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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 12 May 2015

The Speaker (The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock) took the chair at 12 noon.

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

The SPEAKER: For the benefit of the member for Keira, last week I made a statement in which I said that if members continue to miss out on giving a notice of motion at the beginning of each day I will consider word limits; I have that discretion. I also have a clear precedent by an Opposition member on a fairly lengthy motion, with the support of Government members. That is how I can justify allowing the giving of fairly lengthy notices of motions. If members continue to miss out on giving a notice of motion at the beginning of each day I will consider imposing a word limit.

Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CYCLEWAYS

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [12.11 p.m.]: Today I will speak about an activity that is close to my heart and important to the people in my electorate of Coogee: cycling and cycleways. As a teenager I spent a lot of time on my bike exploring the electorate of Coogee and its surrounds. Indeed, I remember, probably in the late 1970s, riding around and joining a group of cyclists. We were riding around and ended up in the centre of the city chanting, "What do we want? Cycleways. When do we want them? Now."

Mr Mark Coure: Ah, Clover Moore's seat.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: That was more than 30 years ago. Finally, we are starting to see some movement; we will have a dedicated network of cycleways in our city. Cycleways are important to my constituents of Coogee. Coogee's close proximity to the central business district [CBD] means that cycling is an effective, cheap and healthy way of commuting into the CBD. Some people believe that cycling advocates are a bunch of pasty-faced vegans, socialists of the green left who are all treasonably conspiring with Clover Moore to eradicate the car. They might have that view but many people who vote for me and the Liberal Party generally ride bikes and want more cycleways.

In recent years cycling has boomed, and that will continue. If restrictions are imposed on car use in the city of Sydney or the CBD it will not be because of bicycles or cyclists. The fact is that an ever-increasing number of cars are competing for exactly the same amount of road space, and that will necessitate restrictions on how we enter the CBD in private motor vehicles. Cycling is one way to address ever-increasing congestion in the CBD, as it improves public transport. Cycling is not for everyone. Cars will remain an essential means of transport for most people beyond the inner city. However, we should be providing for those who want to get on their bikes and commute into the CBD. I always scratch my head when I hear people complain about cyclists in front of them. If they stopped for a moment and visualised those five, six or 10 cyclists ahead of them as being cars instead of people on bikes, they would probably think again.

If people who ride into the CBD daily decided to hop into their private motor vehicles we would see a massive increase in congestion. We should realise that motorists—I am one of them—should have more respect for cyclists, if only because they can see that cycling is benefitting them and clearing the road lanes. We have a long way to go in this country and in this city to achieve mutual respect for all road users, whether they be pedestrians, bus drivers, motorists, cyclists, and anybody who uses footpaths, cycleways and roads in the city. We see much better examples of people cohabitating in Europe, in places such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen where cycling is simply part of the culture. They have built up that culture around strict observance of strict road rules for cyclists. They also respect that cyclists have as much right to be there as anybody else. We all need to take a deep breath and not see one another as enemies but as people who can cohabit and make this city accessible to all and a much more enjoyable place to be.

TRIBUTE TO KEITH RAYMOND RYDE

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.16 p.m.]: Today I inform the House of the tragic passing of Keith Ryde, who died last week, on 3 May, after a short illness, aged 85 years. Keith was an Australian Labor Party [ALP] stalwart in our area. He was a good friend of mine and of Jason Clare, the Federal member for Blaxland. Keith Raymond Ryde was born on 13 June 1929 and grew up in Condobolin in Central New South Wales. When he left high school he was given three options: to become a schoolteacher, a policeman or a banker. He chose banking. He joined the Commonwealth Bank in Yass on 6 February 1947. He had a very long career at the Commonwealth Bank—in total 42 years working until 1989.

In addition to being passionate about banking, Keith had a huge interest in the Labor Party. He joined our local Chester Hill branch and became a regular and passionate member of the Labor Party. I remember our branch meetings. Indeed, I cannot imagine a Chester Hill branch meeting without Keith Ryde. He was passionate and always ensured that he brought motions to every meeting. He met his wife, Ruby, in Petersham Town Hall in 1955, and they married in 1956. They had a difficult start to their family life. A son, James, was born in 1960 and tragically died by cot death only eight days later.

Happily, their son, Stephen John, was born on the anniversary of James's death in 1961. Tragedy hit a second time for Ruby and Keith when they lost their third son, Michael Thomas, six weeks after birth. They had a daughter, Samantha Laura, who was born in 1964. I had the pleasure of meeting both Stephen and Samantha today at the service for Keith. They both gave wonderful eulogies in his loving memory. He leaves two grandchildren, Stephanie and Liam, who also attended the service along with Stephen's and Samantha's partners, Ines and Glenn.

Reverend Stephen Miller, who conducted the very well-attended service—in fact, it was packed out—at the Chester Hill Anglican Church, provided many insights into and anecdotes about Keith. He spoke about something we already knew, Keith's wonderful character. He was always a happy individual as well as a very generous and kind man. He was a regular at that church as well as at our Labor Party meetings. He was devoted to a number of different causes. He loved sport and maintained his 50-year membership of the Canterbury-Bankstown Rugby League Club. He joined the club when it was founded in a tin shed across from the branch at Belmore where he worked. He also devoted time to one of his great passions, bromeliads. The President of the Central Coast NSW Bromeliad Society, Bob Hickel, paid a tribute to Keith. Jason Clare, who is the Federal member for Blaxland, also gave a wonderful tribute. A loving tribute was read by Keith's son, Stephen Ryde, on behalf of Keith's older brother, Neville Ryde, who was in hospital and unable to attend the service.

It was a very touching service for a very wonderful man. I will always remember the times when I felt down, as people in politics often do. I had the pleasure of living just a couple of blocks away from Keith in Chester Hill and would often bump into him down the street or at the club. On every occasion I met him, he always had a joke and something positive to say. He always wanted to encourage people with positive ideas and vision. I have retained a copy of the many motions he presented to our branch which were passed. I hope to compile them and present them to his family. Keith is survived by his wonderful wife, Ruby, his son, Stephen, his daughter, Samantha, and their respective families. May Keith rest in peace. He will always be remembered for the wonderful man he was and the wonderful legacy he will leave to many, particularly in the Chester Hill area.

WARIALDA SHOW

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [12.21 p.m.]: Today I draw attention to the fantastic Warialda Show, which was held last weekend—a three-day extravaganza of all things rural. The Northern

Tablelands electorate often has been described as ground zero for the best agricultural shows in the State, if not for the whole of Australia. At a time in rural Australia when running country shows is becoming tougher and tougher and when volunteer levels are waning, that is certainly not the case at Warialda. The people of Warialda certainly are bucking that trend. Last Saturday after a busy morning opening the inaugural Armidale and New England Cat Show and the Armidale City Public School Mother's Day Fete, I was absolutely delighted to head across to Warialda to join the community in celebrating the wonderful Warialda Show.

Madam-Speaker, as you would be fully aware, country shows are a real showcase of the produce of the local district as well as the skills and talents of the local community. As my Federal colleague Mark Coulton said so eloquently at the opening of the show, country shows are also a window through which we can peer into the heart of the community and understand what makes country communities tick. The Warialda Show is absolutely wonderful. Like so many country shows, it is planned, it is well organised, and it is run completely by volunteers. People, who have other commitments in their lives, put aside all their spare time in the weeks and months ahead of the show to ensure it runs on time and lives up to expectations and the usual superb standards of the community.

To put that dedication and energy of the volunteers into perspective, let me state that in Warialda there are 111 official positions on the Warialda P and A which, for the benefit of members who may be unfamiliar with the term, is the Warialda Pastoral and Agricultural Association. Warialda has a population of approximately 1,300 people, which means that approximately 8.5 per cent of the Warialda population is involved in positions in the association that runs the show—an incredible statistic. They devote their time free of charge to ensure that the show goes on.

