an immense challenge for this State and community in that more southerly location. In recent weeks we learned that 250,000 homes were without power because so many areas in the Hunter and the Central

Coast were affected. If that same impact had occurred in Western Sydney across that vast catchment of the Hawkesbury-Nepean system we would be talking a multiple of that on a very large scale indeed. We would be looking potentially at the evacuation of people from 50,000 or 60,000 households across Western Sydney, a task which would no doubt stretch the resources of all of our emergency services.

It is just as well that these volunteers undergo such a preparation and train for extreme events they know are possible and that we have a State emergency management plan that is well coordinated and well thought through to deal with the potential extreme events which we know we could face. I commend both sides of the House for the resourcing that has been made available to our emergency services in recent years to give the best possible chance to those services to protect us in those times of need. I say "Well done" not only to all the volunteers but also to paid staff in the NSW Police Force and NSW Fire and Rescue, who have put themselves on the line for our communities in recent weeks.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.32 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contributions of members representing the electorates of Castle Hill, Fairfield, Heathcote, Newcastle and Riverstone. Among the many good points made by the member for Castle Hill was the importance of safety in extreme weather events. I know that everyone in the House would agree with him. The member for Fairfield referred to the closure of schools during such an event. One of the issues raised with the brigadier was the lack of information to our public schools. I hope we can address that better in the future.

I now know why I believe the member for Heathcote is so clever—he has relations in my electorate. He referred to the fantastic volunteers that are a credit to the Hunter and to New South Wales. I thank the member for Heathcote for his contribution. The member for Newcastle referred to the Storm Risk Management Program that has been ongoing at Newcastle City Council. I would like to see some results from that sooner rather than later, particularly for Minmi Road, Wallsend. I also acknowledge ABC1233, which was brilliant at passing on information to the community. Many people were relying on their radios to get information. The member for Riverstone mentioned the importance of safety. One of his comments could be our epitaph. He said the storm was a slow-moving system but strong in its impact, and that could relate to all members.

On behalf of all members of this House, I extend my sincerest condolences to the families of the seven who passed on during the storm in the Hunter. I thank everyone in the community services, including the Salvation Army, which I omitted to acknowledge earlier. I am sure that the Minister will acknowledge the work of the State Emergency Service and all the other contributing services.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

ALBION PARK RAIL BYPASS

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I call the member for Kiama. I trust that the debate on his motion will be far less vigorous than it was yesterday.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.36 p.m.]: Mr Assistant-Speaker, you will just have to strap yourself in and find out!

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Don't worry, I will.

Mr GARETH WARD: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Government on committing to build the Albion Park rail bypass.
- (2) Acknowledges that this commitment is contingent on the long-term leasing of poles and wires.
- (3) Notes that the Opposition's 10-year infrastructure plan did not include the Albion Park rail bypass.
- (4) Recognises that only the Government can be trusted to deliver on their promises for the Illawarra and South Coast.

It was indeed a great Monday in March when the Premier arrived in the Illawarra and announced \$550 million to build the Albion Park Rail bypass should we be re-elected to government.

Mr Mark Coure: How much?

Mr GARETH WARD: I say to the member for Oatley: \$550 million. This was the single largest commitment made by the Government in the Illawarra and, in fact, the single largest commitment made by any party in the Illawarra in the last election.

Ms Jodi McKay: It is conditional though.

Mr GARETH WARD: It is interesting that the honourable member for Strathfield is back for five minutes and is already interjecting. It is wonderful to see her on the Opposition benches—long may she remain on them. I am proud of the fact that working with my Liberal colleagues in the Illawarra we were able to deliver and secure this commitment from our side of politics. But what were the sounds on the other side? Nothing, but I will refer to the member for Kiama later because I want to talk more about this commitment. I was delighted to join the member for South Coast, the candidate for Shellharbour, Mark Jones, the candidate for Wollongong, Cameron Walter, and the candidate for Keira, Phil Clifford, in relation to this announcement. I was proud to have worked on this commitment. Anyone who knows this section of road is well aware of its 16 intersections, five sets of traffic lights—the only traffic lights between Bomaderry and Heathcote—that choke this area every day.

We were honest at the last election when we said that this commitment would be contingent on the long-term lease of poles and wires. I am disappointed that in the past few days Labor has tried to say that the Government is backing away from the promise. Labor has linked the decision of the Australian Energy Regulator to somehow say that this Government will not deliver on its promises. Who does not deliver on promises in relation to roads in the Illawarra? Thy name is Labor. Labor promised the Gerringong upgrade and the Berry bypass, and it talked about the Albion Park rail bypass. It did not deliver.

Unlike those opposite, who lied and scare-mongered at the last election, we made it clear that \$350 million of this particular project would be contingent on the long-term lease of the State's poles and wires. We will deliver in full on that commitment. I call on the Opposition to respect and vote for the mandate we were given to ensure that this State can be turbocharged through the spending of \$20 billion, including \$350 million that will go towards this project. If the member for Shellharbour sits in this House and votes against that motion, she will be voting against the Albion Park rail bypass. How will she explain to her community that she is voting against a project that she talks about but is not prepared to fund? That brings me to paragraph (3) of the motion, which states:

- (3) Notes that the Opposition's 10-year infrastructure plan did not include the Albion Park Rail Bypass.

Despite all the talk from the member for Shellharbour and the alleged lobbying, there is no recognition from her party that this is an important project. In fact, in its 10-year infrastructure plan there was not one mention of the Illawarra.

Ms Anna Watson: That's not true.

Mr GARETH WARD: I acknowledge the member for Shellharbour's interjection. I ask her to point me to the paragraph in Labor's infrastructure plan—if she has read it—which indicates that it has been funded. We know it has not been. Paragraph (4) states:

- (4) Recognises that only the Government can be trusted to deliver on their promises for the Illawarra and South Coast.

One has to look only at the Berry bypass, the Gerringong upgrade and the South Nowra upgrade delivered by the Speaker, the member for South Coast. When we make a promise, we commit to it. I was convinced that the Opposition was going to make this commitment during the campaign. On 21 January Luke Foley, the Leader of the Opposition, held a press conference at which he said that the Albion Park rail bypass could be paid for from Labor's Illawarra infrastructure fund. Do we remember this fund, the farrago of falsehoods from flip-flop Foley and his funny money faux pas, which was money that came from the long-term lease of Port Kembla? The member for Shellharbour voted against it and then said, "Hold on a second, we are going to bring money to the Illawarra from the Illawarra infrastructure fund. During the campaign we reallocated funds." Opposition members did not say what projects they were going to cut but, like the veritable Magic Pudding, they were chopping up a fund that they voted against.

I was waiting, with trepidation, for an announcement from the member for Shellharbour. It was like the Peggy Lee song, "Is that all there is?" We were waiting for something more from the Opposition, but that is all

she wrote—\$350 million for small projects with no benefit-cost ratio. The figure was just rattled out to try to win a few votes. It was money that was allocated in the budget. There was no thought about the implications if contracts or projects were cut. It is disappointing to know that that is the politics with which they engage. It is disappointing also not to see the shadow Minister for the Illawarra or the member for Wollongong in the Chamber. I thought the member for Wollongong, as Opposition Whip, would be in the Chamber debating the issue.

The member for Shellharbour had much to say about the Albion Park rail bypass. Time does not permit me now to put those points on to the record, but in my reply speech I will remind her of some of the statements she has made. She has nothing to show for her past four years in Parliament. I will continue to deliver the major investments, along with my Liberal colleagues the member for South Coast and the member for Heathcote. This Government is continuing to deliver for the Illawarra.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [12.42 p.m.]: It is always entertaining to watch the member for Kiama put on his show and little dance. Words mean nothing in this place, but actions do. The member for Kiama has not changed his spots. He is famous in the Illawarra for reheating announcements. Now he is reheating notices of motion. Only two nights ago we heard the same words come from the mouth of the member for Kiama during his private member's statement. The construction of the Albion Park rail bypass has bipartisan support. I have campaigned on it, as has the member for Kiama. There is no question that we need the road infrastructure built, but we disagree on the means by which it is funded. At the last election Labor put forward a 10-year infrastructure plan. It was funded without the need to sell off our electricity network. I make no apology for making it clear to my electorate during the election campaign that that was my position and the position of the Labor Party. I remind the member of Kiama that I was re-elected in my electorate with a 9 per cent swing to me. His party, however, suffered a 5 per cent swing away from it.

I have a direct mandate from the people of Shellharbour to oppose the Government's electricity sell-off. The Government must create a clear timetable for the construction of the Albion Park rail bypass instead of debating silly notices of motions such as this one. This morning the member for Kiama should have made it clear what the timetable for construction is, but he cannot do that. First, he does not have the money and, secondly, the promise is built on a house of cards. During the election campaign the member for Kiama announced that the Albion Park rail bypass would cost \$550 million. There is a \$50 million shortfall from what is stated in the Roads and Maritime Services December 2013 study. I have never heard of a major infrastructure project costing less money the longer it takes to build. We do not know what is being cut from the \$550 million allocation.

At the same time the funding for the bypass is needlessly complex. It relies on a cocktail of funding. In addition, \$350 million is dependent on the sell-off of the electricity network. We are told the other \$200 million will come from the existing road budget. Half of the bypass and the most expensive component—a massive bridge over Macquarie Rivulet—comes off at Yallah, which is in the Wollongong local government area. The Wollongong local government area cannot access the Government's sale proceeds from the sell-off of electricity because most of that money has been promised to Sydney's infrastructure projects. The Government, supported by the member for Kiama, has denied allocating the Wollongong local government area with any of the proceeds from the electricity sell-off.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: I know the member for Shellharbour is desperately running out of material, but the topic of the motion is the Albion Park rail bypass.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! What is the member's point of order?

Mr GARETH WARD: It goes to relevance under Standing Order 76.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I ask the member for Shellharbour to return to the leave of the motion.

Ms ANNA WATSON: Also at risk is the \$350 million in funding. The Australian Energy Regulator has issued a final determination to cut power costs for consumers. This will lower the sale price for electricity assets and the Government will not have the \$20 billion it suggests it will receive from the sell-off. In turn, this means less funding for the Government's promised infrastructure projects, including the Albion Park rail bypass. The member for Kiama has reheated this silly the motion for those reasons instead of outlining a clear timetable for the construction of the bypass.

Earlier this week the member for Kiama was on the ABC Illawarra bemoaning the standards of debate in politics in this place. He said that he wanted a new kind of politics. This morning he could have put his money where his mouth is by outlining a timetable for the construction of the bypass. But he has not, and he cannot. It is a pity. The people of southern Illawarra are not a bit interested in the self-congratulatory motions of the member for Kiama. They want a clear timetable for the construction of the bypass. They want a clear indication that the money that the member for Kiama promised during the election campaign will be available. I suggest that the next time he moves a motion for debate on this issue that it addresses those two key issues. Nobody else cares too much about the pointless theatrics contained in the motion.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [12.48 p.m.]: I welcome the opportunity to speak on this important motion about the Albion Park rail bypass. I note the indignant rant from the member for Shellharbour about why it will not be built. I am sorry to tell her that the bypass will be built. We have the plan and it will be a reality.

Ms Anna Watson: Show us the timetable.

Mr LEE EVANS: This is not actually a glossy brochure—for which the Labor Party is so well-known.

Ms Anna Watson: It is not a timetable either.

Mr LEE EVANS: What timetable do you need? It takes several years to build anything so it will be built in the next couple of years. It gives me great pride to support the major roadworks heading south from Sydney. I highlight the role of the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast. Without his continual lobbying the hundreds of millions of dollars being committed to the Illawarra and South Coast would not have eventuated. In the mid-1990s the then Roads and Traffic Authority undertook a study that identified a preferred route for the bypass. To reserve land for this bypass route, a road corridor was included in the Wollongong and Shellharbour city councils local environmental plans. This road corridor protects the route from development and reserves the land for the road.

In 2013 Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] reviewed the road corridor and confirmed that the reserved corridor is suitable for a bypass of Albion Park Rail. Roads and Maritime Services recently invited community representatives to participate in a flood focus group to give local residents the chance to understand and to contribute to the flood assessment process. Nineteen community representatives were selected and are now working with the project team and technical specialists.

The first meeting was held on Monday 16 March 2015 and provided members with an update on the project from RMS, followed by presentations from Wollongong and Shellharbour city councils on flood modelling carried out in the catchment areas relevant to the proposed Albion Park Rail bypass. The second meeting was held on Wednesday 1 April 2015. At the meeting an overview of the flood assessment and modelling that had been undertaken by RMS was presented to the group. This provided the group with an overview of existing conditions, the flood modelling approach and the expected results. Links to the meeting notes and presentations are available online. Once the road is completed—

Ms Anna Watson: If it ever gets started.

Mr LEE EVANS: Don't you worry about that. We are good at turning sods. I put to the House that the significant upgrading of infrastructure in the section of this South Coast be dedicated to Madam Speaker, the member for South Coast. We can imagine that in the future we will be driving over Shelley Hancock Bridge on to Shelley Hancock Drive and turning on to Gareth Ward Street. I can see the signs now. I know Opposition members are very good at naming things after their past luminaries and it is only fair that we should now start to do the same thing. [*Time expired.*]

MARK COURE (Oatley) [12.52 p.m.]: This is an historic motion. I place on record my sincere thanks and congratulations to the member for South Coast and the member for Kiama, who is the mover of the motion. It is an important project that the Government is undertaking. It is a major upgrade, a \$550 million upgrade for the people of the Illawarra, and one that is sorely needed. It will return local streets to local communities. It will mean that up to 16 intersections will be bypassed and travel times will be reduced by up to 30 per cent. The Government is getting on with the job of building the much-needed infrastructure.

Ms Anna Watson: What about the crossroads?

Mr MARK COURE: I will get to the crossroads in a second if I have time. I thank the member for Kiama for getting on with the job and lobbying both the Premier and the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight to get this project going as quickly as possible. As we know, we are currently at the planning stage and construction will start during this term of government. Once completed, it is expected there will be a sixfold reduction in crashes and fewer impacts from flooding. There will be more efficiency in movement of freight and better and more reliable trips for locals, tourists, business and freight.

We on this side have a plan and we announced that during the election campaign. We are getting on with the job of building this major road upgrade. As we all know, this is the last town to be bypassed between Sydney and Bomaderry. It will result in a major improvement for the Albion Park community. Actions speak louder than words and the Government is getting on with the job of completing this missing link. Members opposite had 16 years to start and complete this upgrade.

Mr Lee Evans: The missing links are on the other side.

Mr MARK COURE: That is very true. We on this side have a plan. We are getting on with the job; we are completing this missing link. The missing links on the other side have no plan; they have no future. It is proof that we care about people living in the Illawarra and we are getting on with the job of getting this infrastructure built as quickly as possible. As we saw at the recent election, the Labor Party had no plan or announcement—none whatsoever. This project shows that the Government cares about the Illawarra. The Labor Party does not care; it has no plan. We are getting on with the job. Opposition members should not be roadblocks. They should support this plan because we are getting on with the job of building this bypass.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Strathfield has been a member of this place on a previous occasion and should know the decorum of the House. She should act with the appropriate decorum.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.56 p.m.], in reply: It is wonderful to see the member for Wollongong finally enter the Chamber for a debate that is important to the Illawarra—the very hardworking member for Wollongong, who is up at the crack of noon every day, working hard for the people of her electorate. Only Labor Party members could come in here and ask about funding and time lines for a project they did not commit to. Only Labor Party members could raise concerns about a \$50 million shortfall when they did not even commit to the road. There was no shortfall.

If they had actually bothered to read the note on Roads and Maritime Services' website they would realise that we changed the route. Only they would be so inept as to want to spend \$50 million more on a road they would not build. The black hole was the \$550 million because Labor did not commit to it during the campaign. The member for Shellharbour could not even talk the time out on this particular project, so passionate is she about this particular project. Let us have a look at what the member for Shellharbour said on 10 October 2014 on ABC Illawarra. She said:

Ms Watson says progress on the Albion Park Rail bypass could be a decade away and the NSW Government is putting-off construction work.

"What a joke", she said.

"This is one of the most hated roads in New South Wales and here we have a New South Wales Liberal Government planning on putting it off for up to another ten years, so I just think it's disgraceful".

Well, who committed to it at the election? We committed to it, not Labor. On 3 December 2013 it got better. She said:

Everybody knows that's the missing link—

and we all know they know about missing links, although I think that is an insult to missing links—

and they need to just get on and do the job.

Join them with what? There is nothing in Labor's infrastructure plan for the next 10 years. In attacking me the member for Shellharbour said:

"He just lacks the guts to tell the people of Albion Park and Albion Park Rail that they'll have to continue with worsening traffic congestion every day."

She claimed that she would ensure that Albion Park Rail bypass got priority over the Berry to Bomaderry stage of the highway if Labor won government.

Thank goodness they did not win. Government members went to the people with an honest plan about how we would pay for the bypass, but there was not one commitment from members opposite. It appears that the only supporter of the member for Shellharbour is the member for Strathfield. Of course, Strathfield and Albion Park have such a close connection. That was the best they could offer. I regard the member very highly, but perhaps not when it comes to commenting on Albion Park. I sincerely thank my good friend the member for Heathcote, who knows about the importance of spending on infrastructure. He is a member on the side of the House that is doing things. Actions speak louder than words, and the member for Heathcote knows that this Government has taken real action on the Princes Highway. In fact, it has committed to spending \$1.5 billion.

Ms Jodi McKay: What is the start date?

Mr GARETH WARD: I acknowledge that interjection. The Government has said that it will start the project in this term of government. It will be underway in 2018. The planning work is being done and the Government will continue to ensure that it happens. My very good friend the Deputy Whip and member for Oatley also knows about delivering infrastructure. He works hard and diligently to ensure that his electorate receives the benefits it should. Of course, he had a well-deserved swing towards him at the recent election. Members on this side of the House will get on with the job. I ask people to judge us not on what we say we will do but on what we actually do. Members opposite have no plans for, and made no commitments to, the Illawarra. I ask people to judge us on what this Government delivers. We have much to get on with and members opposite should get out of the way and let us do it. They should stop opposing the Government's infrastructure plans for our region. Let the Government get on with delivering.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 43

Mr Anderson	Ms Gibbons	Mr Provest
Mr Aplin	Ms Goward	Mr Roberts
Mr Barilaro	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Sidoti
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Skinner
Mr Brookes	Mr Henskens	Mr Speakman
Mr Conolly	Mr Humphries	Mr Stokes
Mr Constance	Mr Kean	Mr Taylor
Mr Coure	Dr Lee	Mr Tudehope
Mr Crouch	Mr Maguire	Mr Ward
Mrs Davies	Mr Marshall	Mr Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr Notley-Smith	Mrs Williams
Mr Elliott	Mrs Pavey	
Mr Evans	Mr Perrottet	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gee	Ms Petinos	Mr Bromhead
Mr George	Mr Piccoli	Mr Patterson

Noes, 34

Ms Aitchison	Mr Harris	Mr Parker
Mr Atalla	Ms Harrison	Mr Piper
Ms Burney	Ms Haylen	Ms K. Smith
Ms Car	Mr Hoenig	Ms T. F. Smith
Mr Chanthivong	Ms Hornery	Mr Warren
Mr Crakanthorp	Mr Kamper	Ms Washington
Mr Daley	Ms Leong	Ms Watson
Mr Dib	Mr Lynch	Mr Zangari
Ms Doyle	Dr McDermott	
Ms Finn	Ms McKay	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Foley	Ms Mihailuk	Ms Hay
Mr Greenwich	Mr Minns	Mr Lalich

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Pursuant to resolution private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LIVERPOOL CATHOLIC CLUB

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [1.11 p.m.]: Today I draw to the attention of the House publication of the history of the Liverpool Catholic Club. On 7 December I was delighted to attend the launch of the book written by Mike Davis, who is well known in the club industry and for the club histories he has written. I have spoken previously about his history of the John Edmondson VC Memorial Club. The history of clubs, particularly good clubs such as these, is inevitably also the history of a local community. That is why such well-written works are also important examples of local history.

The scale of growth and expansion of the Liverpool Catholic Club from 300 to 45,000 members is well captured in this history. In the book's foreword the club's life member number one, Bob Brassell, points to the school bursary given by the club to each year 12 dux of the four local Catholic high schools—originally \$25 and now \$7,500—as a symbol of this growth. Bob is a well-known figure in Liverpool and helped to provide important documentary evidence for this book. In his introduction Mike Davis commented that the history of the club is about a lot more than just new buildings. He said the book "epitomises the many Australian traditions of mateship, helping one another, beating the odds, time for each other, personal accountability and responsibility". He also gives special thanks for the help he received in obtaining information and preparing the book from current chief executive officer John Turnbull, Dave Vidler, Gary Parisi, Hambli Lati, Pat Murray, current board director and life member Phil Coleman, and Antoinette Sultana.

In any club the individuals involved play an important part. Mike recounts personal stories that focus on John Turnbull, Bob Brassell, Charles Gullotta, Con Kontitsa, Jack Best, John Cairns, Pat Murray, Pat Thomas, Phil Coleman, Silvo Marucci, Stan Seconi, Warren Williams, Bernie Doria, Bruce Vale, Jean Garard, Marie Hamer, John Rugless, Brian Wood and Russell Bartholomew. Current club president Tony Atkins, who has been on the board for 25 years, points to the many ways in which the club benefits the community, including its important facilities and its support for charities and community groups.

The club has a function centre; Liverpool's best hotel, the Mercure; an ice rink; restaurants and lounges; an 18-hole mini golf course; and a real golf course at Thurgoona. Tony pays tribute, in particular, to the very large number of volunteers involved with the 18 associated intra-clubs, many of whom have been volunteering for more than 20 years. Acknowledgement is given to general manager John Turnbull who has been with the club for 30 years and he, in turn, pays appropriate tribute to the club's employees and the contributions they have made. Long-term master of ceremonies Steve Murphy is also acknowledged. The history of Liverpool gives the context for the club's development and growth. On 1 December 1979 the first club building opened on Hoxton Park Road. New suburbs in Liverpool such as Green Valley were developed literally at the club's front door.

The club's history is inevitably tied into the history of the Catholic Church in Liverpool and this State. The history notes the viciously anti-Catholic and anti-Irish comments of sectarian bigots such as Governor Brisbane and Samuel Marsden. The book tells also of the progress in the nineteenth century of Father John Joseph Terry, Father Richard Marum, the All Saints Catholic Church, the original primary school and the work of the Sisters of Charity. In 1954 the Patrician Brothers came to Liverpool and other parishes developed. The origins of the club are found in the All Saints Golf Club and the Liverpool Patrician Brothers Sports Club. In fact, a steering committee was established on the presbytery steps of All Saints and the first official meeting took place in 1970. I note that one of the parishioners of All Saints was a retired licensing magistrate who seems to have been of great assistance. The first committee election was also held in 1970. Bob Brassell and John Duffy were elected secretary and treasurer, Warren Williams was elected foundation president and permission was eventually received from the hierarchy to use the word "Catholic" in the club's name.