The main officials of the team comprise 15 volunteers: show patrons, John McDonald and Col Cleal; president, David Coulton, who did a magnificent job this year in his first year as president of the show; vice-presidents Colin James, Hugh Coulton, Brian Davis and Michelle Hubbard; secretary Jeannie McMaster, who deserves special mention for being an absolute trouper and who does a power of non-stop work behind the scenes leading up to the show, after the show and throughout the year; treasurer Gay Gaffey—of course it would be impossible to have a show without a very good treasurer; and the main stewards in the ring, Lex Roberts, David Moor, Sam Barwick, and John Coulton, who is also the mayor of Gwydir Shire Council, of which Warialda is an important part, so even the mayor rolls up his sleeves and works as a steward, and David Conway whose dulcet tones resonated throughout the showground.

David loves the show. In fact, many people say that he does not need a microphone. After spending some time with him on Saturday afternoon, I must concur with that assessment. The show's announcer was Johanna Jane. David Moor and John Coulton did double duty as the show's safety officers. Backing them up are 68 committee stewards, 15 committee members and 11 life members. They all put their shoulders to the wheel, so to speak, to ensure that the show goes on. Over the three days of the show, as testament to the efforts of the committee and the show being so great more than 8,000 came through the gates of the show to exhibit their skills or to watch, have fun and spend time as families together.

Some of the highlights of the show included tearooms, sideshow alley and the rides, pavilion exhibitions, ring events and, like all good country shows, the Miss Showgirl contest. This year we had three excellent entrants who vied for the Warialda Showgirl sash—Taneya Davis, Kendall Moxey and Jessica Weeks. All three are outstanding young women with great community spirit, and it was great to see them promoting their district in such a strong way. All three were winners but it was Jessica Weeks who will go on to represent Warialda in the zone finals next year.

Among the list of other attractions are arts and crafts, cooking and preserves, poultry, sheep, fireworks, racing pigs, stunt motorbikes, horticulture, machinery displays, needlework, photography—the list is endless. The show is an extravaganza of rural exhibits to enjoy while having a lot of fun. Warialda—place of honey—and the Warialda Show should be on the bucket list of every person in this House, and they will not be disappointed. I say well done to the Warialda P and A for its magnificent country show, organised by a great community.

HORNSBY HEIGHTS RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.26 p.m.]: I am delighted to acknowledge the fiftieth anniversary of the Hornsby Heights Rural Fire Brigade. By doing so, I acknowledge 50 years of outstanding service and commitment to protecting and building our community. Last Saturday I joined members of the brigade to celebrate this special occasion at a dinner held at Asquith Bowling Club. The dinner was a

chance for us to celebrate those members of the community who, on a cold night in March 1965, had the vision, foresight and community spirit to come together at the then Sommerville Road Public School and form the Gorge Brigade. From the brigade's humble beginnings, which I understand was an old Hillman sedan used as a makeshift fire truck with the back seat removed to fit the hoses, the Hornsby Heights brigade became one of the standout brigades in the Rural Fire Service.

Today I thank the men and women of the brigade, who work tirelessly year in, year out to protect our bushland community from the ever-present threat of bushfire. The Hornsby Heights brigade comprises some of the most hardworking and dedicated people in the emergency services field that I have had the pleasure of coming across. Courageous volunteer members, like Captain Stewart English, senior deputy Malcolm Bruce, president Paul Pilkington and secretary Richard Hay, have poured their heart and soul into the Hornsby Heights brigade to make it one of our Hornsby shire's proudest achievements. As I said, the Hornsby Heights brigade has come a long way since formation in 1965. Back then the brigade was just an old Hillman sedan that was used as a makeshift fire truck until the young brigade was able to secure something more appropriate.

In the 1960s Hornsby Heights was still a predominantly rural area. In 1964 a large bushfire swept through the Pike and Evans roads area of the district. Many locals were handed over a standpipe, a hose and a directive and told to defend their homes. The captain of the Elouera brigade, Alan Edwards, was on hand with their tanker, "Popeye", and spoke to one of the exhausted residents, Kevin Williams, suggesting that Hornsby Heights needed a brigade of its own. As a result of that conversation, Kevin Williams doorknocked the district to gauge whether there would be sufficient interest in forming a bushfire brigade. The doorknocking convinced Williams to approach the Hornsby council. With council's help, a public meeting was held on 1 March 1965 at the Somerville Road Public School.

The council's representative, Bert Hardy, chaired the meeting. Bert Hardy recommended George Preston to captain the new brigade. George Preston had been a member of Belrose bushfire brigade and was the only experienced firefighter in attendance. The meeting accepted the recommendation. There were elections for a further three deputy captains and other office bearers. Sixteen members were present, the constitution was discussed and a motion was moved that the brigade for the time being would adopt the chief secretary's department model in principle, pending any necessary amendments to be decided at a later date as required.

Shortly after this, in 1966, an iconic little red fire truck by the name of "Puff the Tragic Wagon" was given to the Hornsby Heights Brigade. Puff the Tragic Wagon is well known to this day in Hornsby Heights. The 1942 Chevrolet Blitz wagon started life as a slow-moving vehicle which struggled to climb up the steep hills around Hornsby Heights. It was brought in to assist volunteer firefighters during the 1966-67 summer bushfire season and was soon joined by another wagon named "I'm Puffed Too", a Ford light truck converted to carry equipment and personnel. Puff the Tragic Wagon was eventually moved on and spent a couple of decades working on farms before it was pulled apart for spare parts. The wagon was about to be buried in an erosion ditch in Mudgee but was fortunately saved by Hornsby Heights brigade volunteers who paid \$200 and two cartons of Crownies to save the historical machine. With Hornsby council's help the wagon was transported back to Hornsby and rebuilt to its former glory to be used once again.

I thank the Puff wagon coordinator, Terry Donnelly. Terry, or Top Cat as he is known, is really the heart and soul of this brigade. He was the longest-serving captain of the brigade and a foundation member. One would struggle to find a better volunteer or a better person. I sincerely thank Terry for his enormous contribution. I also note the tireless work of volunteers like David Whittingham and Linda English in looking after the wagon, which is today used for a wide variety of Hornsby Heights community engagements such as local parades, school fetes, displays, Santa runs, motor shows and even the Easter Show.

The story of the Santa run began in 1999 when a resident in Hornsby Heights gave a \$50 donation to the Hornsby Heights Rural Fire Brigade on the proviso that they bring Santa on the truck on Christmas Eve to the residents of a street in Hornsby Heights. As Hornsby Heights residents enjoyed it so much, the following year they decided to do their own Santa run in the Hornsby Heights area, giving lollies to the kids as a way of giving back to the community. In 2008 the historic truck Puff the Magic Wagon joined the Santa run. As the years pass by, more and more people are lining the streets of Hornsby Heights to get involved in this terrific community initiative. It is this kind of dedication, commitment and community spirit that has made the Hornsby Heights Rural Fire Brigade such an integral part of the local community.

We celebrated the contribution of former members who have helped to build this brigade into what it is today. We celebrated members such as Johnny A'Beckett, Les Parsens, John Hunter, Bob Collins, Annette

Collins, Graham Hughes, George Davey, Euan Flynn, George Preston and Rob Tickell. But it was also a chance to celebrate a new generation who will build on their great legacy: members such as Paul Pilkington, Robert Wawrzyniak, Malcolm Bruce, Stuart and Linda English and Brad Nuttall and all the volunteers. To each and every one of them from the bottom of my heart, on behalf of a grateful community, I thank them for their outstanding community service.

Pursuant to resolution business interrupted for the giving of inaugural speeches.

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

The SPEAKER: Order! I welcome the former member for Maitland, the Hon. John Price, local government representatives in the gallery, family, friends and supporters of the member for Maitland.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) [12.33 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Madam Speaker, parliamentary colleagues, special friends and family, I thank you for your generous 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 acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where I live, the Wonarua people, and pay my respect to their elders, past and present. Maitland is one of the fastest-growing cities in New South Wales and our Aboriginal community is growing at an even faster rate.

Recently I purchased an art work for my office by local Aboriginal artist John Robinson, who grew up in the North Coast and now lives in Woodberry. The painting combines Aboriginal and Western European styles. In one work it encapsulates the story of Maitland—the old meeting the new, welcoming each to the other, valuing both our diversity of experience and our unique traditions and culture. It is a beautiful expression of the understanding that can be found when we share and embrace our individual cultures and experiences.

I feel deeply honoured to take my place in this, the oldest Parliament in Australia, to represent everyone in my community. I am pleased to be able to say that I am in fact the second woman member for Maitland, my predecessor Robyn Parker, being the first. I am pleased because when I became foundation President of the Women's Network Hunter NSW in 2005, there were no women members in this place representing the Hunter. For the record, this changed in 2007 with the election of Sonia Hornery in Wallsend and Jodi McKay in Newcastle. The non-party political network I helped to establish has been instrumental in increasing women's participation in decision-making, at all levels of our community.

I pay tribute to the co-founders of our network, Vicki Woods and Bronwyn Ridgway, and other executive members such as the Deputy Mayor of Maitland, Loretta Baker, Jann Gardner, Jennie Wilkinson, Nada Vujat, Sheila Turnbull, Gail Johnson, Glenda Briggs and Race Barstow. I pay tribute to the members of Emily's List, which I joined when it was founded 18 years ago, and organisations such as the Labor Women's Forum, Maitland BPW and Women in Business Connect. These diverse organisations have helped many talented women within our community by providing forums where women can discuss issues of importance to them and develop their skills in representing our community. It is 90 years since Millicent Preston-Stanley, the first woman in this place, made her inaugural speech, and there is still much to do.

I am lucky to have been assisted by those who came before me and those who now join me. I look forward to progressing women's issues right across this Parliament for the benefit of all women and all in our community, particularly those women who will come after us. I thank all of the women and men in the Labor caucus for their support, but particularly the Hon. Courtney Houssos, the Hon. Sophie Cotsis and Jodi McKay who encouraged me to run for the seat of Maitland for many years. I also acknowledge the Hon. Penny Sharpe who is also present and thank her for her long support. Sophie, known by the *Maitland Mercury* as the "the Sydney member for Maitland" in the last Parliament, was a constant support and visitor to our community in the difficult and challenging days after 2011. To the Country Labor and Hunter Women candidates, particularly Kate Washington, Yasmin Catley, Jodie Harrison, Melissa Cleary, Sonia Hornery, Cassandra Coleman, who is here today from Bathurst, and Ursula Stevens, I thank you for your support along the way. It has been great to share the journey with you.

Perhaps the most important woman in my life though has been my mother, Anne O'Connor, who taught me to read at the age of three and sparked my lifelong love affair with words and communication. My mother had been working as a library officer in the Commonwealth public service in Canberra and was one of the first women to receive paid maternity leave when she had me. As the parents of three girls, my mother and my father never subscribed to stereotypes about women so I never felt I was limited to one kind of role in life. My father,

Jim, taught me as a teenager how to restore furniture, along with lots of other very hard labour, and I remember many hours discussing philosophy and the world in general in our shed as we stripped back old pieces of furniture.

I was about eight years old when I decided I would follow in my mother's footsteps and commence working at my local library as a volunteer. I spent many hours shelving and repairing books. My father told me only in recent times that I was "let go" when the chief librarian found my letter to Santa in the library post box and decided I was perhaps a little too young for the world of work. I catalogued all the books in my own book cases at home in rebellion. My activism started in earnest in 1985 during the first International Year of Youth when I was selected to represent my school on an interschool newspaper. But I was too busy to join the world of student politics. I got my first casual job at the age of 15. I remember fondly the owner of the business, Mr Erdman. He was an excellent role model for me years later, when I ran my own business, for his kindness and generosity to both his staff and his clients.

At 21 I joined the Labor Party, 100 years after it was established. Later that year I joined the Commonwealth public service in the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, where I read the sad yet ultimately hopeful stories of the many thousands of people who had unsuccessfully applied to come to Australia as refugees or migrants. I read with a sense of deep shame and embarrassment a question from an overseas school student to the Minister asking if it was really true that Australia had once had a policy that we would only let people with white skin into Australia. I moved to the Social Justice Coordination Section—my dream job—where I drafted the department's Agenda for Women and coordinated consultations around Australia, hearing firsthand the stories of many refugee and migrant women.

When John Howard came to Government I soon joined the staff of the Opposition as chief of staff for the member for Fraser, Steve Dargavel. With Steve I helped coordinate a meeting in Canberra of church and community leaders to affirm their commitment to multiculturalism. I was moved by meeting Sir Ronald Wilson, co-author of the *"Bringing Them Home"* report on the Stolen Generations. I am glad that we have apologised as a nation to our Indigenous people and later to those who were abused in institutions. I reject racism, discrimination and abuse in all their forms. In 1997 I met my husband, Robert, and later moved to Walcha, a small town in the New England Tableland. The town had 1,800 people and three-quarters of a million sheep. It is a wonderful community. In Walcha I joined and started to manage the family business, Northern Highland Travel, as part of a motel. In the year 2000 we moved to Maitland with our six-week-old son Joshua.

I take this opportunity to thank Elaine and Bruce Aitchison, my parents-in-law. They taught me so much about business and about regional and rural Australia. They have treated me as their daughter and have been wonderful friends, mentors and supporters through some of the best and some of the hardest times in business and in life. In the 17 years the business has grown incredibly. From the spare room of our house, the business has grown to employing around 25 staff across three distinct businesses with seven coaches, a café and conference centre and a travel agency. In all, I suppose one could say I am a Labor member in plain clothes. I have spent 24 years working in the private sector, 17 of which have been running my own business. I have also participated on a large number of local, State and Federal government and industry advisory boards.

I have won a number of personal and business awards, including the Lower Hunter Business Woman of the Year and the Bus NSW Young Achiever Award and I was a finalist in the Telstra Business Awards. My company is in the Tourism NSW Hall of Fame and we were national finalists three times in the Australian Tourism Awards. I thank my business and industry associates for their support and friendship over the years, including Darryl Mellish, Frank D'Apuzzo and Matt Threlkeld at BusNSW; Michael Apps at the Bus Industry Confederation; Craig McGregor from the Maitland Business Chamber; Kerry Hallett and Rod Doherty from the Lower Hunter Business Enterprise Centre, BNI Harvest; Bob Kerr and my fellow chief executive officers at The Executive Connection; Elizabeth Gaines, Nicola Nanninga and Lisa Gair from Helloworld Limited; and the staff of the Australian Tourism Export Council [ATEC], Tourism Australia, Destination NSW and Destination Hunter.

In my business I have been lucky to travel to many parts of the world. I have been privileged to enjoy the culture, geography, flora, fauna, art and history of cities as diverse as Vienna, Kota Kinabalu, Paris, Barrow in the Arctic Circle, Luxor, Madrid, Soweto and Angkor Wat. These places and the people in them changed my life and my perspective. Perhaps one of the most powerful lessons I have learnt during this time was about the impact of social media. The Egyptian Revolution of 2011 was born out of the new freedoms available due to social media. As we saw so recently in the storms in my community, people are more likely to trust their own

networks for information. Government must attend to this significant change and ensure that we are still able to communicate effectively with the growing number of people who do not use traditional media. Like any media, we must be careful to ensure that the true voices of our community are the ones that are heard.

Through my business I have contributed to the economic development of small and remote communities such as Walgett, Broken Hill, White Cliffs, Ouyen, Deniliquin and Lightning Ridge. I enjoy listening to the inaugural speeches and private members' statements of members from places to which I have travelled. I ran for Country Labor in order to assist communities in regional New South Wales, drawing on my experiences both here and overseas, to ensure that families in these communities have the same opportunities that people in cities take for granted.

I would like to tell you more about the beautiful city of Maitland. Forgive me if I start to sound a little like a tourist guide—it is understandable, given my background. Maitland was once the principal centre of the Hunter Valley and much of our early colonial heritage remains largely preserved. Much of our long history has been recorded in the *Maitland Mercury*, established in 1843 and one of Australia's longest surviving newspapers. Historically Maitland was made up of three townships. In the early days, West Maitland was known as the "people's town" and over time became our commercial centre. It was popular because of the rich alluvial river flats which, as we know from the last few weeks, are subject to flooding, but they provided an important source of water, and land for cropping and grazing and transport.