The club was incorporated in February 1971 and a licence was granted by the Metropolitan Licensing Court in June 1977, despite public grumbling by other clubs. The usual fundraising activities and the issuing of debentures allowed the official opening of the first building in 1979. That opening was performed by Bishop David Cremin. He actually declared open the "Illawarra Catholic club" to the consternation of those present. That slip of the tongue was soon corrected but he has continued to be reminded of it for the past 40 years. The book also details the constant and continual expansion of the club's buildings. The history records Bishop Cremin at one of those openings giving a special prayer in which he said, "The Liverpool Catholic Club's

extensions are now open with a special blessing on the bar and poker machines." Lots of interesting stories inevitably emerge from a history such as this. My favourite comes from long-term member Jack Best. One night he was duty director and relieved the doorman at the club entrance, who was having his evening meal. The front door opened and in walked Gough Whitlam, not accompanied by security or anyone else. Gough asked if he had to sign the book and where the local meeting of the Green Valley branch of the Labor Party was. Jack also has some interesting stories about nuns playing poker machines—and a photograph. This book is an impressive history about a very significant institution in my electorate.

CAMDEN ELECTORATE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE HIGH ACHIEVERS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [1.16 p.m.]: Today I speak about the successful Higher School Certificate [HSC] high achievers in my electorate. Each year Camden Council recognises its Higher School Certificate high achievers through a mayoral reception to acknowledge their wonderful efforts. I am proud to say that these awards were first introduced in 2007, when I was mayor, to acknowledge Camden's 2006 Higher School Certificate high achievers. The then director of schools, Gary Waldon, had a passion for teaching and recognised the hard work put in by students. He approached me to initiate official recognition of such outstanding results. Gary acknowledged how proud the families, school communities and wider community were of these outstanding students, so it was only fitting that they be so recognised. In 2007 Gary took leave to have routine knee reconstruction and whilst in hospital he caught an infection. Tragically, Gary passed away the next month. He never saw firsthand the mayoral reception in 2007. Pleasingly, this ceremony has continued.

The following students achieved a band 5 or band 6 in one or more subjects. Congratulations to Magdalene Catholic High School students Rhiannon Ace, Bree Aldridge, Thomas Arias, Chiara Assetta, John Azzi, Taylor-Anne Barbaro, Aleesha Bertoldi, Jake Bethune, Katherine Bonanno, Monique Borg, Tiarnne Brown, Abbey Bull, Joel Burke, Lachlan Burke, Megan Casey, Elizabeth Coluccio, Taylah Davidson, Clare Dowswell, Keziah Duguid, Alexandra Francis-Reynolds, Campbell Green, Yasmin Haley, Jackson Harrison, Jarrad Harvey, Danica Irving, Tahlia Irving, Emily Jansz, Sarah Kennedy, Jake Lombardo, Jacqueline Marshall, Kate Moran, Cody Newton, Eloise O'Meara, Jordan Parker, Hannah Perigo, Nicholas Pervan, Laura Petrie, Emma Potocki, Madeleine Rosevear, Maddison Rullis, Joshua Sanchez, Lucy Sharp, Rachael Smith, Christopher Talese, Christopher Willis and Daniel Zanatta.

From Camden High School, students Jacob Bennett, Rachel Bickle, Joshua Black, Carly James, Liam Knox, Jacob Malcolm, Bridget McGrath, Alicia Moses, Jarrod Prout, Alison Skinner and Nicholas Small. From Elderslie High School, students Christie Anderson, Nicole Ascaino, Tianna Bell, Lauren Caines, Raelene Carter, Elliot Christie, Ashleigh Cooper, Jessica Cumerlato, Kate Dawson, Bronte De Sousa, Monique Dunk, Hannah Fairweather, Olivia Fairweather, Tiarne Gruosso, Carrie Hauville, Ani Hoxha, Elizabeth Knowles, Hayden McDonald, Leah Morgan, Sophia Nejkov, Timothy Parks, Sarah Smith, Ashlee Starr, Isabel Suleau, Jamie-Lee Turner, Ashleigh Vave, Emily Walker and Demi Woods.

From Macarthur Anglican School, students Robert Alexander, Zachary Ball, Abbey Bamford, Brendan Banks, Rhiannon Barrett, Amanda Bentley, Gingkwan Boonpun, Caitlin Bowman, Montana Byers, William Clinton, Joshua Condello, Amy Cooper, Andrew Corby, Emma Cosier, Renee Cowper, Courtney Cross, Sally Darwish, Hannah Ebeling, MacKenzie Edgington, Carolyn Fernandez, David Fyvie, James Hadjimichael, Jamie-Lee Hayes, Tyson Hooker, Emma Houghton, Hsiu-I Hsiao, Lachlan Hunter, Mia Iorfino, Taylor Jones, Robert Keane, Donald Kerr, Tabetta Lane, Jeremy Lawless, Ann Lubke, Abbey Macdonald, Justice Massaad, Brooke McCarthy, Stuart McIntosh, Tobias Morgan, Azwad Murshed, Connor Newdick, Emma Nockles, Andre Pearce, Luke Perich, Paige Perich, Bessie-Lucile Platt, Marie Playford, Andre Ponniah, Andrzej Prociuk, Jasmine Read, Jacqueline Robertson, Annie Shao, Matthew Smith, Georgia Spagnol, Kate Springett, Josiah Syjes, Jia Yee Tan, Daniel Tanios, Tristan Thorman, Kym Van den Heuvel, Samuel Watson, Daniel Whittle, Alanna Wright and Melissa Zenkis.

We have wonderful students in our schools and I congratulate all these remarkable students for their outstanding efforts in last year's HSC. These students are our future leaders, and I look forward to working with them when they become leaders in their chosen careers. They will be great achievers, and I commend them. I commend as well the principals and staff of the schools, who do a great job in ensuring the students receive the best possible education.

COAL SEAM GAS

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.21 p.m.]: I speak for the first time in this the Fifty-sixth Parliament of New South Wales with the honour and privilege to serve as the

member for Clarence. I thank the voters in the electorate of Clarence for this privilege. It is also a great privilege to serve this Parliament as Parliamentary Secretary for the North Coast, and I take on that role with great humility and with all due responsibility.

During the election campaign and, in fact, over the past four years, one issue has been at the forefront of community concern across the North Coast, and that issue is coal seam gas [CSG]. Since coming to government in 2011, the Liberal-Nationals Government has taken every measure to regulate the coal seam gas industry and to provide protections for our water and our environment. We have taken a very measured approach to the development of a CSG industry in New South Wales when compared with the approach of the previous Labor Government and we have taken a much more precautionary approach to that taken by the Queensland Government.

The NSW Gas Plan developed by the Liberal- Nationals Government is based on science. It has been very successful in reducing the CSG footprint across New South Wales from about 48 per cent to 11 per cent through its buyback program as well as through the cancellation of licences, where appropriate. But still community opposition to CSG grows. I live in this community and I hear what a wide cross section of people say.

These are people from all walks of life, like the Knitting Nannas who sit outside my office every Tuesday afternoon, the famers who rely on the clean, green reputation we have in the Northern Rivers to market their produce, and just ordinary townsfolk who are concerned about the future for their grandkids. These are not extremists, just everyday people from my electorate. They are very fearful of the potential for long-term impacts on our water, our land, our livelihood, our health and our lifestyle that the CSG industry may have in my electorate of Clarence and in our beautiful Northern Rivers. We live in a lifestyle region and we must protect the very essence that makes it such a wonderful place to live.

I applauded the action taken by the Liberal- Nationals Government to suspend Metgasco's drilling program at Bentley last year, and so did the people of the Northern Rivers. There is something very fundamentally wrong when 6,000 or 7,000 people are prepared to confront 1,000 police because they feel so concerned about the impacts of the CSG industry, that it is an industry which is incompatible with our traditional agricultural industries, that it is wrong for the Northern Rivers and that it is dangerous to our environment. Confrontation of this magnitude is not the way we conduct business in any jurisdiction in Australia, nor is it acceptable or appropriate to conduct business like this in the electorate of Clarence.

I was extremely disappointed by the decision of the Supreme Court of New South Wales to quash the suspension of the drilling program issued to Metgasco by the New South Wales Government. I was disappointed because I believe the decision is wrong and it flies in the face of community sentiment. The community wants a gas field-free Northern Rivers. I support my community and I support this proposition.

I have urged the Government to explore every opportunity to appeal the decision of the Supreme Court. Should this not be an option, then I firmly believe that the Government has the capacity to deliver a gas field-free Northern Rivers through the NSW Gas Plan. I urge the Government to investigate, as a matter of urgency, every option available to do so, starting with the Metgasco licence. I believe there is an opportunity whereby a compromise position can be reached which satisfies Metgasco, the New South Wales Government, the taxpayers of New South Wales and the community of the Northern Rivers. They want a gas field-free Northern Rivers. That is what I want, I know that is what my colleagues on the North Coast want and that is the goal we should be aiming for as a government.

LONDONDERRY ELECTORATE COMMUNITY

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) [1.26 p.m.]: In my first private members' statement I pay tribute to the fantastic community groups in my electorate, especially those in the suburbs around Mount Druitt. Over the past two years I have come to know many of these groups and I am very proud to take up their issues in Parliament. As members would know, over the past two weeks there has been a great deal of community outrage at the SBS documentary entitled *Struggle Street*. Much of this documentary is filmed in my electorate of Londonderry, particularly in the suburbs of Willmot and Lethbridge Park. It is deeply concerning how these suburbs, and, by extension, the people of Mount Druitt, have been portrayed by SBS. SBS has stereotyped and mocked our community.

The electorate of Londonderry is facing big challenges. I am the first to admit that, but let us not pretend that this documentary helps overcome these challenges in any way. SBS might say that this is about

shining a light on issues that have been forgotten by our State and our country, but once they finish filming they are never heard from again. All they leave behind is the mess they have created. Progress that is being made in the community is set back by documentaries like *Struggle Street*. Stereotypes that we are shaking off are enhanced, all in the name of good television.

This documentary is grossly unethical. SBS has taken advantage of the generosity of the people of Western Sydney and selectively shown footage that is designed to demonise the Mount Druitt community. It is unacceptable that a public broadcaster would use hardworking taxpayers' money to produce a program like this. What is particularly alarming to me is a report in today's *Daily Telegraph* that SBS producers purchased junk food for participants and drove some participants to purchase illegal drugs so that they could use that footage. This cannot and has not gone unnoticed by our community.

I congratulate Blacktown Mayor Stephen Bali on taking up the fight to SBS and advocating for a fairer and more balanced program. I also congratulate the member for Mount Druitt, my colleague Edmond Atalla, and the Federal member for Chifley, Ed Husic, on standing up for our community. It beggars belief that the documentary fails to acknowledge the fantastic work that community groups do in my electorate every single day.

Instead of focusing on the slander by SBS, I want to inform the House of the positive work being done in the Mount Druitt region every day. This work is done by groups such as the Willmot Community Group, led by the unstoppable Peta Kennedy, working tirelessly in bringing the community together. The group organises events such as the Willmot Festival and the annual Mother's Day function, which I will be attending tomorrow. The Willmot Community Group participates in group walks around the suburb, working together with Blacktown council to fix issues that need urgent attention. The group worked with Graceades Community Cottage and the Holy Family Primary Emerton to establish the Willmot hub, where local residents can access community services.

In another suburb, the Whalan Community Action Group runs a successful Men's Shed, producing woodwork and providing support and an outlet for men in our community. During the election campaign, I was astounded to learn that this dedicated group of volunteers makes curtains for people living in Housing NSW accommodation in Whalan, as the department does not provide blinds.

I am also very proud of the work of the Tregear Public School parents and citizens association, which is intimately involved in the Tregear community. Recently I attended the Anzac service at Tregear Public School, which brought together the entire community to pay tribute to the Centenary of Anzac. This was an inspiring service, with a focus on the New Zealand contribution to Anzac. This is an important part of our history, particularly for our Maori community in Tregear. The Tregear parents and citizens association also provides a breakfast club every morning, ensuring that all schoolchildren have a nutritious breakfast before the day commences.

All of these groups should be acknowledged for the fantastic work they do in our community, even if SBS has chosen not to do so. I pay tribute to them and the many other community groups in my electorate whose commitment to serving our region through volunteerism inspires me to represent them in this place.

[The Assistant-Speaker (Mr Andrew Fraser) left the chair at 1.31 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the public gallery Rod Gillett, Group Education Director at EduCo Global, guest of the member for Oxley. I also welcome 12 years 11 and 12 students and their teacher from Emmanuel Anglican College, Ballina, guests of the member for Ballina. I welcome 60 students, from kindergarten to year 12, and their teacher from homeschooling Central Coast. I also welcome Cameron Walters, who was the Liberal Party candidate for the electorate of Wollongong in the recent State election and is here today as a guest of the member for Kiama.

TEMPORARY SPEAKERS

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 19, I do hereby nominate the following members to act as Temporary Speakers whenever requested to do so by, or in the absence of, the Deputy-Speaker and the Assistant-Speaker: Mr Lee Justin Evans, Ms Melanie Rhonda Gibbons, Mr Adam John Marshall, Mr Bruce Neville Notley-Smith and Ms Anna Watson.

COMMISSION TO ADMINISTER PLEDGE OF LOYALTY OR OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER: I report that His Excellency the Governor has issued the following Commission:

His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley, Companion of the Order of Australia, Distinguished Service Cross, (Retired), Governor of the State of New South Wales in the Commonwealth of Australia

GREETING

Pursuant to the power and authority vested in me by the Constitution Act 1902, I, General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd), Governor of the State of New South Wales, in the Commonwealth of Australia, hereby authorise the Honourable Shelley Elizabeth Hancock MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, as a person before whom the Pledge of Loyalty or Oath of Allegiance, required by law to be taken by every Member of the Legislative Assembly before that Member shall be permitted to sit or vote in the Legislative Assembly, may be taken.

Given under my Hand and the Public Seal of the State, this sixth day of May, 2015.

By His Excellency's Command

MIKE BAIRD
Premier

DAVID HURLEY
Governor

COMMISSION TO ADMINISTER PLEDGE OF LOYALTY OR OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER: I report that His Excellency the Governor has issued the following Commission:

His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley, Companion of the Order of Australia, Distinguished Service Cross, (Retired), Governor of the State of New South Wales in the Commonwealth of Australia

GREETING

Pursuant to the power and authority vested in me by the Constitution Act 1902, I, General The Honourable David Hurley, Governor of the State of New South Wales, in the Commonwealth of Australia, hereby authorise the Honourable Thomas George MP, Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, in the absence of the Honourable the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, as a person before whom the Pledge of Loyalty or Oath of Allegiance, required by law to be taken by every Member of the Legislative Assembly before that Member shall be permitted to sit or vote in the Legislative Assembly, may be taken.

Given under my Hand and the Public Seal of the State, this sixth day of May, 2015.

By His Excellency's Command

MIKE BAIRD
Premier

DAVID HURLEY
Governor

COMMISSION TO ADMINISTER PLEDGE OF LOYALTY OR OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER: I report that His Excellency the Governor has issued the following Commission:

His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley, Companion of the Order of Australia, Distinguished Service Cross, (Retired), Governor of the State of New South Wales in the Commonwealth of Australia

GREETING

Pursuant to the power and authority vested in me by the Constitution Act 1902, I, General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd), Governor of the State of New South Wales, in the Commonwealth of Australia, hereby authorise Mr Andrew Raymond Gordon Fraser MP, Assistant Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, in the absence of the Honourable the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the Honourable the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, as a person before whom the Pledge of Loyalty or Oath of Allegiance, required by law to be taken by every Member of the Legislative Assembly before that Member shall be permitted to sit or vote in the Legislative Assembly, may be taken.

Given under my Hand and the Public Seal of the State, this sixth day of May, 2015.

By His Excellency's Command

MIKE BAIRD
Premier

DAVID HURLEY
Governor

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I advise members that the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport; the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Planning; and the Deputy Premier will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Local Government.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Notices of Motions**

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.17 p.m.]

TAFE NSW COMPUTER SYSTEM

Mr LUKE FOLEY: My question is directed to the Premier. What steps has the Government taken to guarantee that the TAFE computer system is working properly and that the backlog of thousands of students unable to graduate or enrol is cleared?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is great to be back in the Chamber on day two.

Mr Michael Daley: That's a strong opening line.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I am waiting for you to ask a question. I am looking forward to it.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The question was asked by an Opposition member and Opposition members should listen to the answer.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Leader of the Opposition has asked a question in relation to—

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Opposition members need to calm down. I have been asked a question about TAFE.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: When the problem was first aired—that is, when we first understood that there was a problem—the Minister for Education worked hard with the Department of Education and Communities to ensure that the problem was dealt with. A lot of effort went into that. As I have been advised and as I am aware, most of the backlog has been cleared.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira will come to order. This is not a debate.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In simple terms, can we do better? Of course we could. We responded to the challenge and we have done everything possible to get students into TAFE. I think it is a great thing that we have people in TAFE. I remember the election campaign that was run by those opposite, and again, it will not surprise anyone—it was dishonest.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Those opposite tried to suggest that we were against TAFE. But we are for TAFE in a big way—we support TAFE.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: What is the member's point of order?

Ms Linda Burney: My point of order relates to relevance. The question was: What steps has the Premier taken? If the Premier does not know the answer he should tell us so.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier remains relevant to the question. There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Canterbury must have missed it because I answered the question. I point out that it is the first time the system has been upgraded in 30 years. Labor never upgraded the system; it just left it as it was. It is another situation that we have had to deal with.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order. She should listen to the answer. I can still hear the member for Cessnock.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Yes, there were some teething problems, but we have worked through those—as we would in any new system—and we continue to support TAFE. One of the proudest parts of the campaign that we recently ran was when we said that we are about providing every opportunity for our youth—the next generation—and particularly some of our most disadvantaged youth.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation coming from Opposition members. The member for Wyong will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: So we preserved 200,000 scholarships for the most disadvantaged youth and for all youth in public housing. We want to give them every opportunity to learn a skill and then get a job. That is what we are about. We are about creating more jobs in this economy, providing opportunities for individuals and giving them the tools they need to get ahead in life. That is exactly what we have done more broadly across our policy and that is exactly what we have done in TAFE. We are very proud of what we have done for TAFE; we are proud there is a new system and we are doing everything possible to make it easy for students, as a responsible government does.

JOBS CREATION

Mr MARK COURE: My question is directed to the Premier. What is the Government doing to create more jobs for the people of New South Wales?

The SPEAKER: Order! I know it is Thursday and it is difficult for the member for Keira to go this long without being removed from the Chamber, but he will be very soon if he does not cease interjecting.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Oatley must have been part of the Opposition's tactics team this morning. I congratulate the member for Oatley not only on winning his seat but also on getting a swing towards him. Those opposite said they were not going to see the member for Oatley again. But look at him—there he is. What a great election result. He is still the member because he is doing such a great job in his community.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: During our election campaign we made a commitment to keep the economy moving. We know those opposite do not quite understand that, but we said before the last election in 2011 that we were going to create 100,000 extra jobs and the good news is that since April 2011 we have created 188,000 jobs in the economy. We have done more than we said.

The SPEAKER: Order! This is not a debate. The member for Wyong and the member for Charlestown can speak on this matter later. The member for Maroubra will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I point out to the new members of the Opposition that this is what happens: the Opposition is in denial because it does not understand economic facts. The Opposition gets quite upset when more jobs come into the economy.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: For some reason, the shadow Treasurer gets very upset when we have good job news. I do not know why, but that is what happens.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Under the Labor Government—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Maroubra to order for the second time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I just want to remind the new members—because we understand it but the new members do not—that for the last five years of the former Labor Government this State had the lowest economic growth and the lowest jobs growth in the country. Under the Labor Government the unemployment rate was 0.4 per cent above the national average. That is what it delivered to the people of this State, and there has been a real turnaround since then.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We are very happy that on all those indicators New South Wales leads the nation again—we are back to being number one. It is quite simple. When we take away taxes, give more confidence to employers, build infrastructure and invest in housing look what happens—the economy starts to grow and jobs start to grow. We have made a commitment for the next four years that we will deliver another 150,000 jobs into the economy and that is exactly what we are going to do. That is why I am so proud that the Treasurer is today introducing legislation in the House that extends the successful Jobs Action Plan. We remember what that plan did. We understand that if we want more jobs we take away the cost of more jobs, provide incentives to business and they get on with it—they employ, they invest and they grow the economy.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We are not only extending the \$5,000 payroll tax rebate for the next four years. This Government understands that small business drives the economy. Therefore, we are providing a \$2,000 incentive to small businesses that invest in employment in this State. We think that is a great thing and we are very proud to do it. We remember that Labor members did have a business policy in the election campaign. What did they want to do to business?

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: Tax jobs.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Exactly right. They wanted taxes to go up, up and up. That is what they do—it is in their DNA. They wanted to give \$7,500 to every business but what would that do to job numbers? They would go down, down and down.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Labor members are very happy to stand in the way of the biggest jobs creator in this State. The lease of the poles and wires will provide, through Rebuilding NSW, more than 120,000 jobs to the economy. For some reason, those opposite do not want to do it. The Leader of the Opposition has said that he wants New South Wales to be an economic powerhouse but he does not want 120,000 jobs in the economy. How does that work?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Leader of the Opposition said that the election was a referendum on electricity assets. Well, it is over. That means the Opposition has an opportunity to back the mandate and get those 120,000 jobs into the economy.

TAFE NSW COMPUTER SYSTEM

Mr DAVID HARRIS: My question is directed to the Minister for Skills. How many students are still waiting to graduate from TAFE courses completed last year as a result of the Government's failed implementation of its new \$573 million computer system?

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I thank the member for Wyong for that very good question. It is unfortunate—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order

Mr JOHN BARILARO: The people of Wyong have given the member for Wyong the privilege of a second chance in this place. One would have thought that the first question he would ask as the shadow Minister would have actually backed the TAFE sector and its teachers and workers.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will come to order.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: He calls himself a champion for educators in this State but he has decided to come into this place and to do the same as the Opposition did for the previous four years and the same as he did during the campaign period—that is, to trash TAFE in this State.