East Maitland was the "government town", the centre of administration—where many of our most historic buildings remain. Caroline Chisholm established a home for female immigrants there, and it is home to the Lands and Water Building, the Old George and Dragon inn, the East Maitland District Courthouse opposite the infamous Maitland Gaol, and the beautiful Anglican church of St Peter's. Morpeth was a private town, started by Lieutenant Edward John Close in 1821. Queens Wharf accommodated the steamships of the Hunter River. Many iconic Australian family businesses such as Arnott's, Brambles and Soul Pattinson started in Morpeth. Morpeth today is a major tourism drawcard, with Trevor Richards and Lisa Simmons Webb having been major advocates for tourism there for many years.

Maitland still has many rural communities—from Lochinvar to Duckenfield, Berry Park, Millers Forest, Phoenix Park and even parts of Woodberry. Tocal College agricultural school is located in the area and we have our own wineries. My home has a resident mob of kangaroos, possums and native birds. It is much easier to leave when it is not necessary to leave animals in a pet motel. From a population of around 53,000 when I moved to Maitland, the current population is now closer to 75,000. Approximately five people move to Maitland every day to start a new life. Our population growth has added a suburban flavour to the outskirts of the city.

Maitland is a town of diversity—a natural stepping point into a larger community for those from the bush and a tree change for those from the city. City dwellers have come to live in Maitland from all parts of the world. People bring to Maitland many different experiences and expectations of life. The 2322 postcode in which I live is covered by three Federal electorates, three State electorates and two local government areas, which sometimes creates difficulty in coordinating economic development but it does ensure a wide range of interest in our community from politicians across the spectrum. Indeed, the headquarters of the Hunter Regional Organisation of Councils operates from offices in Thornton. As members will see, Maitland started as, and has retained its role as, the heart of the Hunter.

The people of Maitland are resilient. We have just suffered one of the most devastating natural disasters in living memory. We lost a member of our community and three more in the nearby town of Dungog. Many people were without power for over a week. Houses have been damaged by water, sewage and trees, and in Hunter Close, Lochinvar, they were swept off their foundations. The whole community of Gillieston Heights was turned into an island for six days and has only this week regained full road access. Businesses have also suffered greatly. Throughout this disaster, the people of our community have worked together to help each other and those in the flood-affected towns around us.

From one community so many heroes emerged: people such as Sonia Gannon and Patricia Ling from Gillieston who led the volunteers to distribute food and water from the community centre operated by Mark and Amanda Venz; doctors Shahid Sarki and Saira Chandio who, with nurse Mick Sager, set up a voluntary medical clinic; the many who operated the ferry at Testers Hollow; Brad and Michelle Adams who kept the Facebook page updated; and Sandy Paul who ensured that her community got to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Anzac Day in a moving ceremony. There are so many heroes I am unable to name them all.

We must remember that the State Emergency Service started from the devastating Maitland floods in 1955 in which 11 people lost their lives. I thank the local State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service volunteers and all the government and charity agencies. They put their community's needs ahead of their own needs and those of their families. I think specifically of the Thornton Rural Fire Brigade members who came home after a 3.00 a.m. response call to find their own cars completely submerged but then went out again.

The State Emergency Service, together with all those in the community, found that there were new challenges to be faced in this latest disaster. The community faced storms and floods and a lack of power and telecommunications that were unprecedented. I will be working with our community to ensure that we learn from this event, particularly regarding our roads. There has been too much congestion and too many floods at Testers Hollow for us to ignore it any longer.

I pay tribute to the community groups I have worked with and will continue to work with in the future, particularly Maitland Senior Citizens; Hunter Valley National Seniors; Maitland Sunrise Rotary; U3A; View Club; Volunteers for Palliative Care; the Maitland Tenambit; BMX Club; Save our Rail; Marcellin Park and Maitland Rugby Club; Maitland Women's Cancer Support Group; Berry Park Residents Action Group and the Tocal Road and Bolwarra Residents Action Group, together with many others.

I thank the former members for Maitland and councillors who have helped me along the way, particularly John Price and Tony Keating who are here today. I thank our councillors, Deputy Mayor Loretta Baker, Henry Meskauskas, Ben Whiting and Robert Aitchison and our Federal members, the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon, MP, and the Hon. Sharon Claydon, MP, as well as Labor State members Tim Crakanthorp and Clayton Barr. I thank Labor leader Luke Foley for being a regular visitor to Maitland and before him John Robertson. Thank you to all the shadow ministers who have visited Maitland so many times, particularly the Hon. Walt Secord.

I thank our ALP branch members, particularly Mike Voorbij and Ian Hunt for their constant presence at the Maitland Markets, come rain, hail or shine, and our secretary, Vicki McLaughlin. I especially thank Kevin Martin, who was the very first person to encourage me to run as the member for Maitland, and to Max Ray, Ruth Stanley and Kim Pagan, who were always ready with a hug or a kind word when I was feeling discouraged, as were Patsy and John Carpenter. Even our newer members, such as Kay Wonderley, Graeme Dark, Brent Nolan and John Leao, have all contributed greatly. For dedication, I must mention Julieanne Bright, who volunteered and even came from Abu Dhabi to be here today.

My campaign team has truly run a marathon. I thank Jay Suvaal, who was instrumental in getting the campaign up and running; Gena Parker, who has been there every day, and as my daughter Jessica said recently, "Everyone needs a Gena in their life." I told her, "She's mine. Don't take her."; Ned Barsi; Giacomo Arnott for always being ready to take photos; Jordan Fallon, who trusted that I was worth it; and Andrew Hewitt, who always believed we could win back Maitland. I must make special mention of Josephine Hillard, who was there at the beginning and coordinated everything over the last five months. She knows when to push and pull and when to leave me alone. She has been a great support. I thank Jamie Clements and Kaila Murnain for their support, as well as the Young Labor team. Ian McNamara, who is here today, and Darren Rodrigo were strong supporters of Maitland through and through. We still remember their magnificent efforts as Young Laborites in 2007, which spurred us on to greater efforts each time.

I thank Mary Yaager and Mark Lennon. As someone in business, I am a friend of the unions. The Maitland Community Union Alliance has been a strong advocate for our community and I thank the hundreds of people who went doorknocking, particularly Matt Graves, Graham Kelly, Matt Byrne, John McFarland, Rob Long, Josh Howarth, Gaye MacAuley, Albert Fazon, Mick Forbes, the Electrical Trades Union, the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, the Health Services Union, the NSW Teachers Federation, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, the Rail Bus and Tram Union and the Transport Workers Union. I am sure I have missed one, but I thank you all.

I thank my friends who have been with me through this difficult path to middle age, particularly Luce Andrews, David Woodcock, Paula Campbell, Eva Cawthorne and David Haydon, Rachel Applebee and Sean Kennedy. Friends such as you have been worth gold. Most importantly, I thank the people in Maitland who have put their trust in me; some of them voted for Labor for the first time at this election. I will honour that trust in all that I do in this place.

Finally I wish to thank my family: my parents Anne and Jim, my sisters Trish and Annie and their families, and little Kendra, who is here today, and of course Robert, Joshua and Jessica. You have shown me an

incredible love and support that humbles me to my core. You have always believed in me and have generously helped me in so many ways. I thank you for accepting the excuse "After the election" for so many months, but most of all for being active participants in this journey. There are no words that could adequately express my thanks and love for you all.

Robert, through the good times and the hard times, you have always been there, with your optimism, persistence and resilience. You have supported me no matter what. I am grateful for every day I have you in my life. In their own right our children have made me immensely proud as a parent. Joshua, you are already an inspiring young man, with an understanding beyond your years, demonstrated most recently on the Kokoda Track with your father and grandfather, which honoured the sacrifices of your paternal and maternal great-grandfathers, Jack Aitchison and Hugh McCall. Jessica, you are an impressive young woman. You are clever, kind and incredibly compassionate. On your own initiative you gracefully and confidently helped many of my constituents during the recent floods.

You have both shown a wisdom and courage in your own ways that is far beyond your years and have accepted the costs of your father's and my ambitions to make a difference in our community. I am sorry for the times I have not been there for you. I promise I will make every moment I am here count, because there are too many reasons to be home and too many precious moments to be shared with you to just put aside unless I am achieving good things for our community.