Mr David Harris: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question. The member for Wyong has not given the Minister a chance to answer his question because he has been interjecting. I call the member for Wyong to order for the second time. The Minister has the call.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I am proud to have been given the role of Minister for Skills and have carriage over TAFE.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wyong will cease interjecting.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I am a strong advocate for TAFE because I have a background in industry. I came from the manufacturing sector, which has relied heavily on the workforce that TAFE delivers to New South Wales. For 20 years in manufacturing, joinery and carpentry I relied on TAFE and the vocational education and training [VET] sector to deliver the workforce of the future. As the Premier said earlier, we have come into this term of government with an ambitious campaign.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. How many students are still waiting?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I would be delighted if members were to take original points of order. I call the member for Strathfield to order for the first time.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: The implementation of the IT system in TAFE NSW is part of the legacy of members opposite after their long time in government. That legacy was to not invest in TAFE and not bring it up to meet the needs of today's students. Members opposite are trashing the hardworking administrators in the TAFE system who have had to endure the rollout of the IT system. We accept there have been some problems, as there obviously would be after 15 or 30 years of lack of investment. We understood that we had to roll this system out and that, like any major program rollout, we were going to run into a number of problems. The dedicated staff at TAFE have made the effort and worked long hours to make sure that students are not disadvantaged by the IT problems. We are trying to ensure that we make the transition easier. Once we get through the IT program and the investment TAFE will be brought up to the standards of the twenty-first century. We will have the ability to manage enrolments—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Maroubra that I have already ruled that the Minister is being relevant. The member knows that I cannot direct the Minister on how to answer a question.

Mr Michael Daley: Madam Speaker, I have waited two minutes since your last ruling to see whether the Minister would answer the question. It is May and the system is still broken. How many students are waiting?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question. That is all I can ask of him under the standing orders.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I am remaining relevant because I am talking about the IT system that the question referred to. That IT system is going to bring TAFE into the twenty-first century, which is something that members opposite neglected to do. I am sure that the reforms that we have put in place through Smart and Skilled will ensure that TAFE will play an important role in delivering the training and education of the workforce of the future. Earlier the Premier spoke about the 150,000 jobs that will be created in this State over the next four years.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled four times that the Minister is being relevant. Does the member have a different point of order?

Ms Linda Burney: My point of order is relevance. If the Minister does not know the answer he should sit down.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: The Premier spoke about the courageous and bold plan for New South Wales that will mean that through the transaction of the poles and wires we will invest billions of dollars in infrastructure and create jobs. I will ensure that as the Minister for Skills, who has responsibility for TAFE, we have a TAFE system that will deliver the workforce of the future.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. The Minister has the call. Has the Minister completed his answer?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I have.

JOBS CREATION

Mr ANDREW GEE: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. What action is the Government taking to support the creation of jobs in regional New South Wales?

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. If they do not they will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr TROY GRANT: The member for Orange understands that for the next four years this Government will be as focused as it was for the past four years on driving regional New South Wales forward. We will not leave it languishing in the past through underinvestment and neglect like members opposite did. The member for Orange understands this Government's absolute determination to rebuild and skill regional New South Wales so that jobs will come and they will stay in regional New South Wales. After just four years of experience, he knows very well that members opposite only have plans for jobs for their Labor mates. We have already delivered the return of New South Wales as the engine room of the Australian economy. As part of that regrowth and rebirth we are determined to awaken the sleeping giant that is the New South Wales regional economy.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kiama and the member for Hornsby will come to order.

Mr TROY GRANT: We built hospitals, roads, police stations and schools and the economy of regional New South Wales responded. We delivered 110,000 jobs and invested \$60 billion. The regional program that the wonderful Liberal-Nationals team put in place created more than 37,000 jobs. We have driven employment growth in our regional economy. It now has a capacity and an optimism that it did not have for decades. We have attracted vital skills. For example, medical specialists are now flooding out to the regions because of brand new hospital infrastructure. Those are the skills that we had not seen for decades and that members opposite would deny us. They would kill off our hope and optimism for prosperity in the regions but we are not going to accept it.

At a time when large regional industries are experiencing some decline because they are often impacted by drought and environmental factors that are out of their control, we have tried to create as best an economic environment as possible. Our payroll tax rebate scheme is an example of how we have stimulated jobs growth and encouraged employers to take on more local workers. Our investment schemes have attracted and created thousands of jobs. For example, we are helping to upgrade airports. Also agribusiness is doing much better.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cessnock and the member for Orange will cease their discussion across the Chamber.

Mr TROY GRANT: Members opposite had no growth plan for regional New South Wales. The only plan they had to create jobs in regional New South Wales was through a bloke by the name of Macdonald

creating jobs for his Labor mates. Their plan was to blanket our State in coal seam gas licences and look after their mates. That is not our plan. The new Leader of the Opposition has come along with a plan. He thinks that policies will be best circulated in regional New South Wales through photo opportunities. First he figured the koala would be a wonderful mascot for him to be photographed with and so he got his photo with a koala without caring about how many thousands of jobs it would cost on the North Coast. If I recall, when he was trying to promote his other policy he used photos of pussy cats to help him out. Members opposite have no vision and no ideas. Labor's plan for regional New South Wales—

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

Mr TROY GRANT: —is a mirage. Members opposite are simply a handbrake on the regional economy. They want to deny regional investment. Shame on them.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira will come to order.

Mr TROY GRANT: After four years I am trying to work out why Labor hates regional New South Wales so much. Why do members opposite hate regional New South Wales?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira will come to order.

Mr TROY GRANT: I sent out my team of members in the Fifty-fifth Parliament to stand for re-election, to be tested on whether they delivered for the regions, and every one of them came back. Every one of them came back because they were listening and delivering exactly what the regions wanted. People in the regions got a taste of the good life under a Liberal-Nationals Government after 16 years of being neglected, robbed of opportunity and robbed of their hopes and dreams by members opposite.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Fairfield will come to order. The member for Strathfield will come to order. There is too much audible conversation coming from the Opposition benches.

Mr TROY GRANT: I have a pledge for regional New South Wales. We will continue to grow the regional economy despite Labor. We have a mandate. Members opposite have an opportunity to stop their hatred of regional New South Wales by accepting that we have a mandate and letting us get on with providing the jobs that people in the regions have been wanting for decades. What are members opposite scared of? Did they not listen to the people in the regions? We have a mandate and a plan. Members opposite should get behind us and support it.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lakemba comes to us as a high school principal. I suppose this is much worse than high school. Is that right? There could be a chance to go back there. I know you will not be an interjector. You did well to get in. Members will come to order.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! For the benefit of the member for Cabramatta, I can see the member for Miranda.

Mr Nick Lalich: Give her the call then.

Ms Linda Burney: Don't say anything or you'll be in big trouble.

The SPEAKER: The member for Canterbury is right.

TAFE FEES

Ms JULIA FINN: My question is directed to the Minister for Skills. The Auditor-General has reported that 60 per cent of the \$573 million that has been spent so far on the new computer system which supports TAFE has gone to consultants and contractors. Is that why apprentices enrolled at Granville TAFE are paying about \$1,500 extra in course fees?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has the call.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I will take every opportunity in this term of Government to promote TAFE in New South Wales and talk about how fabulous it is. I make no apology for the investment we are making in TAFE. During the election campaign members opposite talked about disinvestment and cuts to TAFE.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bankstown will come to order.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Under Smart and Skilled, we are transforming TAFE to meet the needs of the twenty-first century.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cessnock will come to order.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: We are transforming TAFE and protecting its brand, its quality and its reputation, which are respected by industry, to deliver the workforce of the future.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: TAFE has a reputation for quality among students choosing TAFE as their education and training provider. We make no apology for the investment that we continue to make in both the vocational education and training [VET] sector and in TAFE NSW. As I said, I am unashamedly a strong advocate for TAFE.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Charlestown will come to order.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: However, as we transform the economy we know that the jobs of the future will be different. Therefore we need a flexible TAFE and VET system that delivers the highly skilled workforce of the future—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Wyong to order for the third time. I have asked him several times to cease interjecting. If he continues to interject he will be out of the Chamber.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: —that meets the jobs of the future. We are investing in TAFE through the IT system and through all our investments to ensure that young people who choose TAFE or the VET sector for their education and training journey will be guaranteed a job at the end of their course. I am proud to be part of a government with its track record in the previous Government. Earlier the Premier spoke about the 180,000 jobs that have been created in this State by empowering the private sector, empowering mums and dads, small business owners—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: Standing Order 129. We did not ask for a general dissertation about TAFE. The question was specific. The member for Granville sought an explanation as to why TAFE fees are skyrocketing. The Minister did not answer the previous question. He should try to answer this one.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: What we have been doing with our investment in TAFE is ensuring that we value what TAFE delivers in the VET sector. We make no apology about the fees. We set this up—

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: I understand he is a junior Minister—

The SPEAKER: What is the member's point of order?

Mr Ryan Park: Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have already ruled on that point of order.

Mr Ryan Park: The Minister is struggling after three minutes.

The SPEAKER: He is remaining relevant.

Mr Ryan Park: He is not close to answering the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I place the member for Keira on three calls to order. The member should not argue with me.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: It looks like the member for Keira will have four long years.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member for Keira to remove himself from the Chamber until the end of question time.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Keira left the Chamber at 2.45 p.m.]

Mr JOHN BARILARO: The member for Keira should stop drinking red cordial at lunch time. TAFE fees have been structured through the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART]. IPART gave the Government a fee structure that delivers value for taxpayers and value for what TAFE delivers. With TAFE, we want to see an investment that delivers—

The SPEAKER: Order! All members on one or two calls to order are now deemed to be on three calls to order. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The Minister has the call.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: It is disappointing. I am trying to answer the question and members opposite continue to yell, scream and carry on.

Mr Clayton Barr: Just do your best.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: During the election campaign the member for Cessnock—

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member for Cessnock to remove himself from the Chamber until the end of question time.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Cessnock left the Chamber at 2.46 p.m.]

Mr JOHN BARILARO: In the campaign I think Labor's election commitment about TAFE was for members opposite to stick their heads in the sand and not acknowledge that the landscape is changing. They said they would rip up Smart and Skilled, which means they would rip up job opportunities for young people in this State, opportunities for young people to get skills for the workforce of the future. Labor's election policy was to rip up Smart and Skilled.

JOBS CREATION

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. How is the Government delivering jobs to boost the State's economy?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Holsworthy for the question. I congratulate her on her re-election. She ran a phenomenal campaign based on defending her community and creating more jobs in her community. I acknowledge that contribution. No doubt our economy is in a strong position after four years of Liberal-Nationals Government, and we have been humbled to be given four more years. We promised to make New South Wales number one again, and that is what we have done. Our economy is back on top where it belongs, and we are the envy of the nation when it comes to housing, infrastructure and jobs. Members opposite do not like to acknowledge that, but it has been confirmed today by the most recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which shows an impressive 9,800 jobs were created in April in New South Wales. Once again, not only does New South Wales have the largest jobs growth compared with the rest of the nation but we have created almost twice the number of jobs of any other State.

Not only is New South Wales number one but we are also driving jobs growth. We have created more than 188,000 jobs since April 2011. The unemployment rate in New South Wales has been at or below the national average—this is an important factor to consider—for 17 consecutive months. What a stark contrast to members opposite. I listened intently to what the Premier said today because when we took office New South Wales was an economic basket case. We were the laughing stock of the nation, and for a decade under Labor New South Wales had the lowest employment growth of any State. It was the absolute lowest. Unfortunately, nothing has changed. Labor has not learned a thing.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Fairfield will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: They just don't get it. What was one of Labor's major planks in its election platform? The Leader of the Opposition boasted that his centrepiece election commitment was a \$5.1 billion tax on business—a tax on jobs. Labor members not only do not get what job creation is about, but want to tax jobs. It is in their DNA and they will never change. Those opposite want to make it harder for businesses to grow and harder for businesses to employ people. In contrast to that, we on the Government side of the House are all about lifting red tape, cutting business tax and encouraging businesses to hire more people. The New South Wales Government is committed to creating at least an additional 150,000 jobs over the next four years.

As the Premier mentioned today, I am very pleased to extend the successful \$5,000 Jobs Action Plan payroll tax rebate for another four years to create further incentive. That will be in addition to our Rebuilding NSW plan, which will play a huge role in creating more jobs. More jobs will lead to a stronger economy, but do not take our word for that: Just look at the CommSec State of the States report. For the first time that report had New South Wales ranked on its own as the number one State. We know that when Labor was in charge of the Treasury benches New South Wales was at the bottom of the list, but under this Government New South Wales is back on top where New South Wales belongs. But we will not stop there. We know that we have been given an incredible mandate to build on this for the future. That is why our Rebuilding NSW plan will unlock \$20 billion of critical infrastructure, which also means more jobs. This Government actually builds things and creates jobs. We reduce the burden on businesses. We also make sure that people who are going to TAFE have jobs to go to.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Canterbury that she is deemed to be on three calls to order. That is my last warning.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Rebuilding NSW will boost the economy and generate jobs. The people of New South Wales gave this Government a mandate to create more jobs and to build for the future. That is what we are doing. I call upon members opposite to support the Government's plans. If Opposition members care about jobs, TAFE, transport, roads, health and education, they will support this Government's plans. Today's Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] affirmation of this Government's policies represents a huge and important building block. We very much believe that the mandate this Government has been given should be supported by Opposition members. If Opposition members care about jobs, they should support our plans and get on board to make New South Wales an even better place.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITIES COMPUTER SYSTEM

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Given that the Auditor-General's report on the new computer system of the Department of Education and Communities states, "It is not clear ... what the total budgeted cost is for the complete implementation of the program", will he provide the House with the actual figure?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am pleased the member for Canterbury asked me that question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order. I am sure she wants to hear the answer.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: First, let me congratulate the member for Canterbury on her appointment as the shadow Minister for Education. It is a great privilege to be the Minister for Education, as I am sure it is a great privilege to be the shadow Minister for such an important area of public policy. I take this opportunity to congratulate her. I am pleased the Opposition asked the question because the Learning Management and Business Reform [LMBR] program, which essentially is the computer program referred to by the member for Canterbury, was established by none other than the previous Labor Government.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister does not need any assistance from Government members. I call the member for Kiama to order.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The process began seven or eight years ago. Labor put up budget figures but did not include factors such as the rollout in schools. The system operates across schools, corporate services and the department in one of the largest single organisations in Australia.

Mr Michael Daley: You are kidding me—after four budgets you have handed down.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The member for Maroubra is right. Over four budgets, this Government has been trying to fix up the disaster Labor left us. How many disasters did Labor leave this Government four years ago?

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Fairfield to order. The member for Fairfield will cease interjecting.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The previous question referred to 60 per cent of the previous budget relating to consultants and others. If Opposition members have a problem with that, they should consult members of the previous Labor Cabinet who signed off on that because that is when the practice began. I am not saying that the computer system overhaul should not have happened; it should have happened. But part of the complexity is that we are upgrading a system that is 30 years old. Some of the systems used by schools and TAFE are disc operating systems [DOS]. Anybody under the age of approximately 50 years would not know what a DOS system is.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: The question asked the Minister to tell the House what the actual figure is.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is remaining relevant to the question.

Ms Linda Burney: The system was actually working before he came along.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Sorry, it was working, did you say?

Ms Linda Burney: Yes. People used to be able to enrol.

The SPEAKER: Order! This is not a debate. The member for Canterbury can move a motion and have a debate later.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The DOS system uses a dot-matrix printer in which a stylus produces a series of dots—dot, dot, dot—on broad sheets with perforated sides. The computer system is at least 30 years old. When we are trying to shift DOS data to a new twenty-first century system, there will be difficulties transferring that data.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Part of the problem, certainly in TAFE, has been transferring that data. I cannot remember how many bits of data are involved but it would number in the hundreds of millions of individual items that must be transferred. There were some technical difficulties with that. We made that very clear.

Ms Linda Burney: Ha, ha!

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: No, we certainly made no secret of it. In fact, I think we put out press releases. We were hiding the facts on the internet: I understand why the Opposition had difficulty finding out about them!

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The Minister might think this is a joke, but thousands of TAFE students do not.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr Michael Daley: The public has a right to know how much the budgeted figure is.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra does not have a point of order. He has not even tried to make a point of order.

Mr Michael Daley: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra simply wants to argue with the Minister. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: People can read the Auditor-General's report, but I am explaining to the Opposition spokeswoman how it all started and what this Government inherited across the Department of Education and Communities and across TAFE. It is very hypocritical for the shadow Minister to say that all of the problems have been caused by me, to ask me what I am going to do about it, and to ask me what the budget figure is when we are cleaning up one of the messes left by Labor four years ago.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. How is the Government boosting frontline services and delivering better health services to the people of New South Wales?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: How wonderful it is to see the member for Coogee returned to this Chamber. He is an absolute champion for health in his electorate, particularly through the wonderful Prince of Wales Hospital. It was great to be with the Premier and the member for Coogee when we announced commencement of the work for the \$500 million upgrade to that hospital during this term. The member has asked a very good question. This Government has made a commitment to boost frontline health staff by at least 3,500 full-time equivalent positions over the next four years.

The cost of 3,500 additional full-time equivalent frontline staff—doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and hospital support staff—will amount to more than \$1 billion. This Government also will create a number of specialist positions for rural generalist training, which I know will be of interest to my colleagues who represent country electorates. There will be 60 new medical specialty training positions with a rural and regional focus and additional access scholarships for metropolitan students as well as new positions for clinical nurse educators, clinical nurse consultants and practitioners.

We are also bringing into line 68 training positions in allied health. These are important jobs that will enable us to keep up with the constant demand in our health system. It supports increasing access to preventive health for people and better health care for those with chronic illnesses in the community through our new integrated care projects. In hospitals we have made a commitment to provide an extra 320,000 emergency attendances and also 13,500 elective surgeries over the term.

I am very proud of what this Government did last term and what it will do next term. It is astonishing that yesterday in the Legislative Council the Opposition health spokesman described the Government's election commitments as "flamboyant", "numerous" and "lavish", which shows that he really does not care. What did the Opposition promise by way of extra nurses? It was 840. What has the Government promised during this term? It has promised 2,100. Furthermore, he said they were all going to be in emergency departments and paediatric wards.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. Some of you are being disrespectful and rude.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Where will they put them in the new hospitals that are opening? Where will they put them in our new facilities in the country? They just do not have a clue. It is astonishing that in the upper House the Leader of the Opposition promised a revitalised team, but the Opposition health spokesman clearly has no idea and quite apart from anything else he has repeated the debunked fake claim about cuts to the health budget.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: He has proven during the election campaign he does not care about health and is only talking about politics.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bankstown will come to order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I am very proud of the extra services that will be provided through our investment in health infrastructure. We have talked about what we have done in the past. We have promised

\$500 million to start the ball rolling on the new Prince of Wales Hospital upgrade; \$900 million, nearly \$1 billion, on upgrades to Westmead Hospital, which has already started and it is fantastic to see the work proceeding; \$400 million for stage two at Blacktown Hospital, stage one having been completed; \$368 million to upgrade Gosford Hospital, which will make it absolutely stunning; and a \$307 million upgrade of St George Hospital.

The member for Oatley—I often forget the name of his electorate—I just think he is the member for Coure. I think we will rechristen St George Hospital. It will no longer be called St George Hospital; it will be called the Coure hospital. Why? Because we have provided more than \$40 million to give that hospital the best emergency department in the State and we have now promised an additional \$307 million for the hospital's very much-needed redevelopment. We also promised more than \$60 million for the upgrade of Sutherland Hospital—I regard them as a pigeon pair. Hornsby hospital was falling into disarray and this term we have committed an additional \$200 million to upgrade it—more hospitals, more services, better care for patients and more frontline health services.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order before I call the member for Newtown to ask her question. She will be heard in silence.

WESTCONNEX

Ms JENNY LEONG: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport, representing the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight. What has the Government done in response to the 2014 New South Wales Auditor-General's report into WestConnex that found shortcomings in the governance of the project and that the delivery of the business case fell well short of the standard required?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for Newtown for her question, welcome her to this place and say that she is probably my favourite member for Newtown because she won 45.5 per cent of first preference votes compared to Labor's 30 per cent first preference votes in the recent election. I love that result because both Balmain and Newtown have sparked a civil war in the Labor camp between Labor Left and Labor Right, with the Right blaming Labor Left for the poor showing in those electorates. The Leader of the Opposition had a personal interest in those electorates and failed dismally, I might add. I note this week the Leader of the Opposition has been jogging around the Domain when divisions have been called, and has asked only one question today.

Mr David Harris: Point of order: I am trying not to annoy you, Madam Speaker, but it is Standing Order 129. The Minister is not close to answering the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I allow some flexibility in the first few minutes of a Minister's answer, but I request the Minister to return to the leave of the question.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: We closely examined the recommendations of the Auditor-General in relation to WestConnex. The audit made a number of recommendations for the more complex future stages, which have largely been accepted by the agencies concerned. The agencies that responded to the Auditor-General's report were the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, NSW Treasury, Transport for NSW, Roads and Maritime Services, Infrastructure NSW and the WestConnex Delivery Authority. All the agencies confirm that the processes adopted for the development of the WestConnex business case were robust, effective and complied with the Cabinet-approved assurance framework.

WestConnex received independent evaluations along the way and has been ticked off by Infrastructure NSW and Infrastructure Australia. Their determination is on the internet. Infrastructure Australia has already confirmed WestConnex has a positive benefit cost ratio and said that Sydney stands to gain significant benefits from completing the WestConnex project. The Government continues to make the key point that the enormous merits of this project will deliver real economic and social benefits for the State. We expect that an extra 1.6 million people will call Sydney home in the next 20 years. Failing to deliver vital transport infrastructure upgrades, which includes both public transport and roads, will fail the entire State.

As I said yesterday, Sydney is crippled with congestion both economically and socially. WestConnex seeks to ease congestion and support the State economy. It is the biggest urban road project in the nation and will allow people to bypass up to 52 sets of traffic lights, take an estimated 3,000 trucks off Parramatta Road each day and generate 10,000 jobs. The WestConnex Business Case was developed by a team of local and

international experts from across the public and private sectors. In 2013 the Government considered and endorsed their recommendations. The WestConnex Delivery Authority is continuing to input the latest information to update the business case as part of the ongoing planning process. Any non-commercial in confidence data from the finalised business case will be released later.

Ms Jenny Leong: When?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Later. I knew they would love that. This is a vital project for the State and one that will deliver in an integrated fashion enormous benefits to improve this city. It will transform public transport in Sydney. I thank the member for Newtown for her question and I look forward to working with her throughout the course of this term on this issue.

JOBS OF THE FUTURE

Mr THOMAS GEORGE: My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. How is the Government preparing our students for jobs of the future? Are there any alternative plans?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I thank the member for Lismore. He is a well-regarded member.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I call the member for Strathfield to order for the third time. I warn the Deputy Premier not to get her into trouble. He should not argue across the table.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I know everybody in this House is pleased to see the member for Lismore back in this Chamber. I note that Labor came third in the electorate of Lismore. It was great to be up there during the election campaign, visiting Kadina High School and Wilson Park Public School School for Specific Purposes, which was rebuilt with the money left over from the Building the Education Revolution. Remember the disasters we inherited four years ago? We spent \$100 million on Wilson Park and the Wyrallah Road Public School.

I congratulate the member for Canterbury on her appointment. I am sorry the member for Keira is no longer the shadow Minister for Education. I made a collection of the dopey and silly things that the member for Keira has said in the past. I cannot use that anymore, so I have made a collection of the dopey and silly things the member for Canterbury has said.

Mr David Harris: Point of order: I have two points of order, but one is that members should be referred to by their correct title. The other is that the Minister should not be argumentative.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. Members should be referred to by their correct titles.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: That is the index. I note also, for the member for Rockdale—whom I have not met—that the idea is that we do not laugh at jokes being made about our own side. He should take a lesson from the member for Blacktown and remain stony-faced. But I think that is more from botox rather than the fact he does not think our stories are funny.

We are getting on with the job of securing the economy and growing jobs in New South Wales. During the election we announced that \$1 billion from the Rebuilding NSW Schools Fund will be spent over the next 10 years across Sydney and regional New South Wales, building schools for the future. That allocation included the Innovative Education, Successful Students package, which will see new and upgraded schools and classrooms designed for future-focused schools—schools of the twenty-first century and, indeed, schools of the twenty-second century.

We announced a \$100 million investment for a new high school in Parramatta, which will cater for up to 2,000 students, and a new primary school, which will cater for up to 1,000 students. The schools will be state-of-the-art, the best in the country. Students attending those schools will benefit from the new technology and new design techniques that we have seen in the new University of Technology, Sydney building in the central business district. The new future-focused schools will have flexible learning spaces, as the member for Parramatta said. A \$40 million investment has been announced to rebuild and merge Ballina's two high schools. The Southern Cross site will continue to be a distant education centre and primary school. We announced a \$60 million investment in Cleveland Street for the new inner-city high school, which is much needed.

Investments into those schools are evidence-based, researched-based and data-based. We have looked around the world to see what we need to do to ensure that when students leave our schools, they are best prepared to take on the jobs they will need in the modern New South Wales economy. We have a plan for New South Wales. It is an infrastructure plan, a health plan, an education plan, and a family and community services plan that will add up to a strong economy. For a strong Sydney, we need strong regions. For strong regions, we need a strong Sydney. This Government will deliver for New South Wales. That is why we were overwhelmingly re-elected four weeks ago.

Question time concluded at 3.14 p.m.

OMBUDSMAN

Report

The Speaker tabled, pursuant to section 31AA of the Ombudsman Act 1974, the report of the NSW Ombudsman entitled "Oversight of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994, Annual Report 2013-2014", dated May 2015.

Ordered to be printed

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced that the following petitions signed by fewer than 500 persons were lodged for presentation:

Independent Investigation of Police Actions

Petition requesting the establishment of an independent complaints body with investigatory powers over police conduct, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Sydney Electorate Public High School

Petition requesting the establishment of a public high school in the Sydney electorate, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Elizabeth Bay Marina

Petition calling for an open and transparent public tender process for development of the Elizabeth Bay Marina, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Harris Street Walkway

Petition requesting the reinstatement of the Harris Street walkway connection to the central business district and the upgrade of lighting on Darling Harbour walkways, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Companion Animals on Public Transport

Petition requesting that companion animals be allowed to travel on all public transport, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Inner-city Social Housing

Petition requesting the retention and proper maintenance of inner-city public housing stock, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Low-cost Housing and Homelessness

Petition requesting increased funding for low-cost housing and homelessness services, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Same-sex Marriage

Petition supporting same-sex marriage, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pet Shops

Petition opposing the sale of animals in pet shops, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Duck Hunting

Petition requesting retention of the longstanding ban on duck hunting, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Container Deposit Levy

Petition requesting the Government introduce a container deposit levy to reduce litter and increase recycling rates of drink containers, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

The Clerk announced that the following petitions signed by more than 500 persons were lodged for presentation:

Slaughterhouse Monitoring

Petition requesting mandatory closed-circuit television for all New South Wales slaughterhouses, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

Petition requesting the banning of pig-dog hunting in New South Wales, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

The Clerk announced that the following Ministers had lodged responses to petitions signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Kevin Humphries—HuntFest—lodged 14 October 2014 (Mr Andrew Constance)

The Hon. Andrew Constance—Retail Trading Laws—lodged 16 October 2014 (Mr John Robertson)

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian—Sydney Airport Curfew—lodged 16 October 2014 (Mr Ron Hoenig)

The Hon. Gabrielle Upton—Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women's Services—lodged 16 October 2014 (Mr Jamie Parker)

The Hon. Troy Grant—Oxford Street Night-time Economy—lodged 16 October 2014 (Mr Alex Greenwich)

The Hon. Stuart Ayres—Gore Bay Terminal—lodged 23 October 2014 (Mr Anthony Roberts)

The Hon. Rob Stokes—Flying Fox Control—lodged 23 October 2014 (Mr Christopher Gulaptis)

The Hon. Pru Goward—Boarding House Regulation—lodged 4 November 2014 (Mr Barry Collier)

The Hon. Gabrielle Upton—Inner-city Social Housing—lodged 4 November 2014 (Mr Alex Greenwich)

The Hon. Duncan Gay—NorthConnex Tunnel—lodged 5 November 2014 (Mr Barry O'Farrell)

The Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson—Slaughterhouse Monitoring—lodged 5 November 2014 (Mr Alex Greenwich)

The Hon. Brad Hazzard—Repeat Offender Sentencing—lodged 6, 12 and 13 November 2014 (Mr Thomas George)

The Hon. Troy Grant—Public Libraries Funding—lodged 11 November 2014 (Mr John Barilaro)

The Hon. Anthony Roberts—Coal Wagons—lodged 11 November 2014 (Ms Sonia Hornery)

The Hon. Brad Hazzard—Daylight Saving Referendum—lodged 11 November 2014 (Mr Troy Grant)

The Hon. Duncan Gay—Warringah Road Widening—lodged 11 November 2014 (Mr Brad Hazzard)

The Hon. John Ajaka—Ageing, Disability and Homecare Services—lodged 18 November 2014 (Mr Jamie Parker)

The Hon. Duncan Gay—Harris Street Walkway—lodged 18 November 2014 (Mr Alex Greenwich)

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital Parking Facilities—lodged 18, 19 and 20 November 2014 (Mrs Shelley Hancock)

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian—CBD and South East Light Rail Project—lodged 19 November 2014 (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith)

The Hon. Pru Goward—Bronte RSL Site Redevelopment—lodged 19 November 2014 (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith)

The Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson—Pig-dog Hunting Ban—lodged 19 November 2014 (Mr Alex Greenwich)

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Royal North Shore Hospital Campus—lodged 20 November 2014 (Mr Jamie Parker).

The Hon. Duncan Gay—Koala Protection—lodged 20 November 2014 (Mr John Robertson).

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk, announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled "Large construction projects: Independent assurance—The Treasury, Infrastructure NSW, Transport for NSW, NSW Health, Roads and Maritime Services, Sydney Trains, Venues NSW, and Department of Primary Industries", dated May 2015, received on 7 May 2015 and ordered to be printed.

Pursuant to sessional order government business proceeded with.

PAYROLL TAX REBATE SCHEME (JOBS ACTION PLAN) AMENDMENT (EXTENSION) BILL 2015

Bill introduced on motion by Ms Gladys Berejiklian, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) [3.16 p.m.]: I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

The bill delivers on the Government's election commitment to encourage job creation and further strengthen the New South Wales economy. The bill provides for an amendment to the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Act 2011 to extend the closure date of the Jobs Action Plan by four years from 30 June 2015 to 30 June 2019. When this Government was elected in 2011 we made a commitment to create 100,000 jobs in New South Wales. A key platform in the delivery of this objective was the Jobs Action Plan scheme. The scheme provides an incentive for businesses to employ new workers and encourages employers to expand their operations in New South Wales.

Since this Government came to office, around 188,000 jobs have been created. Data on the Jobs Action Plan shows that up to the end of April 2015, more than 101,000 Jobs Action Plan registrations have been received. Rebates paid to date total around \$93 million. In the metropolitan area, the local government area [LGA] of Sydney records the largest number of registrations at 21,814. This is followed by North Sydney at

5,911 and Blacktown at 3,297. I am pleased to say that out of the top 10 metropolitan LGAs, four LGAs are from Western Sydney. They include Blacktown with 3,297, Parramatta with 2,729, Auburn with 2,514 and Liverpool with 2,254. In regional New South Wales the top LGAs include Lake Macquarie with 1,708, Maitland with 1,400, Wagga Wagga with over 1,000 and Orange with 821.

The Jobs Action Plan has assisted in exceeding our target of 100,000 jobs and delivering strong jobs growth to New South Wales. This plan has well and truly had a positive result. Given the success of the existing Jobs Action Plan, the Government committed in the election to extending the scheme for a further four years to 30 June 2019. Extension of the scheme means employers can continue to hire additional staff and receive the benefits of the current Jobs Action Plan scheme. As members would be aware, under the scheme, payroll tax liable employers can continue to apply for a \$5,000 payroll tax rebate for each additional full-time employee, with the rebate paid pro-rata for part-time employees based on the number of hours worked compared to the standard working hours of full-time employees.

The rebate will still be paid in two payments, with \$2,000 paid on the first anniversary of the hiring of the additional staff member and \$3,000 paid on the second anniversary of the hiring of the additional staff. This bill recognises the difficult economic environment many businesses are operating in and encourages employers to continue hiring additional employees. This bill demonstrates the Government remains committed to making New South Wales the first place to do business and encouraging employers to expand their operation. I note the presence in the Chamber of the shadow Treasurer and I seek the support of the Opposition on this very important piece of legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Michael Daley and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

CENTENARY OF ANZAC

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.22 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Anthony Roberts: I move:

That this House notes the Centenary of ANZAC.

At 12.00 a.m. on 4 August 1914 Britain declared war on Germany. Australia quickly pledged its support for Britain. As Andrew Fisher, shortly before he was elected Prime Minister, said:

Australians will stand beside our own to help and defend her to our last man and our last shilling.

By the end of 1914, 52,561 Australian volunteers passed the strict physical and medical standards for overseas service. Despite two attempts to introduce conscription enlistments remained voluntary for the duration of the war. On 11 September 1914 the Australian Naval and Military Expedition Forces [ANMEF] captured German New Guinea. ANMEF troops skirmished with German and Melanesian troops at Bita Paka in the German colony of New Guinea while attempting to capture a nearby radio outpost. The six Australians killed in the action were the first of 60,000 Australian troops to fall in the First World War.

In the first action fought by the Royal Australian Navy HMAS *Sydney* sank the *Emden*, thereby neutralising the major threat to the Australian and New Zealand troop convoy headed to Europe. Having arrived at the seaport of Aden at the entrance of the Red Sea the Australian and New Zealand troops went to Egypt as a garrison force to protect the Suez Canal against the Ottoman Turks. This news was disheartening for many troops who were eager to fight the German army in the main theatre of war. On 25 April 1915 British, Australian, New Zealand and French troops made a pre-dawn amphibious landing on or near the Gallipoli peninsula while the British landed at Cape Helles on the southern tip of the peninsula and the French landed at Kum Kale on the Turkish mainland. The Australian and New Zealanders landed at Anzac Cove.

Although only lightly defended by the Turks, Anzac Cove was overlooked by precipitous terrain and was easily defended. Nevertheless, the Anzacs managed to gain a toehold. But in the following eight months of the campaign they were able to make little progress inland. On 2 May 1915 the Australian and New Zealand troops attacked the Turkish occupied feature known as Baby 700. Turkish fire swept into the unsupported left flank of the assaulting infantry and the attack ground to a halt nowhere near its objective. It was a failure that cost the Australians and New Zealanders approximately 1,000 casualties.

On 24 May 1915 Australian burial parties interred dead Australian and Turkish soldiers at "The Nek" during a truce. Approximately 3,000 Turks and 160 Australians were killed in the Turkish attack of 19 May

1915. So pervasive was the stench of the Turkish corpses resulting from the attack on 19 May that a temporary truce was negotiated between Australian and Turkish troops to recover the dead from no man's land for burial. With respect to the August offensives, a series of British attacks were launched along the Gallipoli peninsula in a renewed attempt to break out from the beachheads at Anzac Cove and Cape Helles and capture the high ground of the Kilid Bair Plateau and the Sari Bair Range. Several attacks were intended to draw Turkish reserves south from the main assault on the Sari Bair Range. The main assault of the offensive took place north of the Anzac positions against the heights of Sari Bair. Other diversionary operations were conducted around Lone Pine and The Nek by the Australians and at Suvla Bay by the British, who attempted to set up a supply base for the offensive but fell short of their objectives.

There were numerous battles. One was the battle for "Hill 60". In 1924 Charles Bean, Gallipoli veteran and Australia's official war historian, described the battle fought at Hill 60 in August 1915 as one of the most difficult in which Australian troops ever engaged. Like many of the actions fought at Gallipoli the battle was confused and inconclusive. The Gallipoli campaign must rank among the most studied and analysed in history. Yet the battle of Hill 60 is often overlooked and rarely examined in detail. It was not a victory that yielded seven Victoria Crosses like Lone Pine, nor has it been accorded the noble tragedy status of the loss of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade at The Nek. However, it was some of the most fought over real estate on the Anzac-Suvla front and was the last offensive action of the campaign. Shortly after the failure of the British and French to capture the Dardanelles, John Masefield wrote a history of the campaign. His description of the action at Hill 60 was short and to the point:

Two thrusts made by the men of ANZAC in the later days of August, secured an important well and the Turkish stronghold of Hill 60. This last success made the line from Anzac to Suvla impregnable. The last days of the month were eliminated by a brilliant affair carried through by the troops under General Birdwood's command. Our objective was to complete the capture of Hill 60 north of Kaijick Aghala, commenced by General Cox on the 21xx ... its success gave us complete command of the under-feature, and outlook over the Anafarta Sagir Valley, and safer lateral communications between Anzac and Suvla Bay. Our casualties in this highly contested affair amounted to 1000. The Turks lost out of all proportion more.

Both of these accounts, though brief, do not give an accurate indication of the outcome of the battle. These uncritical accounts were probably the result of the vague reports on the outcome of the fighting on the hill at the time. With impending winter and the inability to break the stalemates on the beachheads, critical examination of a single action was brushed aside by the failure of the campaign. On 6 August 1915 the 1st Division assaulted the Turkish positions at Lone Pine, which they ultimately captured, and spent the next three days defending it against repeated counterattacks. So fierce was the fighting at Lone Pine that the 1st and 3rd brigades suffered 2,277 casualties. Seven Victoria Crosses were awarded to Australian troops for this action.

The brave but futile charge at The Nek was made famous by the movie *Gallipoli*. Yet the day before, the Australians attacking Lone Pine had a rare success in some of the fiercest fighting they ever experienced. The battle of Lone Pine is the only Gallipoli action represented by a diorama in the Australian War Memorial's First World War galleries. The Lone Pine diorama depicts the opening assault by Australians from the 1st Brigade as they rush across no man's land to attack the heavily fortified Turkish trenches. As with all the large-scale dioramas at the memorial, the Lone Pine diorama offers the viewer a frozen moment in time, placing the battle in a geographic setting and against a human scale. But, of necessity, a diorama can tell only a small part of the story and in this case, unfortunately, it also reinforces some of the misconceptions surrounding the battle.

The attack at Lone Pine signalled the start of the allied August offensive in the Anzac area. At 4.30 p.m. on 6 August 1915 an intensive artillery bombardment, from both land and naval guns, pounded the Turkish positions at 400 Plateau—including Lone Pine, Johnston's Jolly and German Officers' Trench. The bombardment was the climax of a slow but constant shelling of the Anzac front line over the previous three days. As soon as the bombardment ceased at 5.30 p.m. Australian soldiers of the 1st Brigade leapt from trenches and underground firing positions to rush the Turkish front line at Lone Pine. They were met by a withering fire from rifles, machine-guns and artillery, and many hundreds were killed or wounded as they crossed no man's land. However, unlike the tragic charge at The Nek next morning, on this occasion the timing and coordination of artillery and infantry worked, with many Turks in the frontline trenches either killed or still sheltering in tunnels and dugouts from the bombardment. The Australians of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions who led the charge also had the advantage of advancing across a wider front, compared to the narrow confines at The Nek.

Once the Turkish front line was reached, the Australian troops were confronted with what official historian Charles Bean described as "an unforeseen check". The trenches were roofed with logs and timbers piled with earth. The *Lone Pine diorama* suggests that the Australians either had to drop, almost suicidally, feet

first through holes in the roof, presumably made by artillery shells, or else create their own openings by lifting off the logs. However, instances of men entering the trenches by either of these methods would appear to have been fairly isolated. In fact, many Australians entered the frontline trenches through gaps in the covering because the Turks had not roofed the entire run of these trenches. This was particularly the case for the men of the 3rd Battalion who advanced on the central front, where large sections of roof were open. However, most of the soldiers who reached the front line did not stop long at the covered trenches. Instead, they rushed over them and gained access through the uncovered rear trenches. Once in the trench system, they worked their way back toward the front line or set up barricades to defend their new forward posts. In this way, fighting through a maze of trenches, the Australians reached their objective within the first half-hour of the opening assault.

The attack at Lone Pine was a diversion, or demonstration, but one with a clear objective. The Australians were to take and hold the third and fourth lines of the trench system in the hope of drawing Turkish reinforcements to the battle. The plan was for the Turks to be fooled into regarding the area around Lone Pine as the objective of the main Anzac assault, while the real offensive was carried out by troops from the New Zealand and Australian Division on the heights to the north at Chunuk Bair and Baby 700, as well as a new landing by British troops at Suvla. Aerial photographs of the Turkish positions at Lone Pine made clear the general run of the trench system. Based on this information, each attacking battalion was given specific points to reach. Having done so, they would establish defensive posts there.

The Lone Pine diorama depicts the opening infantry assault as the Australians who had rushed the Turkish line entered the elaborate maze of their trenches. What it does not show is the main battle that ensued within the system over the following three days, a battle which Bean described as "the heaviest of its kind in which Australian troops ever took part". The fighting was brutal and bloody and often confused as soldiers from both sides attacked with bayonets, bombs, rifles, and even their fists. Seven Australians were awarded the Victoria Cross as a result of the battle, the most in any single Australian action.

Turkish counterattacks on the Australian positions were almost continuous. Bombing, sniping, and artillery bombardments were used to drive back troops and to destroy barricades, followed by a rush of infantry. The Turks used the half-light of evening and dawn to launch concerted attacks, and during the night maintained almost constant bombing raids. By the end of the battle they had managed to drive the Australians back from some of their more advanced positions. On the evening of 9 August, the counterattacks ended after the Turks became aware that the attack was a diversion and that the main allied assault was occurring in the hills to the north.

Lone Pine produced some of the highest numbers of casualties, both dead and wounded, of the Gallipoli campaign. The diversionary attack cost the Australian division more than 2,000 men; the Turkish 16th Division was said to have lost 6,390 men in five days. The bodies of dead soldiers from both sides crowded the trenches and the open ground of the battlefield. Soldiers could not move through the trenches without walking on the bodies, sometimes several men deep. Bean noted that "the only respect which could be paid them was to avoid treading on their faces". For the rest of the war, the battle of Lone Pine became a touchstone for Australian troops, as they compared the intensity and brutality of the combat there with subsequent battles at the Western Front. Fittingly, the Lone Pine diorama is a graphic visual reminder of the courage and sacrifice of Australian troops in one of the earliest successful battles of the First World War.

On 7 August dismounted Australian light horsemen charged the Turkish trenches at The Nek in what was a callous and ultimately futile charge against machine-gun and rifle fire. The attack failed, with 234 of the 8th and 10th Light Horse regiments killed and some 140 wounded. On 19 December 1915 the evacuation of British, New Zealand and Australian forces from Anzac Cove was completed without a single casualty. By then, the Australians had sustained 26,000 casualties, of which 8,000 were killed in action or died of wounds or disease. One of those who died of disease in that early conflict was James Martin. James was known as the youngest soldier. He was born on 3 January 1901 and lived until 25 October 1915. He was the youngest Australian known to have died in World War One. He was only 14 years and nine months old when he succumbed to typhoid during the Gallipoli campaign. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

He was one of 20 Australian soldiers under the age of 18 known to have died in World War I. James Martin was born to Amelia and Charles Martin on 3 January 1901 in Tocumwal, New South Wales. His father was born Charles Marks in Auckland, New Zealand; however, after emigrating to Australia and settling in Tocumwal he changed his name to Martin to avoid discrimination for being Jewish. Charles worked as a grocer, handyman and horse-drawn cab driver. Amelia was born in Bendigo in 1876 to Thomas and Frances Park. Her parents had emigrated to Australia during the gold rush in the 1850s. The youngest of 12 children, she married

Charles just before her eighteenth birthday. Martin's family moved to many different suburbs in and around Melbourne before finally settling in Hawthorn in 1910. He was the third of six children, and the only son. He attended Manningtree Road State School from 1910 to 1915, during which time he also received basic military training as a junior cadet under the compulsory training scheme.

After the outbreak of World War I, Martin enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force on 12 April 1915, against the wishes of his family. His parents finally agreed when he made it clear that he would sign on under an assumed name and never write to them if they did not consent. He gave a false date of birth to the recruiting officer—he claimed to be 18 when he was actually 14 years and three months. His father had earlier tried to enlist but had been rejected for being too old. Martin joined the first reinforcements of the 21st Battalion as a private and trained in Broadmeadows and Seymour—later Puckapunyal—camps in Victoria before boarding HMT *Berrima* in June 1915 to deploy to Egypt. He arrived there in late July.

In late August, following the failed August offensive, he was sent to Gallipoli on the steamer HMT *Southland* to take part in the fighting against the Turks, which had by that time developed into a bloody stalemate. En route, *Southland* was torpedoed by a German submarine off the island of Lemnos, and Martin was rescued after spending four hours in the water. After being picked up he rejoined his battalion at Mudros Island, where he was transferred to the transport ship *Abassieh* on 7 September to resume the voyage to Gallipoli. Just before 2.00 a.m. the following morning Martin's platoon, 4 Platoon, landed at Watson's Pier in Anzac Cove. He then served in the trenches around Courtney's Post, which was positioned on the ridge overlooking Monash Valley. During this time he wrote to his family telling them that "the Turks are still about 70 yards away from us" and asked them not to worry about him as "I am doing splendid over here". Throughout his time in Gallipoli his family were writing to him but Martin did not receive any letters from home because of the breakdown in the mail system.

As the campaign dragged on winter approached and the weather on the Gallipoli Peninsula began to take its toll on the soldiers in the trenches. Following a period of cold temperatures and heavy rain Martin contracted enteric fever in the trenches. After suffering mild symptoms for about a fortnight, during which time he had refused treatment, he was evacuated to the hospital ship *Glenart Castle* on 25 October 1915 having developed diarrhoea. He died of heart failure that night at age 14 years and nine months, and was buried at sea the next day. At the time of his death only Martin's parents and his best friend Cec Hogan, who was himself only 16, knew Martin's real age. Nevertheless, on 18 December 1915 Melbourne's *Herald* reported Martin's death in an article titled, "Youngest Soldier Dies". Martin was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal. His name is recorded on the Australian memorial at Lone Pine and on the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour in Canberra.