Labor has a proud tradition of delivering for Maitland. Just in our last term in office more than \$300 million was delivered, including the third river crossing and the Hunter Expressway, which were both crucial in the recent floods. We built social housing; moved government departments to create jobs in Maitland; redeveloped the Maitland Hospital emergency department and increased beds, creating another 300 jobs; invested in schools and TAFE and SES and New South Wales rural fire brigades. It is a proud record and I am so proud of our former members.

The Liberals promised \$80 million at the last election and delivered less than half that amount. Projects such as the railway roundabout have been stalled; promises to retain the rail line have been flipped over and promises of 24/7 staffing at Beresfield police station, retaining the East Maitland courthouse and the existing Maitland Hospital have all been broken. It is a shame. Unemployment has doubled. Essential services such as community counselling, TAFE and fire services have been cut and all we have to show for the new Lower Hunter Hospital is a \$6 million sign at Metford.

At the 28 March election the Baird Government made more empty promises, but this time the community was not fooled. Our community rejects the Baird Government's privatisation agenda and has demanded public schools, public hospitals and the retention of our rail line into Newcastle and Sydney. We need this infrastructure to cope with our growing population.

I am committed to getting Maitland working again and to ensuring that we get the essential services and infrastructure we need to ensure that our community is able to fully participate in work and education with high quality health and transport. I am proud of Labor's vision and our values of social justice and integrity. I will be working towards implementing those visions and our values in this Parliament as well as holding the Baird Liberal Government to account. I look forward to working with you, Madam Speaker, and the other members in this place to achieve great things for my community and our State.

The SPEAKER: Order! I welcome the guests in the gallery. I particularly welcome the former member for Banks in the Australian House of Representatives, Daryl Melham, and the former member for Kogarah, Cherie Burton, who is talking—as usual. I remarked to her that the Chamber was much quieter since her departure. I am sure that the new member for Kogarah will not be as difficult as she was at times. I also welcome the former member for Oatley, Kevin Greene, and the family, friends and supporters of the member for Kogarah. I welcome you all to the Legislative Assembly today. With great pleasure, I call the member for Kogarah.

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) [1.01 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your re-election to this important post. It is a true privilege to be elected to serve the people of St George in the electorate of Kogarah. I pay my respects to the Dharawal people, who were the first Indigenous people to meet Captain James Cook's *Endeavour* just 500 metres from the edge of my electorate. Indigenous Australian's have the oldest continuous living culture on the planet. They were careful and attentive custodians of this land long before we came here, and we must be cognisant of that fact as we enjoy this country's natural beauty and resources.

I take this post after 16 years of tireless service and dedication from my predecessor in Kogarah, Cherie Burton. Cherie was a lion for our community. She was the first Minister for Housing who had herself grown up in public housing. I have lost count of the number of times members of the community have told me that I had big shoes to fill if I were to be half as good as she was. Like her predecessor Brian Langton, Cherie upheld the best traditions of a good member of Parliament. They were committed, accessible, hardworking and deep-down true believers in the Labor cause. It will be exceedingly hard to top these two wonderful people's contribution to Kogarah and to claim the mantle of the best member for Kogarah ever. Hopefully, it will be easier to avoid the title of worst member for Kogarah ever, particularly given that one of my predecessors was a serial killer who ended up in Broadmoor prison for the criminally insane.

Mr Paul Lynch: He was a Tory.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: I thank the member for Liverpool for that interjection. Thomas Ley, a Conservative member, attempted to bribe his Labor Party opponent, Frederick MacDonald, in 1925 with a £2,000 share in a Kings Cross apartment if he agreed to withdraw from the ballot. MacDonald refused the bribe, went public with the approach and one week later disappeared in suspicious circumstances. That is right: A New South Wales State Labor politician named "MacDonald" refused a bribe! Ley was also implicated in three other disappearances. While Ley's contribution to politics is obviously bad, it at least gives me a retort if one of my constituents ever claims that I am the worst member in the history of the seat of Kogarah.

St George is an example to the world that people from different races and religions, with different skin colours and political beliefs not only do live together and tolerate one another but also can thrive on this one small parcel of land. Australia's ability to absorb new immigrants, to celebrate diverse cultures and to respect ancient traditions and religions is truly the envy of the world. But why is this the case? Why are we succeeding when there is so much turmoil and hate in other parts of the world? It is not luck, nor is it an adherence to a monoculture. The answer is that we respect the ideals and principles of multiculturalism and can claim, based on evidence, that it works. During the Second World War while other leaders around the world were busy banging the drums of war, or alternatively working to divide mankind based on religion or race, our Prime Minister John Curtin said:

There is a price that the world must pay for peace; I shall not attempt to specify the price, but it does mean less nationalism, less selfishness, less race ambition.

Curtin was telling our country in the context of international amity that we had an obligation to each other as humans that is greater than a glorification of our own religion, race or creed. Curtin's speech, made to a tired and war-weary country in the grip of the White Australia policy, was a brave invocation of our shared humanity, and it set the tone and template for the country we are today. And we can never forget it.

The electorate of Kogarah is home to people from all over the world—61 per cent of people speak a language other than English in their households. Dreamers, adventurers, entrepreneurs and those prepared to take a chance on a better life in a distant country call Kogarah their home. These immigrants transfer these positive characteristics to our community and they make St George great. We are proud to have them. It is a wonderful opportunity to be the member of Parliament representing the highest percentage of Chinese Australians in the country at the same moment that China is emerging as a major economic power.

I take this opportunity to state clearly that there is nothing wrong with direct foreign investment in the New South Wales economy, especially considering the fair and appropriate safeguards in place for that form of investment. That does not mean that I would, nor do I believe this Parliament should, sell our electricity assets—particularly given that the Government's asset recycling program is highly dubious and likely to cause major budgetary problems deep into the future. It is instead a reminder that history suggests once countries begin to enact restrictions on trade and investment within their own countries retaliatory behaviour is not far behind. This form of protectionism would prove fatal for Australia's long-term economic prosperity.

While investment in Australia is welcome, investment by Australian firms in China and Asia more generally is vital to Australia's future. PriceWaterhouse Coopers recently conducted a study that showed that Australian businesses have more direct foreign investment in New Zealand—a country with a population of just four million—than all of Asia, with a total combined population of four billion. This is a worrying statistic given the expected opportunities emerging from growth in the countries of the Pacific over the coming decades. The study shows that, despite all the rhetoric about Australian readiness for the Asian century, in terms of business we are still not of Asia, we are simply floating within it.

The leading cause of Australia's unpreparedness to take advantage of the Asian century is that Australian firms are unsure of Asian customs and Asian languages and lack Asian contacts. A big and bold decision by this Parliament to mandate the teaching of Mandarin to all New South Wales schoolchildren from kindergarten to year 12 would make a big, positive difference. Last year, out of 70,000 children who finished the Higher School Certificate, only 0.5 per cent studied Mandarin. This is a miserly number particularly given that most countries in Asia, as well as European Union member countries—including recently the United Kingdom—have mandated the teaching of a second language in their schools. According to the *New Scientist*, Australia's multilingual rate is lower than that of the United States. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that 81 per cent of Australian kids speak English only at home compared with a multilingual rate of more than 50 per cent in France and 80 per cent in Sweden. Half of the world's population speaks two languages and as Australia enters the twenty-first century our kids will need to as well.

Some might say that it is not fair to compare Australia's low bilingual language percentages with the rate in a country like Sweden given that Sweden is surrounded by countries with populations that do not speak the same language and that the populations of all its major trading partners speak a foreign tongue. My response is to say that most of our neighbours do not speak English, and our first, second, fourth, fifth, eighth and ninth largest trading partners do not speak our language either. Not only would mandating the teaching of Mandarin have a positive impact in terms of commerce and trade but also it has been established that people who are bilingual score better on standardised tests, do better at maths, reading and vocabulary exams, are better at remembering lists and are more discerning of information presented to them. The Australian Curriculum may be a hurdle to this sort of reform. If New South Wales is not able to leverage its competitive advantage in teacher skills, training, diversification and teacher numbers for the benefit of the people of this State, then its goals and objectives need to be examined.