On 1 July 1916, 1st and 2nd Division Anzac arrived in France in the build-up to the Battle of the Somme, a major British offensive orchestrated by General Sir Douglas Haig in conjunction with the French commander, *Maréchal* Ferdinand Foch. The plan coincided with several other offensives being planned in other theatres, but was intended to create a rupture in the German line that could then be exploited with a decisive blow. It was hoped that tying down the German army on the Somme would relieve pressure on the French army, which was locked in a savage campaign with the Germans at Verdun. Alongside the British 61st Division, the Australian 5th Division attacked the German positions near Fromelles. The intention was to make a demonstration in the Lille area so that the German army would be prevented from transferring reserves to the Somme. For the Australians, the action was a costly and unsuccessful introduction to the war on the Western Front, with the 5th Division suffering 5,533 casualties in less than 24 hours.

The 1st Division Anzac was assigned the task of capturing Pozières village and moving the line northwards towards Mouquet Farm. On 23 July, 1st Division attacked and captured the German-occupied village—making an advance of more than 1,000 yards. The successful capture of the village pushed a bulge in the British line, thereby allowing German artillery to relentlessly shell the Australian positions from multiple sides. The 1st Division suffered heavily under the bombardment, incurring 5,284 casualties over five days. In the next phase of the battle 1st, 2nd and 4th divisions rotated in and out of the line, making attacks of varying sizes to the north. By capturing Mouquet Farm, a heavily fortified position on Pozières Ridge, it was hoped to assist the British in attempts to capture Thiepval Ridge further to the north. While some of these operations were successful in moving the line north towards the farm and in capturing important tactical points to the east, such as the OG lines and the windmill, Mouquet Farm itself remained out of reach. The farm had been heavily fortified by a series of underground tunnels and was heavily manned by German defenders. The Australian divisions all suffered heavy casualties but ultimately failed to take the farm. Official historian Charles Bean famously said that Pozières Ridge "is more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth".

After several months of long-range patrolling east of the Suez Canal, the Anzac Mounted Division fought its first major action at Romani. Australian, New Zealand and British mounted troops engaged up to 8,000 Turks moving west towards British outposts. The mounted troops were able to turn the flank of the attacking enemy, who were ultimately forced to withdraw. The Anzac mounted troops took the brunt of the Turkish assault at a cost of 900 casualties. Time does not permit me to record more about the actions of the Anzacs but I look forward to further debate as we commemorate the centenary of Anzac. I encourage people in every town, village and hamlet across New South Wales to get involved in commemorating the great sacrifices of those who served in World War I.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Mark Coure and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

By leave, private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

STATE ELECTION

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.48 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the recent State election and the terrific result in the Orange electorate, with its big primary vote swing to The Nationals. In the 2011 election the primaries totalled 56.7 per cent and this time the primaries increased to 65.59 per cent. I take this as a great vote of confidence in the work the Government has done over the past four years. As our local paper pointed out, the size of this support indicates that it now crosses party lines. When the electoral boundaries change there is always an element of uncertainty, and the vote in the new parts of the electorate was particularly encouraging. We were fortunate to win every single booth in the electorate. One of the highlights was the falling of the last Labor bastion in the west: the Peak Hill booth.

I am very grateful for the community's support and for all the hard work of the volunteers and supporters who helped to secure such a resounding victory. I make particular mention of Glenn Davis, our hardworking and tireless campaign director; Sarah Hayes, who did wonderful work in the campaign office; and many other volunteers. These volunteers include: Yvonne and Cliff Armstrong, Warwick Baines, Phil Baker, Jenny Beach, Duncan Brakell, Tony Briggs, Don Bruce, Peter Bryan, Alf Cantrel, Ross Cary, Janelle and Paul Culverson, Michael Cunial, Robert Dowling, David Elliot, Ron and Shelly Gander, Matthew and Jo Gee, David and Vanessa Gee, Bob and Melva Gee, Helen and Bruce Glasson, Mal and Helen Griffith, Graeme and Kerry Harris, Trixie and Alan Hawke and Mick from Molong and his family in the Molong area.

Other volunteers included Helen Haynes, Richard Hazelton, Max Hazelton, Gabrielle and David Ironside, Janet Appleby, Jamie Jones, Ann Kelly, David and Maureen Kennett, Floyd Legge, Jessie Legge, Jan Lintott, Danny Litwin and Carmel McDonald, Tony Lloyd, Jamie McClymont, Daniel McClymont, Bill McLaughlin, Chris Messenger, Barry and Robyn Moore, Jeff Morrow, Scott Munro, Brian and Mary North, Will Parish, Steve Patterson, Kim Pattinson, David Pearce, Robert and Jeannie Pearce, Stuart Porges, Dougal Pottie, John and Jan Pullen, Des Redmond, Derek Robinson, Ian Shannon, Angus Shannon, Michael and Mandy Tindale, Paula Townsend, Rob and Diana Waddell, Peter West, Peter Worboys, Graham Yelland, Allister and Jill Kable, Sharon Aiken, Guy Geata, Ken and Sally Kirkpatrick, Andy and Melvie Percival, Melinda Thompson and Brian Woods.

I also thank the hardworking volunteers from Forbes: Allen Duggan, Clare Haley, Margaret Vogelsang, Elizabeth McLean, Alister Lockhart, Pip Perry, Angus and Sylvia Glasson, Jeff Herdegen and Vanessa Crompton, Lesley Teale, David Williams, Grant Roberts, Len Pietch, Chris Hawke, Phillip Adams, Bruce Adams, John Kennedy, Lyn Kennedy, John Scott, Tony Toohey, Shirley Hohnberg, Bruce Toole, Rex Fuge, Mark Pietch, Vince Toohey, Julianna Kneebone, Peter Schofield, Yvonne Glasson, and Brian and Jacki Flannery. The hardworking volunteers in Parkes were: Mark and Ann Olson, Dorothy Wyatt, Walter Berry, Gary Somers, Gavin and Ellie Tom, Andy and Dorothea Tom, Glen Somers, Donald Field, Warwick Tom, June Armstrong, Doris Field, Marie Maguire, Richard Green, George Green, Rhyse Forrestal, Stan Field, John Sarkissian, Robert Field, Maurice and Merren Davey at Alectown, Graeme Hunter and Judith Patton at Bogan Gate, Rob McCalman at Peak Hill, Max and Margaret Swift, Dawn Walsh, Tony Toohey, Don and Joan Herbert at Eugowra, Dick Baxter and Bill Burns at Peak Hill.

The hardworking volunteers from Canowindra were: David Pearce, Matthew Pearce, Jill McDonald, Richard Glasson, Richard Nash, Michael Payten and David Harrison. At Tullamore we had the great Ian

Rathbone, ably supported by his wife, Jillian, Brian Darcy and Brian and Poppy Jones, and Jenny Paul. At Cargo were Rob Bowman, Lachie MacSmith, Peter Davis, Peter Searle, Geoff Dunkley and David Bracey. Rob also did the scrutineering at this booth. At Trundle—the heart of the heartland and home of the ABBA Festival—were Cranley Gowing, Ron Jones and his wife, Marie, and Linda Taylor. Ron also did the scrutineering. Many other people offered support along the way, including former local member Russell Turner. It was a real team effort and a resounding result for the Orange electorate. The two-party preferred vote was 71.7 per cent. I thank all the volunteers and the people of the Orange electorate for such a strong vote of confidence.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.53 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Orange on his return to the Parliament with such a healthy margin. I acknowledge the hard work of all the volunteers. We all rely on the generosity of people in our electorates. It is clear from the number of names the member read onto the record that he has a strong following. Those volunteers have worked hard to return the member for Orange. He is a fantastic local member who has achieved wonderful things for his electorate, and will continue to do so.

GLENWOOD HIGH SCHOOL TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [3.54 p.m.]: In my inaugural speech I referred to the interesting combination in my electorate of treasured heritage from settlements at the Windsor end, which was then included in Riverstone, and the youthful dynamism of the new suburbs to the south. It is on that youthful dynamism that I will focus today. On 27 April I had the pleasure of attending the tenth anniversary celebration of Glenwood High School. For schools in many of the older communities in the State, 10 years is a mere blink of the eye. So it is amazing that Glenwood High School, as the oldest school in the area, is seen as an established school in that part of my electorate.

"Opportunity through Learning" is the motto of Glenwood High School, and when the school celebrated its tenth anniversary on Monday 27 April that was apparent for all to see. When the school opened in 2005, with only 240 students enrolled in years 7 and 8, and with 24 teachers, the founding staff and students were given a unique opportunity to shape the future paths of all who would follow in their footsteps. Under the leadership and guidance of Russell Turner, the founding principal, staff and students set about creating a culture of respect and an inclusive environment for all that encouraged individual academic, sporting, performing arts and cultural talents. Fine examples of the school are former students Marisa Mu and Justin McRae, who were the first school captains in 2009. Marisa graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Design from the University of New South Wales and Justin graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics (Honours) from the University of Sydney.

The students of Glenwood High School come from a broad range of backgrounds, with approximately 52 per cent of students coming from a language background other than English. These languages include Tagalog, Punjabi, Hindi, Gujarati and Sinhalese—and a smattering of other communities are also present. The school prides itself on encouraging students to celebrate their differences, to develop confidence and resilience, and to work together creatively to solve their problems. Under the leadership of the current principal, Erla McMaster, the school has gone from strength to strength. In just 10 short years Glenwood High School enrolments have increased from the initial 240 to 1,496 students this year, with a teaching and support staff of 136. That makes the school one of the larger schools in this State. The school enjoys an excellent reputation and is fast becoming the school of choice for the Glenwood community. The school's core values are:

Democracy, Integrity, Respect, Empathy, Embracing diversity, Excellence, Responsibility, Loyalty, Participation and Co-operation.

These values are important building blocks for a collaborative and inclusive society, such as we have in New South Wales in 2015. I commend the school for promulgating these values and living by them. I congratulate Ms McMaster, the leadership team and students on the tenth anniversary of Glenwood High School and I commend them to the House.

FALL OF SAIGON FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [3.59 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the fortieth anniversary of the Fall of Saigon. This occasion is known by many Vietnamese-Australians in my electorate as "ngày mất nước"—the day we lost the country. As members are well aware, when Saigon was overrun by Communist guerrillas from the north on 30 April 1975, hundreds of thousands of innocent Vietnamese people

faced the unbearable hardship of losing their homes, their livelihoods and, in some cases, being permanently separated from their loved ones. Many Vietnamese refugees showed their bravery and tenacity by finding a new home in a new country for a second chance at life.

Many refugees made the dangerous, heart-wrenching but necessary decision to leave Vietnam by boat. Sadly, it is estimated that only 60 per cent of the Vietnamese refugees who embarked on that journey between 1975 and 1990 made it to Australia. We are very fortunate to have almost 200,000 Vietnamese Australians living in Australia today. In the last 40 years, the Vietnamese Australian community has played an integral role in promoting freedom, democracy and human rights in Australia and has made a great contribution to our society.

I grew up in Punchbowl, and my immediate neighbours and my neighbours across the road were of Vietnamese heritage. They were in fact Vietnamese refugees. I remember that when my immediate neighbours settled here their first instinct was to find work. When they had trouble finding work, they began to work from home and would sew and make clothes. My neighbours across the road had five children, but I noticed there were only ever four children at the home. I asked why the photo in their lounge room showed five children. They told me that, tragically, they had lost their eldest daughter on their journey to Australia. That story has stayed with me. I have imagined how hard it must have been for that family knowing that in pursuing freedom they lost one of their children in such a tragic way. I am pleased to say that their children have grown up and become great success stories in our community.

In the Bankstown region today there are over 13,000 people with Vietnamese roots, and there are over 10,000 people who were born in Vietnam who reside in Bankstown. I take this opportunity to commend and to highlight the many achievements of the Vietnamese community in the Bankstown electorate. Their incredible hard work and contribution have enriched our community economically, socially and culturally. In 2011 I was honoured to be part of the ceremony for the unveiling of the Vietnamese boat people monument, which paid tribute to the Vietnamese community in Bankstown. I still feel privileged to have been part of this wonderful ceremony.

I pay tribute to Mr Thanh Nguyen, the former President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia NSW Chapter [VCA], for his tenacity in coordinating the construction of that monument. I acknowledge others within the Vietnamese community. The many community leaders in the VCA and other community organisations continue to work with all levels of government and the community to bring the Vietnamese Australian community closer and unite the community. This year the Vietnamese community will commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the fall of Saigon. I understand that there will be a number of events throughout the year to mark this occasion.

We will hear stories from refugees and speeches about the contribution the Vietnamese community has made to our nation over the last 40 years. I am also proud of Saigon Place in Bankstown. This involved renaming part of Bankstown Plaza to commemorate the fall of Saigon. I am proud of the fact that we celebrate the Lunar New Year Festival in Bankstown every year. That festival is also celebrated in Fairfield. Over 60,000 attend this three-day festival. Celebrating these festivals reminds us of the warm nature of the Vietnamese community and how willing they have been to embrace the Australian way of life. We are indeed fortunate that their traditions and customs have enriched our community. I am proud of our strong Vietnamese Australian community and will continue to work closely with them in Bankstown and in New South Wales more broadly.

MYALL LAKES ELECTORATE

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.04 p.m.]: Today I want to inform the House about what the recent State election result means for the electorate of Myall Lakes. First of all, I mention the honour and privilege the people of Myall Lakes have bestowed on me in electing me as their local member. I appreciate that the people of Myall Lakes have entrusted me to represent them in this House and I will do so passionately and always with their best interests at heart.

During the election campaign the Coalition Government made a number of promises in relation to the Myall Lakes electorate. These included: \$20 million for stage 1 of the upgrade of the Manning Base Hospital; a multimillion-dollar upgrade of Taree Police Station; and \$19 million for water security and better water and sewerage in country areas. The Government also announced funding for a motorcycle track between Taree and Old Bar and funding for lighting at the Jack Neal Oval in Taree, amongst a number of other small grants. There was also \$1.89 million for better boating in the Manning River and the Great Lakes area.

I return to the Manning Base Hospital and the \$20 million funding for stage 1 of its development. Stage 1 includes the planning and costing for stages 1, 2 and 3 of the hospital redevelopment. This is a huge redevelopment. This funding is on top of the Government, in 2011-12, increasing recurring funding for the hospital to \$14 million per year. That money has allowed the hospital to engage two new anaesthetists, two new intensive care specialists, a new general surgeon, a new orthopaedic surgeon and, for the first time ever, an oncologist.

The hospital engaged six new registered nurses and a new midwife and established a stroke unit. The funding enabled the hospital to install all new beds and to purchase other new equipment. The \$14 million per year is going into the local economy, year in and year out. It is money being spent in the local shops and going around the local economy. On top of that is the \$20 million for stage 1 of the hospital redevelopment, and there will be money in the future for stages 2 and 3. I am very much looking forward to working with the hospital staff and community—it is their hospital—in relation to stages 1, 2 and 3 of the redevelopment of the hospital.

The Government has also promised a multimillion-dollar upgrade of Taree Police Station. This comes on top of nine new police officers stationed there. Another seven police officers coming this month will be on duty at the Manning Great Lakes Local Area Command. Taree Police Station has undergone refurbishments and extensions over many decades and each time the building has been added to or changed, with stairs going everywhere. It is not the best work environment. It is very pleasing to know that proper planning will be undertaken on this multimillion-dollar police station.

Even if the new police officers are currently earning at the lowest level of their pay scale, they represent an extra \$1.3 million per year going into the local economy. That is \$13 million over 10 years going into the local economy. When we add the hospital funding I have referred to, the total is \$140 million over 10 years going into the local economy—that is a phenomenal amount of money.

The third great promise the Government made was funding for water security and country sewerage and water upgrades. This represents another \$19 million coming into the electorate. The largest amount for water upgrades, \$26 million, went to the Barwon electorate and the second highest amount in New South Wales was \$19 million for Myall Lakes. I look forward to working with MidCoast Water and the other stakeholders in the development of water security projects.

It will mean that the Minimbah Nabiab borefield will come online. Instead of drawing water from the Bootawa Dam and the Manning River, the whole of the Great Lakes area will draw its water from the Nabiab borefield. This will decrease the amount of water taken from the Bootawa Dam and the amount of water pumped out of the Manning River. It is good for the environment and for the people in the Manning area. The dam at Bootawa will only have to service the local people from the Manning River area, which will add many years to its lifespan.

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [4.09 p.m.]: With the indulgence of the House tonight, I will elaborate on some of the remarks I made at the opening of the Parliament this week when I was re-elected as the Speaker. Those remarks were in relation to the advancement of women in this House and other jurisdictions across Australia. Whilst time on that day only allowed me to mention a few of the first women in this Parliament, I now want to include others in my comments and ensure no-one is overlooked. As previously noted, in this Parliament we have the first female members for the electorates of Ballina, Miranda and Granville. After the election of 28 March 2015 we now also have the first female members for the electorates of Cootamundra, Holsworthy, Londonderry, Newtown, Oxley, Port Stephens and Summer Hill.

It is important to note those elected in previous parliaments who were the first females to represent their electorates in this House: the member for Bankstown, the member for Canterbury, the member for Charlestown, the member for Goulburn, the member for North Shore, the member for Vacluse, the member for Wallsend, the member for Willoughby and, last but not least, the member for Wollongong. I was the first female member to represent the South Coast. I do not make these statements lightly because it is important to note the contributions of women; it is so tough sometimes for women to enter parliament. Women face barriers such as child care, particularly young women, but they have so much to contribute to this House.

In this place, we have the first female Treasurer, the first female Attorney General and the first female Clerk of the Legislative Assembly—a role that Ronda Miller has demonstrated time and again was made for her.

She holds a position from which she leads as a role model for women on what can be achieved with hard work and determination. Most times now we see only women sitting at the Clerk's table, and they make a fantastic contribution to this Chamber, as I am sure Mr Deputy-Speaker will agree.

In jurisdictions across the country females preside in Chambers in the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory and the Commonwealth parliaments. As I said on Tuesday, there is a long way to go and there are many barriers, but women are breaking down those barriers. We only have to look at the Commonwealth Parliament to see the wonderful job our Foreign Minister is doing, demonstrating on the world stage that we are a country that promotes and develops strong, talented and accomplished women. I hope it will not be long before we are celebrating our first Liberal female Prime Minister.

Leadership for women is not only the domain of those of us in elected positions. Although I am proud to say that females hold the position of Mayor of Shoalhaven and the Federal seat of Gilmore in my local area, I would like to highlight some of the great work that female leaders of my electorate have made. First, a very good friend of mine, Shoalhaven City Councillor Karen Anstiss, was the 2011 Shoalhaven City Australian Citizen of the Year in recognition of her work with Slice of Life, a not-for-profit organisation that she founded 10 years ago to provide work opportunities for people with a disability in our community. This organisation has grown to employ 22 people, 14 of whom have a disability. Karen is not only making a contribution in the council, she is also extraordinarily busy in her work with Slice of Life, and I congratulate her on that.

Another wonderful South Coast leader for decades is Narelle Ober, OAM, whom I have known for a very long time. In 2013 she was named on the NSW Department of Primary Industries Hidden Treasures Honour Roll, which acknowledges the important volunteer roles women play within New South Wales rural communities. Although she has an extensive history of giving back to the community by volunteering for many different organisations, it is her work on the Milton Ulladulla Hospital Auxiliary where I have seen that she has given so much of herself in volunteering and devoted her time to our local hospital. It should be noted that Narelle too was not a woman to be stopped by convention. She was the first woman on a Catholic hospital board in New South Wales when she was invited to join the board of St Joseph's Hospital in Auburn, a place where she lived before moving to the wonderful electorate of the South Coast.

These two great women, day in and day out, give so much of their time to my community of the South Coast. They are the standard to which we should hold ourselves. But they are not alone; there are many, many more. I could stand here for hours and speak about all the wonderful women, but I will mention a special lady, Turia Pitt. I am sure that many people will have heard of Turia Pitt. She is an Ulladulla local who attended the high school where I taught and who only last month hosted a charity gala to support Interplast, an organisation that helps burns victims in developing countries. I am sure members know Turia's story.

Greenwell Point resident Jo Allen was the 2014 South Coast Woman of the Year in recognition of her work with the Nowra State Emergency Service. The list goes on. I referred earlier to the wonderful member for Wollongong, who is now in the Chamber. I congratulate her on her elevation to the position of Opposition Whip. I recognise all the years she has contributed to her community in the electorate of Wollongong and I am sure she will continue to do so for many more years to come, if that is her choice.

WOLLONGONG CROWN STREET MALL

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [4.14 p.m.]: Mr Deputy-Speaker, I place on record my congratulations to you on your re-election as Deputy-Speaker in this House.

This afternoon I raise an issue that came to my attention when I was reading an article in the *Illawarra Mercury*. It reinforced comments I made to councillors at Wollongong City Council about my concern at the lack of people visiting the town centre. Walking through the mall, blind Freddie can see that very few people are visiting. I was told of the assistance given to retailers by way of new facades. But, as I have said on a number of occasions, the erection of new facades meant closures of the mall so that people could not access the retail shops, and those retailers still had to pay their rent. I called for rental assistance for those retailers, but nothing happened in that regard. Following the refurbishment of Wollongong Crown Street Mall, retailers are again saying that people are not visiting the mall. The *Illawarra Mercury* article stated:

Some lower Crown Street Mall retailers say they have been forced into "panic mode" as shoppers have failed to return to the inner-city strip despite last year's mall refurbishment works.

After months of waiting behind construction hoardings for Wollongong City Council's multimillion-dollar mall revamp to open, a number of small retailers say they are doing it tougher than ever.

These retailers need assistance because, clearly, the ongoing delay in the refurbishment of the mall has caused them great hardship. The article went on to state:

South Coast Runners owner Karl Hayes has been leading a call for more to be done to revive the mall, as he is worried some of the "local and unique" businesses at the eastern end of Crown Street Mall won't survive if the current trend continues.

Sitting in his empty shop on a weekday afternoon, he revealed his own monthly takings had dropped by thousands compared to the same time last year.

"Most of the time there's just no one around," he said.

"Since the new mall has opened, it seems like there's actually less people coming into Wollongong to shop. Every day, you hear retailers saying sales and people numbers are down."

Parking is a problem in Wollongong. People have complained to me about having to pay for parking in Wollongong and the lack of parking spaces. Retailers have complained to me about losing business because people can travel to Shellharbour and park for free. Shellharbour has a DFO—Wollongong rejected the opportunity to have a DFO and the potential 700 jobs that would have come with it. Wollongong has a Myer store, which is an attraction for people coming from areas such as Dapto, Warrawong and Port Kembla, but now Shellharbour also has a Myer store.

Wollongong City Council should take a proactive approach and provide entertainment or facilities that will entice shoppers so that those retailers can recover some of the income they have lost. These are small businesses; they are doing it tough and they need every bit of assistance they can be given. It has been suggested to me that Wollongong council should consider introducing paid parking at North Wollongong beach—where all the visitors from Sydney come and park for free, use our facilities and leave us with nothing—and have free parking close to the main city centre. Free parking will allow people to go and spend some money in the stores. I encourage Wollongong council to do whatever is necessary to help these retailers recover from the financial impost they have experienced in the past couple of years.

RYDE ELECTORATE

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) [4.19 p.m.]: Once again I am humbled to have been given the responsibility of representing the people of Ryde in our State Parliament. I have a long connection with the electorate of Ryde. I was born in Ryde Hospital, attended North Ryde Primary School and, like my father, went to Marist Brothers, Eastwood. My grandparents settled in Ryde more than 80 years ago and I have lived in Ryde for more than 45 years. My mother went to North Ryde Public School, the same school that the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian attended. My sisters also attended local schools in the area. It has been our home for a long time. The community has given me so much and it is an extraordinary honour to be elected to serve them in the Parliament of New South Wales. I will always fight for the best interests of my electorate and ensure that I do my constituents proud.

The next four years will be an exciting time for the people of Ryde. I look forward to delivering on the trust the residents of Ryde have placed in me and realising our pre-election commitments. The long-term leasing of 49 per cent of the State's poles and wires will allow the Government to invest in infrastructure that will turbocharge our economy, transform our hospitals, open our transit corridors and unclog our peak hour traffic. An amount of \$9 million has been promised to modernise Ryde Hospital. The money will be used to upgrade the hospital's coronary care and high dependency units as well as ward 2, which is a medical inpatient ward. The Government has a proud and impressive record of delivering additional funding for Ryde Hospital. Indeed, in 2013 health Minister Jillian Skinner and I opened the \$41 million purpose-built *Graythwaite* Rehabilitation Centre. We are proud to have that 64-bed, state-of-the-art unit in Ryde.

In our previous term of government we also allocated an additional \$5 million to remodel the operating theatre complex, improve car parking and upgrade ward 8, which is the assessment planning unit. We have wasted no time in delivering on our election promise. Less than six weeks since the election we have already secured a preliminary meeting with representatives from Northern Sydney Local Health District to discuss both the Ryde Hospital master plan and survey its current infrastructure. I was grateful that the Minister for Health allowed us to proceed with the master plan because it will set in motion the necessary longevity of this important hospital. The master plan will give the hospital a strategic focus that will ensure it meets the needs of our community and the wider metropolitan area of which Ryde is the epicentre.

Another important election commitment was our promise to provide, in concert with Ryde City Council, 230 additional commuter car parking spaces in Eastwood. We are working to ensure that those parking

spaces will be available as soon as possible. The new car park demonstrates the Government's commitment to delivering improved transport infrastructure across the network. We will continue to listen to the concerns of commuters and improve accessibility to public transport throughout Ryde. Our commitment to public transport is also evident in the planned upgrade of Meadowbank wharf as part of the Government's \$100 million Transport Access Program. The upgrade will make transport to and from Western Sydney along the Parramatta River more accessible than ever before. We have already begun consultation with customers and local residents along the Meadowbank foreshore to ensure that we earmark and prioritise the improvements that will make the most difference to customers' public transport experience.

In this fifty-sixth term of Parliament I am looking forward to new challenges both as the member for Ryde and in my new role as Minister for Innovations and Better Regulation in the Baird Government. The new portfolio has responsibility for regulatory reform across government, with specific responsibility for Fair Trading. The Minister for Innovations and Better Regulation is also responsible for the Government's Information and Communications Technology [ICT] strategies. I recently attended a meeting with Federal Minister for Communications Malcolm Turnbull. In many ways I am his State counterpart. We have already engaged in meaningful dialogue about how we will collaborate to deliver infrastructure for the future.

I thank my colleagues, friends, family, party members and constituents who supported my campaign and sent me their well wishes since my re-election. In particular, I thank Craig Chung, Jordan Lane, Margaret Lee, Anne Felici, John and Dee Brown, Hassib Elias, Matt Dawson, Kevin Pagaddinnimath and Trenton Brown. Those people, along with the volunteers they inspired, were the heartbeat of my campaign over the past three or four months. Once again, I thank the Ryde community for the trust they have placed in me for the next four years. I promise them that I will continue to advocate for their interests.

EPHING ROTARY CLUB PRIDE OF WORKMANSHIP AWARDS

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) [4.24 p.m.]: Last Monday night I had great pleasure in presenting the awards at the Epping Rotary Club Pride of Workmanship Awards Night. The Rotary Pride of Workmanship Award was launched as a Rotary project in June 1975 at the District 9680 Assembly, which I think is the Pennant Hills district. The aims were to encourage pride in personal performance in the workplace and to help create a national attitude for the benefit of our country. The Rotary Club of Pennant Hills followed this up with the establishment of annual Pride of Workmanship Award presentation evenings. The program has been adopted by more than 600 clubs in Australia, New Zealand, the South Pacific, Malaysia, Canada and the United States.

The objectives of the program are: to promote vocational service; to encourage Pride of Workmanship in all vocations; to provide employers with an opportunity to recognise employees who display the qualities worthy of an award; to encourage favourable employer-employee relationships and a sense of community pride in individual achievement; and to provide an opportunity for Rotary to be involved in the community, in particular the business community. Perhaps the best summary of the program is encapsulated by its motto, "Do it once, Do it well, Build a Better Australia."

The awards given out on the night were judged by a panel of three Rotarians: Bruce Jacob, Stephen Wright and Colin Allerdice. Stephen spoke glowingly of the nominations that had been received. In no particular order, I will now inform the House of the 2015 award recipients. Warren Law is a caterer for Epping Rotary who was nominated by Ian Stephenson. Ian spoke glowingly of Warren's dedication to providing the meals that the Rotary Club receives each Monday evening. He told a story of a recent Rotary Club conference he attended where he related the quality and variety of the meals that Rotarians at Epping received each week. His stories made Epping the envy of all Rotarians attending the conference. Indeed, I was the recipient of the fare and I can attest to the quality of the meals provided. My advice to Rotarians in Epping is to be careful of their waistlines. However, it would be remiss of me not to suggest that with Warren helping out it is an incentive to return to the club often.

Allen Hughes of Allen C Hughes General and Commercial Painting was nominated by Diane Walker. Diane spoke of Allen's professionalism in carrying out a domestic painting job for her—so much so that she was motivated to nominate him for an award. She related how impressed she was with his attention to detail as well as the fact that he did not use bad language or play loud music. She placed particular emphasis on the fact that he was neat and tidy and that the finished job added many dollars to the value of her house. Kamini Savai is a Coles employee who was nominated by a Coles manager. Kamini has worked at Coles at Epping for 19 years and the manager acknowledged her loyalty and dedication, which plays out in her willingness always to work back and do the jobs that no-one else wants to do.

Anne Rowsell is a teacher at Epping Primary School who was nominated by Principal John Ford. John described Anne as the teacher in his school who has the appearance of a blur because she has only one pace—flat out. He acknowledged that she was the teacher who would always volunteer for activities at his school and would be there first to set up. She is now teaching the children of some of her first students. She helps out many students as a teacher of English as a second language and she exemplifies the values of the many teachers who give so much to their communities. Janet Dumbrell is a receptionist at an Epping arcade optometrist who was nominated by Ernest Tobia. Janet was leaving the practice of Ernest Tobia after 25 years of service. Ernest spoke of how over the years Janet had run the practice of the optometrists who worked there. She is moving to Queensland and Ernest does not know how he will survive without her.

Often it is the hardworking staff who make many small businesses successful. Having come from a small business background, I am well aware of the importance of these awards. Pride of workmanship is a notion we all ought to endorse. I also acknowledge the great work of Epping Rotary and current President John Fenessy. Like all Rotary clubs, it does marvellous work in its community and raises money for many well-deserving charities.

Private members' statements concluded.

Pursuant to resolution inaugural speeches proceeded with.

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

The SPEAKER: On behalf of the member for Ku-ring-gai I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the Federal member for Bradfield, the Hon. Paul Fletcher, MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Communications; the Consul-General of the Netherlands; Mr Andrew Humpherson, a former member of the Legislative Assembly; family, friends and supporters of the new member; and my friend and colleague the President of the Legislative Council, the Hon. Don Harwin.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) [4.30 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): In October 1944 my father spent two days in the basement of a biscuit factory with his mother, father, sister and their neighbours. The advancing Allied Welsh division was fighting the German army, house by house, street by street. As my father sat in the basement of that biscuit factory, with shells exploding and bullets ricocheting, he did not think of the brave work he had done in the Dutch resistance over the preceding three years, the German rifles he had stolen or the sabotage he had performed. Instead, he thought to himself that there was more he could do to help the advancing Allied army.

My father and his friend hatched a plan. They walked across the road. As my father spoke to a German guard who was holding a machine-gun, his friend came from behind and held a gun to the head of the soldier. The guard handed the machine-gun to my father. After taking the machine-gun, my father then went alone down the steps of the building the soldier was guarding and into the basement of a disused cigar factory where the Germans had a temporary command centre. My father caught the people inside by surprise. He ordered about 10 SS soldiers to drop their guns. Their leader defiantly responded to my father:

I am an officer of the Waffen SS. We do not surrender to civilians.

My 19-year-old father was hardened by what had happened during the war. That included the imprisonment in a German concentration camp and later death of his brother, Gerard, as a political prisoner, the internment of his brother, Jacques, on the Burma railway as a Japanese prisoner of war and the disappearance and death of a third brother, Theo, who was a merchant mariner. He witnessed first-hand the horrible transportation that led to the extermination of many of the Jewish inhabitants of his city. With that background he responded to the officer in German:

Surrender or I will shoot the lot of you.

As he said those words my father probably squeezed the trigger of the machine-gun a little tighter as the eyes of the two men met. After a terrible pause, the SS Officer gave an order to his men:

Put down your guns.

It took about 65 years after those events for my father to fully tell me that story. We were on a holiday to Europe to celebrate my parents' fiftieth wedding anniversary and we were standing at the foot of the steps he had

descended many years ago. My father was motivated to risk his life that day because of the love of his family, his community and his country. I come to this place with different risks but with the same motivations. I thank my parents who were volunteers in our community, at my schools and in our church. Without much money, you raised five children on a single income and gave each of us a great start in life. Your support, love, values and guidance have been all that I have ever needed to do well in life. I am so glad you are here today.

My mother significantly introduced me to and then encouraged my love of music and drama. In fact, the only trade union that I have ever been a member of is the now former Musicians Union, which I had to join as a teenager to be able to play in the clubs and hotels of the Hunter Valley in bands or as a solo singer-guitarist. And I promise not to sing at the drop of a hat in this place like the former member for Epping. I also thank my music teachers at Newcastle High School and Mr Warburton. The Liberal Party needs to do as much as it can to support the arts. Government is not only about economic efficiency but also needs to facilitate the human soul, the advancement of humanity and the continuous investigation of the human condition by which societies advance.

In addition to my parents, I am delighted that my wife, Nancy, who has been the most important person in my life and who has been my companion since we were in our early twenties is here with our two lovely children, Georgia and Gus. I love you dearly and thank you for your love and support. In the time remaining I want to say some words about Ku-ring-gai, to thank the people who helped me arrive here and to talk about some ideas for the better future of our State. I am only the fifth person to represent the seat of Ku-ring-gai. I immediately acknowledge my predecessors. Ku-ring-gai has been represented by two Premiers, the Hon. Nick Greiner and the Hon. Barry O'Farrell; an Attorney General, the Hon. John Maddison; and Stephen O'Doherty. On behalf of my constituents, I acknowledge and thank each of those men for their exceptional public service to our local community and to this great State.

I also thank most sincerely the electors of Ku-ring-gai who have given me the great privilege of representing an area that I have lived in for almost 20 years. Ku-ring-gai is a great place to live and to bring up a family, and it is one of the most highly educated and economically sophisticated electorates in our State. I consider that it is not only an honour but also a great responsibility to represent them here. I would not have been given the opportunity to represent Ku-ring-gai without the support of the local Liberal Party branches. I thank our local party members, the conference executive led by Carolyn Cameron and all of the volunteers who worked so hard in a compressed and intense campaign to see me elected.

I especially acknowledge the help and support of my good friends Diane Woods, Michael Lane and Alan Lipman. The four of us have been active Liberal Party volunteers together and friends since the turn of the millennium when we served together on Andrew Humpherson's SEC executive. Thank you to them and to Darren Bark for your friendship and tireless work in helping me to be pre-selected as the Liberal candidate and then elected as the member for Ku-ring-gai. I have worked closely as the Bradfield FEC president with the Hon. Brendan Nelson and the Hon. Paul Fletcher, and I thank both of them for the support and assistance they have given me. I appreciate Paul Fletcher and Andrew Humpherson being here today. I am honoured that the Consul-General of the Netherlands could also join us.

I am buoyed today by the presence of so many other family and friends. I am delighted that my brother and sister, Frankie and Marianne, Keith, Aunty Joan and Uncle Jim, and my nephews Charlie, Willem and Hamish are here today. I also mention my sister Ineke, who I love very much and who has done so much for Nancy and me. I also acknowledge the member for Orange who I employed as a young solicitor in Newcastle in the mid-1990s and who has been a friend ever since. I am glad we can work together again. Many friends have come from near and far to be here today. I have some very longstanding school friends from Newcastle East Primary School and Newcastle High School, and other friends from the University of Sydney and my legal career, as well as the friends I have made in my role as a parent, a parents and citizens association president, a director of New South Wales Basketball, a coach and manager of that sport, and as a Liberal Party volunteer.

I cannot mention you all today but you are all very special to me, and I particularly appreciate those who were so willing to help me with my preselection and election campaigns. You have come at relatively short notice today and your presence has made this an extra special occasion for me. I especially mention Mr Omar Ali, who was my high school maths teacher from year 9 until year 12. Mr Ali is an Egyptian immigrant to our country. In my high school neither his country of origin nor his religion was important to his students. What made us love going to maths was the fun that happened in Mr Ali's classroom. We could only be affected by the way that he cared about how we learnt maths. His love of maths became our love of maths.

After I became a lawyer, Mr Ali's eye was blinded in a cataract operation and because of a dense cataract in his other eye he was legally blind. It was to me that he turned for help. It was a heavy responsibility, given his vulnerable situation, but it was in a way fitting. Without his teaching I would not have become a lawyer and now I was able to help him. Although I have routinely represented as a barrister the very largest public companies from Australia and other parts of the world, representing Mr Ali was one of the most special cases I had as a lawyer. With my good friend George Inatey, QC, leading me, we were determined that Mr Ali would receive justice.

I would like to quickly acknowledge some other important mentors in my life. Pam and Cliff McDonald were neighbours and the parents of my best friend, Graeme, at primary school. Mr McDonald was a great citizen of Newcastle—a solicitor, a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve and an alderman on the Newcastle City Council. I wish he was still with us but his sons, Graeme and Greg, are here today. My first basketball coach and Olympian, Terry Charlton, introduced me to that sport which has brought me so much enjoyment in my life. Mr Bob Dick was my junior representative basketball coach for many years and Stan Allen was my high school coach. My father was the parents and citizens association president for the whole seven years I spent at primary school. Each of those men gave their time as volunteers freely and by their example in my early life showed me the importance of community service, which I hope to emulate now as a member of Parliament.

Today I am not going to embark on a theoretical treatise in political science nor wax lyrical about technical legal issues. I am also a bit sick of talking about myself and my life after a compressed preselection and election campaign this year. Instead I would like to speak freely about some of the challenges we face as a State Government and as a society. I will not show any regard for jurisdictional issues between State and Federal governments, because the people of Ku-ring-gai expect their elected representatives to work together to solve problems and not make excuses. I will talk a lot about what people might think are economic or dry issues. But I adopt the words of my Ku-ring-gai predecessor Nick Greiner, who said Liberal governments should be dry and warm.

As Liberals we often speak of economics because we are the party in this place that takes economic issues seriously. But we always need to ensure that community members understand that we care about them and not economic theory. Liberals can never appear to be just a team of accountants or actuaries who live for the love of numbers—no offence, Mr Ali. We must always show that we are economically responsible but with the objective of making people's lives better through our economic and other policy. The Federal Government's intergenerational report released in March this year is a sobering insight into how Australia will change and its population will age over the next 40 years, which will necessarily put increasing strain on State Government services. In October last year federalism again was given prominence by a paper entitled "A Federation for the 21st Century", published by the Committee for the Economic Development of Australia. It is fitting that in this Chamber, which was addressed frequently by the Father of our Federation, Sir Henry Parkes, that we consider and debate the modern operation of our federation.

There are two contemporary important problems with the operation of our Federation and they have been with us for some time. Government services are subject to Federal and State duplication at an increasing rate, which wastes our precious government resources. Also State governments have a poor revenue base relative to the Federal Government but States undertake expenditure in excess of the direct revenue they raise. This is known as vertical fiscal imbalance. The latter has given rise to calls to reconsider the scope of the GST which is paid to the States. Australian Federal and State governments need to restore their zeal for reform. I am pleased that this Government is doing that. There was a time in the 1980s when both sides of politics appeared to understand that driving economic efficiency was not just a matter of theory but also could be in the best interest of the community.

The reformers recognised that a dollar saved by the efficient delivery of government services was a dollar made available for new or existing government services. Similarly, efficiency in the private sector creates wealth which expands taxation receipts, thereby enhancing government services and improving the lives of those who could gain employment after previously being on welfare. But that bipartisanship appeared to dissolve during the Howard Government years. It is for our side of politics to make the case for continuing economic reform by facing down the shallow scare campaigns of our opponents. We must be prepared to win the battle with intelligent and reasoned arguments delivered in the language that the community can understand. The last State election and the poles and wires debate in my opinion were a window to the political future. Liberals will need to be prepared to continually operate and win in the marketplace of ideas.

For example, we cannot have a real discussion about tax reform in this Federation without considering as part of that discussion the current situation of the GST. We need to sell the virtues of tax reform. If our

citizens want the current standard of, for example, public hospitals and public education to continue in the future, together with the full implementation of a National Disability Insurance Scheme, then we have to find solutions to the fact that most revenue is raised by the Federal Government but that most government services are provided by the States.

A GST discussion is not radical. My economics professors at the University of Sydney all agreed as far back as the 1980s that a broad-based consumption tax was the most efficient taxation model possible, if the regressive nature of the tax could be comprehensively addressed. John Howard and Peter Costello were able to demonstrate that the GST could lower the overall taxes of average Australians if accompanied with proper income tax cuts and appropriate welfare measures. Despite the all-too-familiar Australian Labor Party scare campaign at the time, the Howard and Costello Government showed that a GST did not bring the end of the world or destroy the egalitarian nature of Australian society. Average law-abiding citizens are better off with a consumption tax because tax cheats do not pay their fair share of income tax. People can avoid paying tax on their income because they can operate in the cash economy, have offshore tax havens or never pay tax because they engage in criminal activity. But everybody consumes goods and services, so a GST has those tax avoiders actually paying some tax. The question is whether we should have them pay more of the tax burden through the GST than they currently do.

It is important and we must compensate people on welfare, pay-as-you-earn taxpayers and people on low incomes if there is any change to the GST so that they are better off and not worse off. But the base of our consumption tax is currently narrower and the rate is lower than in many comparable countries. Governments want laws that encourage economic activity and the provision of jobs. But stamp duty and payroll tax penalise economic activity and the provision of jobs. We would be better off with tax reform than persisting with stamp duty and payroll tax. [*Extension of time granted.*]

The revenue base of the States of our Federation should not be subject to the boom and bust of the property market or the mining industry because of the reliance by State governments on stamp duty and mining royalties. Allied to the question of the State's revenue is the drive to greater efficiency in the provision of services and contestability. There is nothing mandatory about the public ownership of assets or the public provision of public services. What matters to consumers is whether they can obtain a good quality service at the lowest possible price. If a private operator can run a public hospital with the same services provided at the same price to patients as the Government currently charges, then it does not directly matter to consumers if the hospital management is in public or private hands. But if those same services at the same price are provided cheaper to government by a private operator, then that does indirectly matter, because more money is then available from that activity for other government services or to lower taxes.

We need to expose the union featherbedding that is currently hindering the provision of efficient public services. For example, the Electrical Trades Union did not fight government policy on the poles and wires on the basis that their industrial practices were efficient. They did so out of naked self-interest. I have thought that our competition laws are inadequate since I appeared in a leading trade practices case from 1999 to 2004 as it weaved its way to the High Court. The case ironically involved a private electricity generation company that was refused access to the government-owned monopoly over the electricity poles and wires operated by the Northern Territory Power and Water Corporation. Our current laws allow too much monopolistic and oligopolistic behaviour in our State, which is stifling competition, creating higher prices overall and damaging small business. When speaking with small business people in Ku-ring-gai I found that they expressed their belief that large retailers in this State are distorting the supply chains and engaging in predatory pricing to try to put them out of business.

The butchers, fruiterers and other shop owners in our local shopping strips in Ku-ring-gai say that they are on the edge of oblivion after having traded successfully for 20 years or more. Despite their better products they need the help of government and, critically, the backing of our community if they are going to survive. If we want to keep the character of our suburbs intact, the community needs to consciously support our local retailers and take more time to shop with them. It will greatly assist our self-employed local business owners who work very hard and have put everything on the line for their businesses.

And all governments need to do more to curb unfair economic practices, including the misuse of monopoly or oligopoly power and predatory pricing and to take on some of the large players in our economy to ensure an efficient operation of the market, which in the long run is in the best interest of consumers. The professional and technical services sector, of which I have been part for 27 years, is our second largest contributor to the State economy. We should ensure that there are no impediments to the service industries of

this State equally and robustly competing at a national and international level. If we want our State to be more than a quarry or a farm, we must investigate ways for us to expand our economic base, create wealth and take advantage of our close proximity to the growing Asian economies.

Our closeness to Asia is an economic opportunity as much as a competitive threat. And there are encouraging signs. For example, software engineers Atlassian, a great Sydney start-up company formed in 2002, last year had sales of over \$200 million. But we need to have a sensible conversation about how our industrial laws in the past have contributed to the decline in our manufacturing industry, and be sensible and honest about how our industrial laws will need to change before we can again be internationally competitive in manufacturing or tourism or other industries crippled by penalty rates.

We need to address industrial allowances for public sector workers so that union membership is truly a matter of choice and not compulsory or paid for by the taxpayer. There is currently an understandable anxiety in the community. Our economy has been largely flat since the global financial crisis, people are concerned about job security, self-funded retirement income has reduced with reduced interest rates and many people wonder whether they will ever be able to afford a home for their existing or future family. Instead of just expanding Sydney endlessly, we need to provide more encouragement to regional development so that good jobs, like they were when my father immigrated to Australia in 1951, are close to cheaper houses, land and the underutilised infrastructure in our regional areas. And we must address the restricted supply of land in Sydney.