New South Wales has traditionally led this country in skills and education. If the Australian Curriculum is squeezing learning into the lowest common denominator then it should not be the children of New South Wales who suffer; rather, its goals and objectives need to change. The former Federal Government's white paper on Australia in the Asian Century, which has shamefully been abandoned by the Abbott Government, called for Australian children to learn one of four priority languages: Mandarin, Hindi, Indonesian or Japanese. If compulsory Mandarin is too much of a stretch for the New South Wales curriculum, then at a minimum the white paper's suggestions should be implemented fully. By 2025 Asia will produce half of the world's total economic output. It is forecast that Asia's middle class will reach 3.2 billion people by 2030. Indonesia is growing by 5 per cent to 6 per cent per year and China by 7 per cent to 8 per cent per year. Australia cannot afford to miss the boat. Our integration must be deeper than being Asia's farm or quarry; we must be part of Asia, not simply in Asia.

I represent the Australian Labor Party in this Chamber and, stretching back to 1953, I am the fourth Labor Party member in a row to represent the electorate of Kogarah. I was never interested in politics; I was only ever interested in the Labor Party. My interest in public policy is driven and directed by the pantomime of Labor history. Labor's heroes and the Liberals' villains shaped my understanding of complicated public policy problems. I still remember the 1993 Federal election when all had given up on Labor except Paul Keating and my dad. For three years my father was considered a genius amongst family and friends for having predicted that Labor would win the sweetest victory of all. Unfortunately, his sage-like reputation took a battering three years later when he also predicted that Labor would win a landslide in 1996. It dawned on me that my father was so one-eyed about this party that he could not countenance the idea that anyone would vote for the Tories.

I love my dad for introducing me to the Labor tribe. The Liberal Party is a party but Labor is a tribe—with all the good and the bad that that implies. Labor has survived intact not because its processes have never changed but because the essential values remain the same: equality, opportunity and recognition that no matter what your parents did for a living you can make it in Australia. We have achieved these goals because of a decent health system, the best education money cannot buy and an egalitarian spirit that does not place social barriers before people from other classes or backgrounds. Labor is the founder and custodian of these values, but to protect them into the future we must also change.

Trade unions are integral to both our success and our heritage, but Labor also needs to represent those who are not in a trade union. That will mean taking steps to reduce union control on the floor of our conference and increasing the representation of ordinary members of our party to have more diverse voices echoing through the halls of this 124-year-old institution. Exceptional trade unionists fight every day for working people but sometimes—particularly at the conclusion of Labor's last term in office—they are shackled by an association within our tribe. In the long term, a more balanced split in the make-up of Labor will be better both for the party and for our hardworking trade unions.

No-one can become a member of Parliament alone. I owe my victory in Kogarah to my incredibly hardworking team—a bunch of true believers who participate because they believe in Labor. Vicki Roussos and her incredible son Peter, Les Crompton, Ashley Mullaly, Sarah Minns, Lee Mullaly, Nick Katris, Colleen Symington, Dom James, Jessica Wei, April Zhou, Chris McKewan, Kris Wendtman, Jim Minns, Toni Goggins, Joe Awada, John Marcus, Kathryn Landsbury, Nick Melas, Matt Murphy, Jessica Yue and Lydia Li, thank you so much for the early mornings at freezing cold train stations and for doorknocking and staffing street stalls in extreme heat. Tommy Zhang, Nathan Liu, David Dai and Tammy Zhang, thank you for your amazing efforts on polling day. I thank Wayne Challinor, Mortdale fire station commander, and the Hurstville Public School Parents and Citizens Association.

I thank the campaign group, who pretty much put their lives on hold in order to see Labor succeed: Leon Pun, Brandan Han, Andrew Silk, Daryl Burge-Lopez, David Dawson, Louay Mustapha, George Vellis and my amazing staff, the wonderful James Zhou and Cheryl Han, who are the hardest working, most dedicated pair I have ever known. I thank also Shaoquett Moselmane, Daryl Melham, Morris Iemma, Kevin Greene, Sophie Cotsis, Ernest Wong, Kaila Murnain and the new member for Rockdale, Stephen Kamper. I thank Luke Foley and his staff for launching a spirited campaign against a government with a big majority and for injecting the Labor caucus with new faces and ideas. I acknowledge also those who have stood by me in fair and foul political weather: Russ Collison, Jack Haran, and my former boss and great mate John Robertson, who I am thrilled has been re-elected in the seat of Blacktown.

I acknowledge also the people I have grown up with in this party and who were with me during the campaign: George Houssos, Brent Thomas, Ian McNamara, Chris Bowen, Damian Kassabgi, Sam Dastyari, Lucy Mannering, my campaign director for Kogarah and the former member for Kogarah, Cherie Burton, and New South Wales Labor's campaign director, my great friend and my son's godfather, Jamie Clements, who did an incredible job in difficult circumstances leading the campaign effort to put Labor back on the map in this State. The godfather of my other son, Nicholas, is also in politics but not on our side: Ben Franklin. I thank Ben for his friendship and congratulate him on his victory in the other place.

I thank my in-laws, Tom and Kath Collins, for holding the Minns family together when my wife or I were studying overseas, running a start-up business, running for office or deciding to pursue something else at the drop of a hat. I also thank my mum and dad. I wish every kid could have the upbringing that I, my sister, Sarah, and brother, Jimmy, had—we lived in a family that sat, ate and talked together every night around the dinner table. They would all be encouraged to pursue their dreams in a home of unconditional love, help and support—and everyone would be forced to support the Labor Party.

Finally, I end where I began: Asian languages. "Yi dzien zhong ching" is a poetic Chinese turn of phrase that expresses the feeling of knowing that you will soon fall in love with the person you have just met. If I had known an Asian language I would have said it the first time I met my wife and best friend, Anna. I have never met a more optimistic and positive person than my wife. Every time I dream up something—whether it is moving overseas or running for Parliament—her immediate reaction is: Great, let's do it! That is pretty extraordinary because she runs a successful business and we are both raising our two little superheroes, Joe and Nick. I have more a sense of us than of me: We are in this together and I owe her everything. I thank the people of Kogarah for entrusting me with this important position. I thank the House for its attention and I look forward to contributing to this historic Chamber.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! With the concurrence of members, the House will continue to sit past 1.30 p.m. to allow the member for Campbelltown to make his inaugural speech. On behalf of the new member for Campbelltown, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the former member for Camden, Geoff Corrigan; the former member for Oatley, Kevin Greene; former member of the Legislative Council John Ryan; Campbelltown City councillors Meg Oates, Rudi Kolkman and Darcy Lound; and friends and supporters of the new member. I welcome you all to the Legislative Assembly today.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) [1.23 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered, the Gadigal people, and I pay my respects to their custodianship of the Eora nation. I also acknowledge the House and all previous members of Campbelltown and their contributions since the seat's establishment in 1968. I take this opportunity to wish my immediate predecessor well with his future endeavours. Mr Deputy-Speaker, colleagues, special guests and people in the gallery, I am humbled to stand here before you today to deliver my inaugural speech, having been selected by the people of Campbelltown to represent them as a member of the Fifty-sixth Parliament of New South Wales, the oldest Parliament in our nation.

Our greatest attribute is the good nature of our people. I credit this fact to the many amazing volunteers and service organisations that Campbelltown and our region of Macarthur would not be the same without. Today I pay tribute to them all. If I could highlight in words the character of our community, it is the selfless generosity and unwavering spirit of our people combined with their hardworking ethos that embodies the very fabric of our home. The traditional custodians of Campbelltown are the Dharawal people, who ranged from La Perouse in the north to near Ulladulla in the south but prominently along the Georges River in Campbelltown, which at that time provided a great source of food, water and shelter to their people. I acknowledge their custodianship and also acknowledge their elders, both past and present.

European settlement came to Campbelltown with the colonists in the early days of Australia's history. At that time the area was officially declared "The District of Campbelltown and Airds" by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1820—the name "Campbell" being the maiden name of his wife, Elizabeth, and "Airds" being her family estate in Scotland. The region quickly became the engine room for industrial and agricultural growth for this State and for Australia. Our city's history of exploration, development, growth and expansion is part of the wealth of our great State, which remains as consistent today as it was then.

Today the city of Campbelltown, as part of the Macarthur region, consists of around 33 suburbs that are increasing steadily, with a population exceeding 150,000 people and growing every day. The challenges for Campbelltown increase with every new family we welcome, almost every week of every month. True to the nature of the people of Campbelltown and our region, we embrace our new residents—as they did me more than 20 years ago. I fondly recall my first introduction to Campbelltown during my time as an Australian soldier and member of the Australian Regular Army when I was posted to many places, including the Lavarack, Holsworthy and Ingleburn barracks from the early 1990s.

During that time I was honoured to be a member of the catafalque party commemorating Anzac Day in Mawson Park in the centre of Campbelltown. This was when my then girlfriend and now wife, Simone, and I felt an instant attraction to the area and, most particularly, to St Peters Anglican Church, where Simone and I decided to wed in 1996. The celebration continued at the beautiful Eschol Park House, where we were hosted by the wonderful Masina family, to celebrate both the beginning of our life together and our new home in Campbelltown and the Macarthur region. Simone and I are so pleased that we chose Campbelltown and the Macarthur region as our home. We feel truly fortunate to be part of such a great community and cannot think of any place we would rather be to live, work and raise our two boys.

Many years ago, long before I entered any level of public office, I was having a few mates around so I went down to the local Asian grocer to get some things. There I met this bloke who was packing shelves in his mum's and dad's grocery business in Campbelltown. I got talking to him and struck up a friendship, though I had no idea that nearly 20 years later the member for Macquarie Fields, Anoulack Chanthivong, would be not only my great mate but also a parliamentary colleague, fighting for our region with common goals. I commend Anoulack and his family.

Many of our State's historical cities and towns have an interesting story, as does Campbelltown. In 1825 a bloke called Fred Fisher had an argument with a local carpenter and received a light prison sentence. Worried about his farm, Fred gave his neighbour George Worrall power of attorney during his sentence. After his release, on 17 June 1826, Fred Fisher mysteriously disappeared and George Worrall announced that Fred had sailed for England. Three weeks later George sold Fred's horse and belongings. Needless to say, the townspeople were suspicious. On 17 September 1826 George Worrall was arrested on suspicion of Fred's murder. During the trial George confessed. Almost four months later there was a strange occurrence: On that memorable night a wealthy and respectable farmer, John Farley, stumbled into a local hotel in a state of shock. John claimed that he had seen the ghost of Fred Fisher sitting on the rail of a bridge over a creek. The ghost pointed to a paddock down near the creek and then faded away. This legend is celebrated with a festival every year.

The Campbelltown City Festival of Fisher's Ghost is one of the longest-running community events in Australia, staged since 1956. This unique festival, inspired by the famous legend of the ghost of Frederick Fisher, is steeped in community history and includes an extensive program of events that bring our community together. The success of the festival and the mass community involvement speak volumes about the character of Campbelltown, the region and its people.

Modern Campbelltown has no shortage of memorable people—from authors and actors like Tony Park and Kate Richie to bushrangers, former police chiefs like "Mad" Dan Morgan and my good friend Ken

Moroney, former Commissioner of the NSW Police Force, decorated war veterans like the late Kevin Wheatley, VC, and rugby league stars like Jarryd Hayne, whose love of footy began while running onto Waminda Oval with the East Campbelltown Eagles Rugby League Football Club.

I was born and raised in country New South Wales, along with my two brothers Brett and Joseph. My dad, Robyn, who unfortunately cannot be here today, is a retired maintenance worker. My mum, Mary, is also retired. She was a support carer for those with disabilities. We never had a lot of money but we had as much love, care and support from mum and dad as we could ever wish for. Like most young blokes growing up, I never realised the lessons mum and dad were teaching me, either directly or indirectly. However, as time went on, I learnt the importance of family, loyalty, consideration and honesty and remembering that there is always someone worse off. I am okay, but what about my mate down the road? Is he or she okay? Is there anything I can do to help?

My two brothers are not here today, as much as I wish they were. I know if they were here, we would all agree that we could not have asked for a better upbringing than that which mum and dad provided for us. Life is a combination of many moments—sometimes tough; sometimes filled with joy. As we know, life sometimes provides us with moments that we will never understand. I enjoy life immensely, with all its challenges and hardships. I know that with hard work comes great satisfaction and reward. I left my family when I was 17, upon enlistment into the Australian Regular Army, and served as a soldier and non-commissioned officer in the Royal Australian Infantry Corps and the Royal Australian Corps of Transport.

My learnings during my time as a soldier endorsed everything mum and dad taught me: pride of self; look after your mates; always remember what matters most; and never fight out of spite but instead be the one who stands up for what is right. Upon discharge I took up employment as a truck driver and fuel operator whilst beginning my tertiary education at Campbelltown TAFE College. I recently completed my Masters of Business Administration. TAFE was the stepping stone for me to transition from military life into the civilian workforce, providing me with the opportunity to establish a career and subsequent lifestyle to provide for my family. This may add some further explanation for those familiar with my strong personal feelings and support for TAFE. It is a vital institution that not only provides a pathway of opportunity for many but is also an investment in our economy.

To that point, when we welcome new residents we want to make sure that they have the same opportunities for prosperity as existing residents currently enjoy. This can only be achieved with the appropriate provision of infrastructure, health services, educational resources and environmental sustainability, with subsequent protection of our green space and habitat areas such as the Scenic Hills, amongst others. I will be bold and emphatic in this plight and I look forward to taking every opportunity to make the required representations to ensure that the needs and aspirations of our local families become a reality. I feel that all communities deservingly expect and require this from all their public representatives, be they in government or opposition, at any level and regardless of political persuasion.

It would be out of character for me not to express my passion for Campbelltown Hospital and commend the fantastic efforts and commitment of the many staff who work there. This is the hospital where my two sons were born and the hospital we continue to rely on each month for paediatric care—as we have for over 12 years. The staff at Campbelltown Hospital bring an inspiring ethos of goodwill that has seen words of praise continue over time from many in our community. But, as we know, the good and sustainable functioning of any service cannot rely solely on goodwill. The promised upgrades to Campbelltown Hospital are essential to ensure the health and wellbeing of our local families as we grow to a region that will eventually exceed the size of Canberra.

Mental health remains a challenge for many in our community and requires the subsequent provision of appropriate care. In particular, the Campbelltown area—faced with population growth, a demand for quality health services for our ageing community and the demands that young and new families bring in terms of maternity and paediatrics—is an area that simply cannot be overlooked. I note the Government's commitments to upgrade Campbelltown Hospital and Appin Road, to provide additional parking at Campbelltown railway station and security fencing at Rosemeadow Playing Fields, and to provide the Menangle Spring Farm connection as a vital southern link for the developing region and local road safety provisions.

I look forward to advocating as strongly as I can for these improvements and to working cooperatively wherever possible. I want to assure the people of Campbelltown that I will unreservedly pursue these promises on their behalf, and I will give no quarter. In addition, I am concerned about the struggle young couples face

with housing affordability and achieving the long-held great Australian dream of owning their own home. Youth unemployment in Campbelltown is well above the State average. I remain supportive of a decentralised government department approach. I flag the enormous benefits that such measures would bring for Campbelltown and our region.

I most enjoy getting out and talking to locals and hearing their stories. It is my intention to take an unchained approach in my representations as the member for Campbelltown and to take my parliamentary office to the people. As I am sure my colleagues would know, many of the stories people share with us of their experiences are moving and often we can relate to them. Recently I met James, who has been a resident of Rosemeadow for 27 years. I was humbled when James told me I was the first candidate or politician he had ever met. James is a working man about my age. Sadly, he lost his wife to cancer just 12 months ago. Like me, he has two sons. He explained how they mean the world to him. All he wants is for them to have every opportunity that he has had.

When door knocking in Claymore I met a young mother of two. I gave her my normal introduction, "G'day, I'm Greg. I'm out door knocking to introduce myself and to see if there's anything I can help you with." This lady presented well. She explained to me that in addition to working two jobs she cared for her eldest daughter, who was autistic. As she was a public housing tenant, she asked if I could do anything about her leaking roof, which she had been waiting six months to have repaired—the ceiling inside her home was falling in. I made the appropriate representations with Housing NSW on the following Monday.