Today I have discussed the operation of our Federation, the tax base of our State, privatisation, competition law, small business, the service industry, industrial practices and decentralisation. I hope that I can focus on the development of many creative ideas to bring about beneficial change to our State. That is why I wanted to come to this place and with hard work and the support of the people of Ku-ring-gai and my colleagues, that is what I hope to achieve. Madam Speaker, I thank you and the House for its indulgence.

The SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Seven Hills, I welcome his family, friends and supporters in the gallery. I make special mention of the Federal member for Mitchell, Alex Hawke, MP. I also acknowledge my friend and colleague, the President of the Legislative Council. I also acknowledge the Lord Mayor of Parramatta City Council, Scott Lloyd.

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) [4.59 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): On 9 June 1989 a young Australian cricketer, with a now famous name, walked onto the hallowed turf of the Headingley cricket ground in Leeds. On that day he scored the ultimate cricket career achievement of 100 runs in his maiden Ashes test. Whilst I doubt that this Mark Taylor's maiden speech will score a perfect 100, I can assure you of one thing, and that is that the butterflies in my stomach and the pounding in my heart are just as significant and no less perturbing as that cricketer would have suffered on that day. Just like that cricketer, I stand here facing up at my crease to a bit less of an opposition.

I stand here, with all my experiences, my upbringing, my education, my values and my years of practice of trade weighing in behind me. What really gives me the strength is that I know there are many in the Chamber seats behind me, and particularly in the gallery, sitting there quietly, leaning forward, with their fingers crossed, wishing me the best and urging me on. It is that support and that belief in this Mark Taylor that I find most humbling. To them I make a simple pledge: I promise you I will never forget you in your time of need.

To be elected to the Parliament of New South Wales in any capacity is an enormous privilege, but to be entrusted with the responsibility of representing the people of Seven Hills fills me with particular pride. Seven Hills is the electorate in which I have spent most of my life. It is the electorate in which I was born, raised, lived, played sport and worked, and probably more to my good fortune than hers, it is also the electorate in which I met my wife, Petrina.

The task of representing an electorate as diverse, culturally rich, historically significant and, above all else, as middle Australia as Seven Hills is an enormous one. But let me be clear from the very start, let me send a simple message to every constituent of Seven Hills: Whether or not you voted for me, I will serve you, I will advocate for you, I will be accessible to you, and I will put everything into being the local member that you desire and you deserve. I am acutely aware of the weight of trust that has been placed in me and this Government, and we will not let you down.

I am more than aware that several of my colleagues, young and some of them old, have stood here before and boasted very proudly that their electorate is unique. I will not be any different. Seven Hills, while

being one of the newer named electorates in this Parliament, is by no means devoid of historical significance. In fact, some of its localities form the very foundation of our lives today, such as Third Settlement Reserve at Old Toongabbie. That site was established in 1791 following on, of course, from Sydney Cove and Parramatta. It was known as Toongabbie Convict Farm and used convict labour to grow barley, maize and wheat to feed the fledgling colony. By 1792 it had some 500 convicts assigned to it. The reserve continues to be maintained and improved by local residents of the Seven Hills electorate. It is inspiring to see such a significant place in history so well preserved.

While the electorate of Seven Hills may certainly be historic, it is also diverse. Each suburb is uniquely different in demography and geography with some quirky past political representation. For example, until March this year the suburb of Kings Langley, despite being a traditionally strong Liberal voting area, had not actually had a Liberal represent it for 53 years. The last was a dairy farmer named Alfred Hugh Dennis, who represented the area for a mere two years and seven months between 1959 and 1962. Yet, if we look at the neighbouring suburb of Winston Hills, named after that great Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, we find an area nestled in the very heart of the Federal seat of Mitchell, one of the safest and I should say most ably represented, Federal seats in the country. No wonder Winston Hills has been Liberal for as long as many of us can remember.

During the 2015 campaign, such contrast and diversity brought us great challenges, and nothing was taken for granted. There was never any assumption that parts of the electorate would remain Liberal, and there was never any assumption that others would naturally return to the Labor heartland. We fought for every vote on every street. We took nothing for granted, doorknocking every street in the electorate, some several times over. We know that people do not vote on postcode. The overriding message emanating from the electorate was that people want to engage with politicians. They want to hear our plans, they want to have their say. In some cases, they just wanted to know that their potential local member cared enough to visit and listen.

I will share a story. On the umpteenth time doorknocking on Bandella Road in the suburb of Toongabbie, we came across a remarkable lady with a remarkable story. She was 92 years old and had been a resident in the area for more than eight decades. She told us she had never voted for Liberal. But this time, well, I think she may have. Why? For the sole reason that I took the time to drop in and say hello, and I took the time to stay for a cup of tea. I listened to her concerns and I acted on her concerns. This may seem trivial, but I cannot stress the point enough because I cannot find a better example of how important it is to stay humble as a local member, to take no constituent in any suburb for granted—to take nothing for granted.

Friends, despite a statewide swing, Labor did not even make a dent in Seven Hills, which was part of a show of faith by the people of Western Sydney. It is clear that the people of Western Sydney have seen this State Government at work over the past four years and they decided they liked what they saw. The North West Rail Link, upgrades to hospitals such as Blacktown and Westmead, additional bus services and, of course, the Opal card. In Seven Hills, upgrade accesses to Wentworthville, Pendle Hill and Toongabbie railway stations make the trip to work and home again so much easier and so much faster for commuters. These are just some of the initiatives that this Liberal Government has undertaken to improve the quality of life in Seven Hills, as well as the entire area of Western Sydney.

I truly believe that under this Premier's leadership, we will redraw the electoral maps across Western Sydney, and Seven Hills is testament to that. Under the bold leadership of this Premier, we have a chance as a Government to leave an enormous legacy. Visionary infrastructure projects like WestConnex and NorthConnex means we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to cement our legacy as the infrastructure government of our time. We have, over the past four years, changed people's lives for the better. Madam Speaker, I genuinely believe that. The reforms and projects we have delivered over the past four years—and plan to deliver in the next four years—have made and will make a great impact on the lives of people in New South Wales. In 40 or 50 years my children's generation of this great State will look at the tenure of this State Liberal Government and deem it an era in New South Wales politics when we expanded the economy and drove economic growth—an era when great things were achieved.

Despite all the good that has been achieved and is planned for the next four years, it will mean little in respect of electoral success unless we effectively communicate our messages. That is the significant role that the Young Liberal Movement played in the Seven Hills win. It was not only in Seven Hills, but across New South Wales. In the trusted hands of Dean Shachar and Josh Crawford, the New South Wales Young Liberals were out several times a week and were indispensable to the victory in Seven Hills. Josh and Dean, your stewardship of the campaign's wing of the New South Wales Young Liberals was remarkable. If it were not for your efforts in

coordinating things such as the flying squad, we would not have recorded the victory we did. In addition to such things as the flying squad, there were two Young Liberals who gave up months of their lives to be attached permanently to the Seven Hills campaign. I take the opportunity today to thank them. Manning Jeffrey and Jordan Lew, who are both here, you have very bright futures in the Liberal Party.

In fact, it is thanks to each and every one of you, the entire Young Liberal movement, that I am standing here as a member of this Parliament and I want you to know that I am grateful every day for the support of your movement. I want you to know that you are the heartbeat of our party and I want you to know that you are the reason we win elections like Seven Hills. Not only is Seven Hills an electorate that I have had a connection with for my entire life, but it is also one where I have worked for most of my career. For the past 25 years I have been on the frontline of the justice system in both the Australian Federal Police and the New South Wales Police Force. As a police prosecutor I spent my working life representing victims of crime, witnessing the tragedies that befall them. From this I have developed a passionate interest in the term "justice".

I am a firm believer that our justice system must prioritise the victims of crime in a more strident manner, and I note the Premier's shared commitment for this, appointing the State's first dedicated Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Minister Pru Goward will do an outstanding job, and I share the Premier's comments that there is no-one better suited to this role than the Minister is. Having seen firsthand the impact of domestic violence on victims, I am extremely proud of the strong stance the New South Wales Government has taken on this matter. It is often said that some issues are above politics, and the specific issue of domestic violence as well as the broader issue of how our justice system responds to victims of crime are clear examples of such issues.

Victims of crime must have a significant say in our justice system. Of course there is a balance to strike in deterrence, rehabilitation and retribution. However, the pendulum must swing back to deal with the issues confronting victims in a timely, compassionate and responsible manner. Whilst our justice system will always stand apart from the Executive and this Parliament it should never stray far from contemporary community desire; it should never be obliquely skewed against the will of the people. So for however long I am privileged to serve as a member of this place I will always be a strong advocate for victims of crime. We must feel the gravel underneath their feet, we must see through the tears in their eyes and I make no apologies for that. We must ensure that our judicial system represents the community it was designed to serve, and I make no apologies for saying that.

I was born and raised in Eucalyptus Street at Old Toongabbie. I attended Westmead Public School before heading to Model Farms High School and later James Ruse High School. These are great examples of public schools around my electorate that provide excellent educational experiences. To this day many of the boys and girls in my electorate still take advantage of what these schools have to offer. It is a testament to the New South Wales Government that public schools across my electorate and the entire State are flourishing.

But from the very start my mother, Jean, and my father, Neil, instilled a strong sense of community spirit in me. My goal, successfully achieved some years ago, to gain admission to the Supreme Court of New South Wales as a solicitor was motivated by a desire to help those in the community. My father led by example, achieving community outcomes as he rose through the New South Wales Police Force, reaching the position of acting commissioner. My father always said to me, like good parents do, "Son, never do anything wrong that will keep you awake at night." As a young fellow I thought it was always better to stay out until four and go to sleep with a few beers under my belt. It is funny how things change when you become a parent. My quote to my young children will share the same philosophy, "Integrity will always be the softest pillow for your head." I am immensely proud of both my parents for all that they have achieved in their lives and I thank them dearly for what they have instilled in me.

Community often leads to politics and in my case it was the Liberal Party. Simply put, it is the only party in our great country that advocates for the rights of the individual, for the chance of every single person to reap the rewards they sow. It is a party that focuses on outcomes. It enable individuals to determine their own outcomes based on their own choices. The election of John Howard as Prime Minister stoked a fire in my belly that has not yet been extinguished. As Prime Minister, Howard epitomised our party values. He was an inspiration to me, an inspiration to many; he was a great leader of this country.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to show great gratitude to some very important people. I thank the Winston Hills SEB—Ben Jackson, Fred Lloyd, Rees John and Councillor Bob Dwyer, and of course the good Lord Mayor of Parramatta, Mr Scott Lloyd, who is here today. I make particular mention of Kirsty Lloyd, a true

trailblazer in the area of Toongabbie, and Mr Don Stein, AM, a man of great fortitude and character. I thank the councillors of The Hills Shire Council but especially Mayor Andrew Jefferies for all his astute advice and guidance during this campaign. I make special mention of the valuable guidance of Mr Alex Hawke, MP, and the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, MLC, for all those mornings at railway stations, days at shops and afternoons doorknocking. I thank the Hon. Scott Farlow, MLC, and Ray Williams, MP, for teaching me how to roll my sleeves up in a campaign and get into it. I thank also Mr Nick Campbell and Minister Pru Goward.

To State Director, Tony Nutt: Under your stewardship our campaign was outstanding and our local effort in Seven Hills was successful. This was due to the operation that you ran so well from central headquarters. To Chris Downy: Your work as party president is tireless. You do not get enough credit for what you do behind the scenes, but I can assure you that it is greatly appreciated. Of course, I will never forget the campaign team, including Matthew Liddle, Bill Tyrrell and Brendan Jenkins. Words cannot thank my campaign manager, Deputy Mayor Michelle Byrne, who ran the whole campaign whilst pregnant with twins. What an outstanding effort. To the Hon. David Elliott: thank you for your support and mentorship. You are an integral part of this Government. The work you do will be crucial to our success. Your recent elevation to the ministry is more than deserved. You will continue to achieve good things.

I express thanks to my in-laws, Ron and Ruth Sadler, who are here today; and my sister, Sonia Porter, and their extended families for all of the out-of-hours support and emergency babysitting. To Petrina and my beautiful children, Finnley and Seronique: I love you dearly. When I explained to Seronique what Hansard was about she said, "Can they put the words, 'I am an epic netballer'?" When I explained the same to Finnley he said, "Can you put I am good at being a good boy?" I have reached my first ethical dilemma. I have not stated the truth. I should seek privilege, particularly in relation to Finnley. I say to Petrina: Thank you for your support. I love you dearly. You are the greatest thing to have touched my life.

I started with cricket so I am going to finish with it. I might not be as fast as that good looking, blond Brett Lee and I have not got the style that Mr Glenn McGrath has, nor do I have that special touch or whatever it is that Shane Warne has—and that is probably a good thing—but I tell you what I have got: I have rock-solid integrity, I have bucket loads of commitment and I have an absolute passion to represent the people of Seven Hills. I can promise you today here in this Chamber, each and every one of you, that I will put my heart and soul into representing the people of Seven Hills because to me, for this Mark Taylor, Seven Hills is far, far more important than any Ashes test.

The SPEAKER: I again thank the families, friends and supporters of the new members. I am sure they were entertained by that inaugural speech. It was fantastic. We have a character in our midst. I congratulate the member for Seven Hills and the member for Ku-ring-gai on making their inaugural speeches. They were fantastic and I thank them.

Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

SILKIE CHICKEN CHAMPIONS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [5.21 p.m.]: Barry and Aileen Tisdell, chicken breeders from Dollys Flat, won the champion white silkie chicken ribbon in the 2015 Royal Easter Show. Being champion breeders is not new for Barry and Aileen, who have won the events at 17 of the 20 Royal Easter Shows they have entered. The couple have established themselves as the top white silkie chicken breeders in Australia. Along with their silkie champion titles, Barry and Aileen won first, second and third prize for white silkie cock birds; second and third for their cockrels; first, second and third for their pullets; and first and second for their hens. White silkies are one of the most popular breeds due to their fluffy appearance. Barry estimates that he and Aileen have won more than 200 ribbons.

ST JOHN MARK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, CHESTER HILL

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [5.22 p.m.]: Last Sunday I had the pleasure of attending St John Mark's Anglican Church at Chester Hill for a special service to pay tribute to our Anzacs. I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Reverend Stephen Miller for his kind invitation to attend the service and for the opportunity to address the dedicated and devoted congregation at the church. I also acknowledge the

contributions on the day of the Bankstown City Choir and Bankstown City Brass Band, who entertained the congregation with their extensive vocal and musical repertoire. I congratulate all the volunteers for providing a wonderful day for attendees and also for the lovely afternoon tea.

SOUTH COAST SURF LIFE SAVING CLUBS

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [5.23 p.m.]: I congratulate all of the surf lifesaving clubs that have worked so diligently in my electorate throughout the summer season. Those who live in coastal areas know how hard our surf lifesavers work. I have three surf lifesaving clubs in my electorate: *Nowra Culburra Surf Life Saving Club*, *Sussex Surf Life Saving Club* and *Mollymook Surf Life Saving Club*. They are presided over by wonderful captains and presidents. Along with the volunteers, they work long and hard to ensure the safety of our visitors and also the local residents who enjoy the beaches of the South Coast.

I listened to the inaugural speeches in which members talked about their wonderful electorates. I know that I have the best, cleanest and most gorgeous beaches in the State. Of course, they would not be safe without the efforts of our surf lifesavers. Mollymook Surf Life Saving Club has 200 volunteers and it achieved a record seventy-ninth year without a drowning. I wish the clubs all the best for next year's summer season. The Mollymook club recorded 16,018 hours of volunteer effort and the Nowra Culburra Surf Life Saving's effort was slightly less. What a wonderful effort. Well done to all of our surf lifesaving clubs.

HOME TO HOME DIGITAL STORY EXHIBITION

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) [5.23 p.m.]: Last week I went to the opening of the Home to Home Digital Story Exhibition at the Newcastle Museum, which provides a glimpse into lives usually hidden away. Nineteen powerful stories uncover the hidden lives of young Australians with disability living in nursing homes because there is simply nowhere else for them to go. Research indicates that the majority of these people receive fewer than two visits a year, which leaves them severely isolated. The Home to Home Digital Story Exhibition, presented by the Summer Foundation, features a collection of stories created during a series of workshops, including one in Newcastle, across Australia in 2014. These people developed insightful videos about their unique experience of living in a nursing home, being at risk of living in one or being a parent of a young person in a nursing home.

Through these stories, we are invited to glimpse what life is sometimes like for young people living in residential aged care where the average age of fellow residents is 84, and where there is no choice about what time to go to bed, what to wear, or what and when you eat. The emotions of grief, frustration and sadness are deeply present in this collection of stories. However, so are the themes of perseverance, strength of character and hope. I congratulate the Summer Foundation on bringing this exhibition to Newcastle and, most importantly, on telling the stories of these people living in such difficult situations.

CRONULLA SENIORS WEEK LOCAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [5.24 p.m.]: I congratulate Lenie Bussing on her 2015 Cronulla Seniors Week Local Achievement Award. Among other things, in her long career and varied community work she established Mothers Unite for a Clean Kurnell, which was responsible for removing more than 1,000 car bodies from vacant blocks and the swamp. She also taught at Kurnell Public School and held positions on the P&C. She has also been involved in raising money for a preschool and kindergarten in Kurnell.

I congratulate Gladys Honer on her 2015 Cronulla Seniors Week Local Achievement Award. Gladys is a surf patrol captain with the North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club. The past four seasons have seen her do more than 100 patrol hours. When not out on patrol, she can be found providing hospitality services for the numerous events that the club holds every year. I congratulate James Cook on his 2015 Cronulla Seniors Week Local Achievement Award. James is secretary of Cronulla Rotary. He has recently been involved with the erection of Anzac plaques in Monroe Park, Cronulla.

I congratulate Barry Gardner on his 2015 Cronulla Seniors Week Local Achievement Award. Barry is heavily involved in the Shire Woodworking Club. He mentors people who wish to become proficient in toy making. He regularly visits the Sydney Children's Hospital and takes requests for toys the hospital would like and then hand delivers them once they are finished.

I congratulate Ron Pears, OAM, on his 2015 Cronulla Seniors Week Local Achievement Award for his service to surf lifesaving. Ron was a founding member of the Elouera Surf Life Saving Club in 1966. He has since been awarded an Order of Australia for his services to lifesaving. He is still heavily involved in the club and is hoping to publish a book to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 2016.

LAO NEW YEAR FESTIVAL

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [5.25 p.m.]: I had the pleasure in attending the Lao New Year celebrations that were held over a three-day period in April in my electorate of Cabramatta. The festivities were a huge success, with thousands of people enjoying the cultural performances and traditional garments that were on display, the fine cuisines that were on offer and the beautiful Buddhist ceremonies. The festival also acknowledged the achievements and contribution of Lao-Australians in our society. The Lao New Year would not be complete without water fights, which symbolises renewal. I thank Mr Deth Sysengrath and Mr Bounlap Saenphoumy for inviting me to the celebration. I congratulate the organisers on making the festival such a great one.

KU-RING-GAI MEALS ON WHEELS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.26 p.m.]: I acknowledge the fiftieth anniversary of Ku-ring-gai Meals on Wheels. I arrived late at the celebrations last night because of my parliamentary commitments. A ceremony was held to recognise the efforts of long-serving volunteers under the leadership of Councillor Duncan McDonald. The Mayor of Ku-ring-gai, Jennifer Anderson, and a range of other people who have been integral to the Meals on Wheels movement in Ku-ring-gai for many years also attended. I particularly acknowledge those who have been providing the service. I met two employed workers who had been helping out for 27 years and 29 years respectively. They are ably led by Kathy Sharp. I commend everyone involved in Meals on Wheels in Ku-ring-gai and congratulate them on 50 years of service.

GUILDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOL CENTENARY

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.27 p.m.]: On 25 February 2015, along with teachers, students, parents and special guests, I had the privilege of attending a special assembly to celebrate the centenary of Guildford Public School. We heard tales of what the school was like in years gone by and how there were no such things as iPhones, iPads or iPods; the only 'i' they knew was the one in the alphabet. I thank Peter Lawless, the principal of Guildford Public School, for the invitation to join them on this special occasion. I also thank Diane Dunn, Executive Director of Schools, and Councillor Greg Cummings, the Mayor of Holroyd City Council, for their contributions on the day. I congratulate Guildford Public School on reaching such a remarkable milestone. I thank all those involved over the past 100 years who have ensured that local children receive a quality education.

TAFE ILLAWARRA NOWRA CAMPUS AWARDS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.28 p.m.]: On Wednesday 29 April 2015 I was pleased to attend the annual TAFE Illawarra Nowra Campus awards ceremony. I acknowledge the following award recipients: Rohan Harvey, Dylan Osmetti, Natalie Costa, Rachael Huxtable, Lars Hargraves-Stevenson, Natalie Ricetti, Susan Brooks, Brett Hansen, Leonie Brindle, Angela Falls, Lisa Black, Alyssa Boyle, Leigh Fitzpatrick, Kathleen Welsh, Nicole Collins, Taylor Hoskins, Madira Arnold, Julie Tinnion, Annika Thurbon, Michelle Ashby, Terry Richmond, Aaron Wallace, Callum Saunders, Colin Barry, Brett Peacock, Matthew Clay, Caden Threlfall, Alexander Smith, Jacob Mulcahy, Blake Deaves, Drew Toohey, Keeli Ward-Franklin, Alexander Morvai, Andre Van der Merwe, Emily Johnston, Jade Bury, Tim Carter, Kelly McKean, James Willoughby and Rachel Coutts. All of those students are outstanding stars of TAFE. It was wonderful to attend with their teachers who were so proud of their achievements. I look forward to TAFE continuing to be a strong provider of vocational education in my electorate.

RAYMOND AND EDITH ROGERS SIXTY-FIFTH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) [5.29 p.m.]: On 22 April 2015 Raymond and Edith Rogers of Glendenning celebrated sixty-five years of marriage. Raymond met Edith in 1949 whilst doing an aircraft engineering course with the Royal Australian Navy in Scotland. Less than two years later they were married and had their first child. Despite a health setback in 2006 with a poor prognosis, Raymond's determination to live for

Edith saw him pull through. Raymond and Edith have five children, 10 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. I invite members to recognise this great achievement and join me in congratulating Mr and Mrs Rogers on a happy and healthy sixty-fifth wedding anniversary.

CENTENARY OF ANZAC IN ORANGE

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.30 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about the recent Anzac Day commemorations in Orange. On a beautiful Orange autumn day thousands of local residents gathered to commemorate the Centenary of Anzac. Organisers estimate that between 12,000 to 15,000 people gathered to watch the Anzac march make its way down Summer Street before attending the service at the newly renovated cenotaph in Robertson Park, which now features two life-size bronze statues. I make particular mention of the Centenary of Anzac Working Party: Chair Councillor Reg Kidd, RSL Sub-branch Secretary Les McGaw, RSL Sub-branch President Lindsay Wright, and RSL Sub-branch Vice-President Chris Colvin. I also acknowledge the wonderful hospitality of the Orange Ex-Services' Club on the day, in particular President Peter Single, Senior Vice President Graham Gentles, Junior Vice President Graeme Scott, Directors Ros Davidson, Terry Flood, Peter Irwin, Russell Jones, Les McGraw and Lindsay Wright, and great Chief Executive Cameron Provost who did such a wonderful job in setting up the day for breakfast and lunch for our service men and women.

LIVERPOOL ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.31 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about a number of community events to which I was invited and delighted to attend to celebrate the New Year in several communities. On Saturday 11 April I attended the Khmer New Year celebrations at Watt Khemarangsaram at Bonnyrigg, organised by the Khmer Community of New South Wales Inc. and the Cambodian Buddhist Society of New South Wales Inc. There was an official opening by the Venerable Long Sakhorn, Chief Monk of the Watt, and performances by Khemara Angkor Dancing Group and the Khemara Angkor Traditional Band. There were speeches by Sakal Men, President of the Cambodian Buddhist Society, and Lina Tjoeng, President of the Khmer Community of New South Wales.

On Sunday 12 April I attended the Lao New Year Celebrations organised by the Lao Community Advancement New South Wales Co-operative Ltd at the Lao Cultural Centre in Smithfield Road, Edensor Park, with an address by Deth Sysengrath, president of the co-operative. I also attended the Lao New Year Buddhist Festival at Bonnyrigg Town Centre, organised by the Lao Buddhist Society of New South Wales, with speeches by society president Bounlap Saenphoumy and Race Discrimination Commissioner Tim Soutphommasane. These are wonderful expressions of multicultural south-west Sydney.

HURSTVILLE CITY COUNCIL MAYORAL BALL

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [5.32 p.m.]: Recently, together with the member for Holsworthy, the member for Drummoyne and the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, I attended the 2015 Hurstville City Council Mayoral Ball, which helped to raise much-needed funding for the Cancer Council Centre Foundation at St George Hospital. The ball was held at Doltone House, Pyrmont. More than 650 people attended this great event, including the mayor of Kogarah, Councillor Michael Platt; the mayor of Rockdale, Councillor Shane O'Brien; and, of course, the mayor of Hurstville, Councillor Con Hindi. I acknowledge the great fundraising efforts of the Hurstville City Council for this worthwhile cause.

RETIREMENT VILLAGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) [5.33 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about the Retirement Village Residents Association, which does a great job representing the interests of retirement village residents. Last week I meet with Pam Decosta, Jim Kelleher and Bill Leadbetter of the association. They advised me that they are seeking an early review of the Retirement Villages Act. They would like to see the introduction of a universal departure settlement model, the commencement of an industry fidelity fund, the appointment of an industry ombudsman, and the enforceability of NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal orders. I wish them well in their efforts and I will do all that I can to assist them.

REDHEAD SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [5.34 p.m.]: Redhead Surf Life Saving Club was recently awarded the national and New South Wales Surf Life Saving Rescue of the Month awards. Last November four ocean ski paddlers set out from Swansea and planned to come ashore at Redhead Beach. However, they found

themselves in trouble near treacherous rocks in worsening conditions. Lifesavers at Redhead Surf Life Saving Club say the paddle boarders were in two-metre to three-metre swells. Through the dedicated work of local surf club members the paddle boarders were retrieved from the dangerous surf with no loss of life.

I recognise the actions of Tim Foran, Drew Morgan, Mark Ayre, Chris Bird, Jeff Rodway, Gavin Eckert and Iain Robertson, who worked together to achieve this great outcome. The national award was presented by Graham Ford, President of Surf Life Saving Australia. I also congratulate the members and executive of the Redhead Surf Life Saving Club on the great service they provide to the community.

ST MARY MAGDALENE ANGLICAN CHURCH 175TH ANNIVERSARY

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) [5.34 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about the 175th anniversary service of St Mary Magdalene Anglican Church. The township of St Marys takes its name from this church, which was called South Creek prior to 1885. The church was built between 1837 and 1840. The foundation stone was laid on 22 November 1837 by Bishop Broughton, assisted by Reverend Samuel Marsden. The official opening was held on 29 April 1840. The church was built for the wife of former Governor Philip, Gidley King. These days the church provides commendable outreach services to disadvantaged members of our community, particularly women. I look forward to attending the Women's Coffee Break for fun, fellowship and craft. The church is a testament to St Marys place in early Australian history, and I look forward to working with the church to ensure its long-term viability. It was a pleasure to attend this service. I thank Reverend Neil Atwood for his hospitality on the day.

WOLLONGONG ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [5.35 p.m.]: I recently attended an event in my electorate hosted by Green Paw Republic to raise money for the Wollongong Animal Welfare League. The inaugural "A Pet's Breakfast" held at JJ Kelly Park on the Illawarra Dog Training Club grounds was a huge success, even though it was a bit cloudy and grey. There was a barbeque breakfast buffet with dog-friendly choices and competitions, including a fashion parade, a talent show, and a pet and owner look-alike competition—my four great danes would probably appreciate that.

I was honoured to be a guest judge for the competitions and pleased to make many fur friends on the day, especially Jasper, a nine-month old great dane, and CJ, a beautiful German shepherd. The Illawarra Dog Training Club members were out in force promoting good training. Their knowledge and expertise is to be commended. I congratulate club president George Bartolo and his team on their continued great work. I also extend my congratulations to Natalie Kelly from Green Paws Republic, who organised the event. I note that my dogs were not in it.

JONTY HEMMINGWAY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [5.36 p.m.]: I inform the House that Jonty Hemmingway from Wingham has returned from the Sydney Royal Easter Show after winning the State final in junior judging for beef cattle and the prestigious Federal Council of Agricultural Societies national beef cattle young judges championship. Jonty, who is aged 18, competed against 28 entrants aged 15 to 25 in the State round and seven entrants in the national championship. She was judged on her presentation, accuracy of information, speaking ability and her ability to compare the animals against each other. Jonty's passion for her hobby began in her early teens following a visit to Wingham High School's agricultural department. She started competing and won her first significant competition when she was in year 9. She is currently enjoying a gap year and working with Wingham Beef Exports as a livestock and production assistant. She is keen to undertake a degree in agriculture and business at the University of New England.

Community recognition statements concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WOMEN IN POLITICS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.38 p.m.]: I was delighted to see that the recent election result delivered a number of new and talented women across all parties represented in

this Chamber. However, we clearly do not practise politics in an environment of equal representation. A 2014 academic study conducted by the Australian Parliament found that only 29 per cent of all parliamentarians within Australia were women and only one-fifth were Ministers. Australia is barely achieving the "critical mass" described by the United Nations as the number of women required to be present in Parliament to "make a visible impact on the style and content of political decision-making".

Female representation in leadership is of enormous importance across New South Wales, including in my electorate of Davidson. I recognise the work of many female politicians, including the Hon Bronwyn Bishop, Speaker of the House of Representatives. Her Federal electorate of Mackellar overlaps with my electorate of Davidson. Her vocal encouragement for women to strive to achieve political goals has helped create an environment for female participation. The crucial role of women is also epitomised locally by Ku-ring-gai mayor, Jennifer Anderson. Her commitment to the wider community, especially through Ku-ring-gai Council, is an inspiration to local women. I strongly support a local political environment for female inclusion and empowerment.

For example, I have encouraged the presence of strong female role models in nominating the Davidson electorate's Local Woman of the Year. The work of past winners is inspiring, including Catherine Knox, in 2013, for her work in perinatal depression and 2011 winner Sue O'Reilly in campaigning for fundamental reforms in the disability and support system. I further note that a local constituent, Cathy Foley, was New South Wales Woman of the Year in 2013. I am pleased to acknowledge June Howarth as Local Woman of the Year in Davidson for 2015. Her work spans more than 40 years, including a long association with the Australian Red Cross. She has lent her voice to the disabled and elderly, utilised skills and talents such as her musical ability to raise money for various charities, and helped create a general sense of local community.

I regard June and the past winners as key role models, particularly for females, not only in the political field but in our wider community. It is also appropriate to note the practical examples of the female councillors of Warringah, Ku-ring-gai and Willoughby representing areas in Davidson. Mayors Jennifer Anderson and Gail Giles-Gidney are joined in local service by Chantelle Fornari-Orsmond; Elaine Malicki; Cheryl Szatow; Christiane Berlioz; Vanessa Moskal; Roslyn Harrison; Judith Rutherford, AM; Wendy Norton; Michelle Sloane; Rachel Hill; Mandy Stevens; Lynne Saville; and finally Sue Heins, who recently won an award for outstanding performance as a female metropolitan councillor. Madam Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons), you would be aware of Sue Heins' award as you were the excellent master of ceremonies at the award ceremony.

Importantly, these women represent a shift to growing female empowerment and representation in the political environment. I have supported this trend through personal encouragement of student leadership programs and work experience opportunities for students, such as Natalie Chandra, who helped me draft this speech. I regard early participation as key to fostering an ongoing interest in politics. Each year I host primary school leaders from the Davidson electorate on tours of New South Wales Parliament House and remind young women of their potential. Furthermore, I applaud leadership programs that invite high school leaders to develop their knowledge of the Constitution and of Parliament. These are integral in shaping and creating female leaders, and include initiatives through the YMCA.

We are fortunate locally to have an environment wherein girls are taught about their capacity and how the heights of politics are achievable. This is particularly evident in the two single-sex schools within Davidson: Roseville College and Brigidine, St Ives. They encourage well-versed young female students by providing opportunities in academia, sports and community. Change begins from the smallest unit and only then can progress be made to the global stage. Female representation is essential in creating a fairly governed and equal opportunity society.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.42 p.m.]: I note the exceptional support that the member for Davidson offers to women. It is great to have males as champions in achieving gender equality and promoting women to their full potential. As the member said, it is disappointing that we have so few female representatives elected to Australian parliaments. It would be wonderful if we could achieve total equality and advancement based upon merit for women in Parliament.

LOVE BITES PROGRAM

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [5.43 p.m.]: Conversations I have been having with many stakeholders as the shadow Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault have made abundantly clear to me the enormous role that education plays in reducing and eliminating domestic violence

and sexual assault from our community. The Love Bites program is a domestic and family violence prevention program for years 9 and 10 school students. It demonstrates the role that schools can play in achieving the goal of eradicating domestic and family violence and sexual assault. The Love Bites program has also been available to young people in other settings such as school support units, juvenile justice programs and youth holiday programs.

This highly regarded program has been rolled out across New South Wales and in other States as well. More than 100,000 young people have completed the program, and in New South Wales more than 4,000 teachers and support workers have been trained to deliver it. Other States have New South Wales to thank for this program. It originated on the New South Wales mid North Coast about 10 years ago and was developed by NAPCAN—the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. The Love Bites program has previously been recommended by what is now known as Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, as well as by academics in the area of violence against women.

The program runs as a one- or two-day course, delivered in schools by male and female schoolteachers or trained facilitators. Facilitators can include domestic violence workers, youth workers and police. The course generally consists of a series of interactive or creative workshops in which students explore the themes of consent, love, control, beliefs and attitudes, violence, sexual assault and bystander strategies. An important component of the program is that male and female facilitators work together to deliver it. In speaking with stakeholders in the prevention of domestic violence sector, a recurring theme that emerges is the importance of male advocates speaking to other males about this issue. As Kate Burke from Tamworth Family Support Service said this week:

We have quite a lot of great male presenters and they're very powerful to have both for the boys and the girls ...

The difference of having a male in the room with these boys is mind blowing.

It's the realisation that they can do something, they can stand up and say this is not acceptable.

Following the workshops, students develop a creative work that is displayed in the community. It is an important program, changing attitudes towards violence against women and giving young people the skills and knowledge to support women experiencing domestic and family violence. As one student said after completing the program:

We knew about some of these issues but nobody really talks about it. By talking about domestic violence and sexual assault, we really did learn something new.

Given how important this program is, I was shocked to discover that across New South Wales the program is in trouble. From Port Macquarie to Tamworth to here in central Sydney, there are reports of the program losing funding. Speaking to facilitators on the ground, it is clear that the lack of dedicated funding for this program is the largest barrier to its ongoing success. Over the past years thousands of facilitators have been trained. Schools are calling out for programs that can support them in reducing violence in the community. Here we have a nationally well-regarded program with existing links in many communities across this State, but groups running it are spending their time chasing grants.

The uncertainty created by this ad hoc funding is damaging to the communities who benefit so greatly from the work of Love Bites. Local communities have successfully sought short-term private grants from clubs or private donations to keep them going, but it is clear that government must step in and ensure that programs such as this continue to operate in the future. Sadly, I have been told that the Family and Community Services funding, which previously existed for this program, is no longer available under the Government's Going Home Staying Home program. The prevention of domestic violence and sexual assault can occur only when education is a key component of government response. Programs such as Love Bites, focusing on education, are essential in our goal of preventing domestic violence.

SURF RETROSPECT

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [5.48 p.m.]: Surfing and beach culture lie at the heart of life in Cronulla, and have done so for a century. Not every beachside suburb can lay claim to having an online museum dedicated to surfing, so we are undoubtedly serious when it comes to one of our favourite pastimes. Earlier this year, Cronulla hosted Surf Retrospect, a celebration of everything that surfing has meant for Cronulla and the shire historically and everything it means today. There was a smorgasbord of activities on offer as part of Surf

Retrospect, including history talks, a surf photography presentation, a retro surfboard display and, of course, surf competitions. I was delighted to join the Mayor of Sutherland, Kent Johns, for the unveiling of the Cronulla Surfing Walk of Fame. This was the culmination of the month-long celebrations. The New South Wales Government was a major sponsor of the event.

From the early days of neck-to-knee swimsuits to the time of *Puberty Blues* in the 1980s and the multimillion-dollar business that surfing has become today, surfing has had a colourful narrative in Cronulla. It was a young Hawaiian named Duke Kahanamoku—known as "The Duke"—who first demonstrated surfing at North Cronulla beach 100 years ago. The newspaper of the day reported that he was a bit of a showman, even performing a handstand on the board. It was not just surfing at which he excelled; he was, without question, an all-rounder. The Duke was an accomplished volleyball player, an Olympic swimmer, a film actor and a surfer. The Duke also served 13 consecutive terms as sheriff of Honolulu. His accomplishments were monumental. Credited with the popularisation of surfing, The Duke would no doubt be proud of the surfing culture that has flourished in Cronulla over the past 100 years. But I am sorry to say that, as a celebrated character actor, he would have been less impressed with the shire's foray into reality television.

By the 1960s surfboard technology had evolved considerably from the 50-kilogram solid wooden board favoured by The Duke. Boards were becoming shorter and lighter. Cronulla's star riders—figures like Bobby Brown, "Fast" Frank Latta, Brian Jackson and John Coleman—were really starting to make a name for Cronulla in the world of professional surfing. The 1970s saw surfing become even more popular, with Sydney's "westies" arriving in their thousands during the summer months. It was a time of long hair, rock and roll, and counterculture. It was the evocative imagery of these decades past that really crystallised our local identity as a true surfing destination.

This brings us to the present day. Of course there is much more to Cronulla than surfing. But no-one can deny that surfing is integral to the Cronulla brand, and that our famous beaches attract people from all walks of life and from all over the world. Local businesses in Cronulla know perhaps better than anyone else just how valuable the surf culture is to our local economy. We have certainly come a long way. The distinctive culture of surfing that has enriched our local landscape for a century endures today. Branding does not happen overnight—you cannot fatten the pig on market day. But more celebrations and public events like Surf Retrospect are an important way to keep on building Cronulla's brand as a beautiful, relaxed, happy, diverse and iconic leisure destination for Sydneysiders and others.

The funds raised from Surf Retrospect will support the outstanding work of Surfing Sutherland Shire to promote the sport. It is a sport that is a passion among its followers. I thank all members of the organising committee: Brad Whittaker, Mark Aprilovic, John Veage, Shane Stalker, Jeff Williams, Ryan Bridges, Michael Banister, Matt Sorensen, Andy Britton and James Young. The volunteers at Surfing Sutherland Shire also deserve credit not only for making Surf Retrospect possible but also for their ongoing work supporting young people to get involved in competitive surfing. Earlier this year I attended the national finals of the Australian Boardriders Battle at North Cronulla. It is encouraging to think more future world-class surfers will get their kick-start at our great beaches. I thank all the sponsors of Surf Retrospect, including major sponsors Olsens Funerals and Sylvania BMW. I also acknowledge Sutherland Shire Council for its contribution to the celebrations and, more importantly, for its ongoing support of our spectacular beaches.

CESSNOCK DISTRICT LEARNING CENTRE

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [5.51 p.m.]: Madam Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons), I welcome you back to this new Parliament and congratulate you on your election and reappointment. I start my contribution in this Fifty-sixth Parliament in much the same way as I started in the Fifty-fifth Parliament: talking about the educational challenges facing the electorate of Cessnock. Unfortunately, not much has changed in the past four years. Alas, I must report that there has been a reduction in funding for education in some of the most critical parts of my electorate. Let me remind the House of a couple of facts and statistics from the census data. The electorate of Cessnock has the lowest number of people in the State who complete year 12. The electorate has the highest number of people in the State who have left school at year 10 or earlier. We have the lowest number of people in the State who go on to tertiary education. These statistics about Cessnock do not just come from the 2006 census; they did not just appear. They were confirmed and endorsed, unfortunately, by the 2011 census. This means that for 10 years now the electorate of Cessnock has faced the same situation with education.

One of the programs being run in the electorate of Cessnock is the Cessnock District Learning Centre [CDLC]. Its patron is the Governor-General of Australia. He is a big supporter of the program and has attended

a number of fundraising events to ensure its continued operation for almost 20 years. The Cessnock District Learning Centre takes some really challenging students out of school for two days a week. When they are out of school and at the CDLC they engage in not only educational tasks but also activities that might be considered a bit more fun—there may be outdoor recreation activities, trips to the shops or a journey on public transport. It is about learning in a different environment. It is not just about classrooms and talk and chalk; it is about learning through doing. It is about life skills and life lessons. Young people really appreciate this and have blossomed at the Cessnock District Learning Centre—and I can attest to this with great certainty.

As a teacher at Mount View High School for nine years, I knew well some of the young people sent to the CDLC. It was often referred to as their last chance at education. It was their last chance before they were booted out of their local high school—told never to return. The young people had to turn up at the CDLC and participate in its programs. They had to do the right thing not only at the CDLC but also when they returned to school. Otherwise the privilege of attending the CDLC would be withdrawn. During the election campaign I spoke to the CDLC students, as did other candidates. I spoke to them about what it is that a politician wants to do, tries to do and should do, and why young people need to be engaged with not only their politicians and their education but also their future.

Unfortunately, last year the Cessnock District Learning Centre missed out on funding in the grants process. I remind everyone of the statistics I mentioned at the start of my contribution and the educational challenges facing the Cessnock electorate. If we want facts and statistics that indicate government should definitely fund educational opportunities, particularly for at-risk students, then we should look no further than the census data. Unfortunately, however, through the new grants process rolled out by the Coalition Government, for the first time in 20 years the Cessnock CDLC failed to win grant funding. By comparison, the electorate of Maitland—which is a swinging seat—managed to secure three different streams of funding for similar programs. Yet statistically, according to the census data, they do not face the same challenges. I hasten to add that Maitland certainly does have educational challenges and thoroughly deserves funding for at-risk students. But, as I said in 2011, the electorate of Cessnock does need special care and attention. There is statistical data for more than 10 years now that we simply cannot ignore any longer.

NEWCASTLE RAIL SERVICES

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) [5.56 p.m.]: Throughout question time today we heard the Premier and his Ministers claim that they have a mandate for the sale of the poles and wires because they were elected. This evening I ask the Premier and his Ministers to return the favour: listen to the people of Newcastle and the Hunter and give us back our rail services into Newcastle. Over the course of a State by-election, a lord mayoral by-election, a ward by-election and a State general election, the people of Newcastle have known up-front that Labor remains solid on its policy to retain the rail service and infrastructure into Newcastle city. The people of the Hunter have followed suit—voting, in no small part, to retain these connective services in each and every election.

In February this year then Minister for Planning Pru Goward made a bold threat to me and the people of Newcastle when, at a lunch hosted by the Property Council of Australia, she claimed that the March State election would be—and I quote—a "referendum on the future of Newcastle". Again, I remind the Government that the people of Newcastle and the Hunter have spoken, and they have solidly declared that they want to retain their transport connection with Sydney and the rest of the Hunter—with Maitland, with Cardiff and with Scone. Workers want to be able to get to work without having an extra half an hour added to their trip. Visitors to Newcastle want to be able to actually get off in Newcastle—surprise, surprise!

When the law courts open in a couple of months—a great Labor initiative—and when the university city campus opens in a couple of years, bringing another 5,000 students into the city as a result of more Labor investment and vision, workers, students and customers will want to be able to access these buildings with a minimum of fuss. This is not to mention the GPT and UrbanGrowth NSW development right in the heart of the city. It will add 25,000 square metres of retail and residential space.

The light rail proposal this Government is suggesting will provide less capacity and less frequency to service these major institutions. All along, the Government has ignored its own departmental advice on planning and transport in Newcastle. I, and my Hunter colleagues, want the best possible planning and transport outcomes for our communities. Removing the rail line and associated infrastructure is illegal. The Government has acted illegally. The Government was taken to court by the community for breaking the law and it lost.

The Government did a backflip on the suggestion that the election would be a referendum on the rail line. Legal questions remain unresolved on removing the rail line. Until the court holds the appeal hearing on 15 and 16 July any movement concerning the rail line is static. Once there is a verdict, whatever the outcome, there needs to be a process of consultation with the community before moving forward. The Government's own traffic advice indicates that the proposed interchange will create extensive traffic congestion around the Stewart Avenue light rail crossover and leading into Honeysuckle Drive.

The Government's own advice strongly supports the current rail line as the preferred route for light rail. The taxpayers of this State will pay an additional \$100 million for the Liberals' choice of the Hunter Street route. That money could give Newcastle a solution to the Adamstown gates and a redeveloped Newcastle Art Gallery. The light rail will also have trouble at the Scott Street end as the street narrows significantly. Traffic in Newcastle will get worse, not better, as a result of this.

The Premier has spent a great deal of time telling Sydney how important rail connectivity is for a world-class city. But now he is saying that Newcastle does not deserve the same consideration. Do we not deserve a properly thought-out transport network and solution? I again remind the Government and its Ministers of their bold threats of a referendum and call on the Premier to actually listen to the Newcastle and Hunter communities and reinstate our rail service right into Newcastle.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.01 p.m. until
Tuesday 12 May 2015 at 12 noon.**