However, her final comment stuck in my mind. The lady explained to me that she was an only child and her parents had both passed away. She had no relatives in Sydney and public housing was the only place she could go to escape her violent husband. She said, "I would rather be in this dilapidated place than in our mansion of a home where my husband took pleasure in frequently beating me." There is so much that is wrong about this story and goes well beyond the growing backlog of public housing maintenance that requires urgent attention.

I have always believed that the standard you walk past is the standard you accept. So far this year, two women have been killed in domestic violence every week. This is a standard I do not accept and I am not willing to walk past. Domestic violence is wrong in every way and by every definition. We, as a parliament, must lead the charge and join with all communities to take a stand against this shameful epidemic.

I fondly reminisce about my time carting coal up and down Appin Road to Port Kembla in the wonderful electorate of Wollongong at all hours of the day and night. It was a time I enjoyed and will always remember. I also remember the many dangers that encompassed being a truckie, which further highlighted to me the importance of a safe, fair and equitable workplace along with the important role that the trade union movement plays in modern industry. Much has been said about the trade union movement—sometimes it is justified; however, sometimes it is not.

I am proud to have stood with my union brothers and sisters in campaigning for the pursuit of fairness and fighting for the rights of Ansett workers during a time of injustice. I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Unions NSW, the Transport Workers Union [TWU] and the Australian Workers Union [AWU], amongst many others, whose representatives are here today. Those present include but are not limited to Tony Sheldon, Russ Collison, Wayne Forno, Michael Aird, Richard Olsen, Glen Nightingale, Scott McDine, Paul Farrow, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, MLC, Gerard Hayes, Mark Lennon, Julie Griffith, Paul Doughty, Dave Lupton, Alison Rudman, Graeme Kelly and Paul Reed.

I have also been accountable for the financial viability and success of large organisations. Having led and managed businesses in both the corporate and small business fields and as a former director and vice-president of the Campbelltown Chamber of Commerce, I understand the vital importance of supporting business within our common society and the essential role small business plays in securing a progressive and prosperous economy whilst finding balance in cooperation.

Anything worth fighting for is never easy. During the election campaign my team and I engaged with almost every local resident of Campbelltown, be it at the train station, by telephone, knocking on doors or at one of the hundreds of mobile offices that we conducted. During the campaign I vowed that I would do my very best in everything I do, act with integrity and sincerity and remain solely motivated by the needs and aspirations of the people of Campbelltown—those I sought to represent. I repeat that vow today to our local families, businesses, sporting groups and community service organisations. Every day in public office we have a chance to make things that little bit better for our communities.

For me, politics is about enabling and encouraging the pursuit of prosperity of those I am privileged to represent, with the intent to make their lives a little better than it currently is. The result of the election was both encouraging and humbling; however, it was not possible without the efforts of many, led by State organiser David Latham and my campaign director Jessica Malnersic, along with many others who include Brydan Toner, Andre Charadia, Brett Joseph, George Tamm, Peter Roxby, Daniel Roxby, Jo Pattison, Peter Muntford, Karen Hunt, Marty Peebles and my endlessly loyal dad.

To the limitless and unwavering efforts of Young Labor, thank you. You are the "eternal flame" of our great party and I commend your efforts for the benefit of a fairer society across our nation. I thank each and every Campbelltown branch member for selecting and supporting me over what was a very long and at times challenging campaign. I will not let you down.

I also wish to thank Mark Lennon, Jamie Clements, Kaila Murnain and the entire team at NSW Labor for their support, along with those who have guided me over many years, including Geoff Corrigan, Dr Andrew McDonald, the Hon. Peter Primrose, MLC, the Hon. Walt Secord, MLC, and Chris Hayes, amongst others. I thank our leader, Luke Foley, for his support and leadership. I am proud to be part of an enthusiastic, energetic and renewed Labor team. A special thanks to all the shadow Ministers, current and past, particularly Ryan Park, Michael Daley, Tania Mihailuk, Guy Zangari, the Hon. Adam Searle, MLC, the Hon. Sophie Cotsis, MLC, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, MLC, Linda Burney, and Paul Lynch.

Colleagues, I believe in the enduring values of our party that were born in a collective struggle for better living conditions for all people. I strongly believe in a progressive and reformist agenda and in the continuing pursuit of a society that values the security, fairness, equality and plight of all people without prejudice. We must never relinquish our values to appease another. We must forever stand by the courage of our convictions and, in true Labor tradition, be the voice of the silent and stand for those who cannot stand for themselves.

To my best friend and wife, Simone: There are many wonderful things in my life but nothing that compares to you. Your unconditional support, loyalty and passion for social inclusion combined with your strength of character and tolerance draw my constant admiration, particularly this morning at about 3 o'clock when I think I woke you up. I thank you and I love you. To my two sons, Bailey and Darcy: You are my purpose and the substance of all my pride. I know that right now you may not fully understand the purpose of what I do and why I have to be away from you as much as I am, but I want you to know that not a minute goes by where you are not on my mind. I love you both with all my heart.

To my mum and dad: You are the people who instilled in me the principles that I carry through my life. I hope that I can be half as good a father to my sons as my dad has been to me. As previously stated, my parents are hardworking people and I learnt from them that we are the architect of our success or demise and the decider of our destiny and that we should never allow anyone or anything to impose on the direction of our life.

I also acknowledge my two brothers, Brett and Joseph, along with my sister-in-law Kim and my nephew Zacharia, for their support. To my mother-in-law and father-in-law, Yvonne and Ian, who welcomed me into their family when I was a young soldier a long way from my own family: I forever enjoy our time together. Some of the fondest and most enjoyable moments in my life are our times together. I thank you for the support, help and comfort that you continue to give to me, Simone and the boys. To my good mate and brother-in-law Damian and his wife, Emma: I thoroughly enjoy our times together as a family. Your friendship is invaluable to me and I appreciate all the support you give us. I look forward to being a part of your exciting new chapter.

Finally, and most importantly, I thank the people of Campbelltown for their faith in me. There are not too many greater privileges than to have the people of your local community entrust you to represent them and their interests. I am very aware that with great privilege comes great responsibility—a responsibility I embrace and a privilege I will never take for granted. I pledge to represent every man, woman and child of Campbelltown without prejudice, regardless of their political preference, in every way I can—whether it be helping the boy from Kentlyn working at his dad's service station who wants to one day be the chief of the Australian Defence Force like Air Chief Marshall Mark Biskin, or a young lady from Campbelltown High School who aspires to be like Lisa Wilkinson and reach the highest levels of journalism or the young couple who simply want to raise their family in a fair, just and safe community. I pride myself on this position and I will never yield. I thank the House for its indulgence.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I congratulate the member for Campbelltown.

[The Deputy-Speaker (Mr Thomas George) left the chair at 1.46 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery 30 masters of social work students and their lecturer from the Australian Catholic University.

CENTENARY OF FIRST WORLD WAR

The SPEAKER: During the Great War more than 215,000 Australian troops were wounded—although it is hard to be precise about the number as many were wounded more than once. The toll on human lives for those wounded in action, subjected to the horrors of gas attacks or otherwise rendered sick and injured is almost too great for us to comprehend. Within the empire's troops Australians suffered at an extraordinarily high rate. Some 65 per cent of those who embarked became casualties compared with 60 per cent of New Zealand forces and 50 per cent of British forces. Whether this reflected the nature of the frontline battles faced by the Diggers or speaks to their fighting habits is a question now impossible to answer.

Among those to suffer severe wounds was Philip Henry Clapin of Burwood, who was wounded at Gallipoli and lost an arm at 23 years of age. He was the son of the Usher of the Black Rod in this Parliament and had served under George Frederick Braund, the member for Armidale who was killed in action on that bloody Turkish peninsula. Called one of the Heroes of the Dardanelles by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Clapin returned and served as a clerk in the Parliamentary Library. Despite his war experiences he had a long life, living until 1966.

There was no town, village, hamlet, suburb or community that did not become familiar with the face of war after our troops returned and those bearing the physical and psychological scars of the conflict made an effort, with varying degrees of success, to reintegrate into civilian life. For many the trauma lasted for the rest of their lives and most of them rarely spoke of their war experiences. Support for them was not great. There was no Department of Veterans' Affairs and no Repatriation Hospital, although the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia—the predecessor of today's RSL—was formed in 1916. The personal impacts of war last long after the formal cessation of hostilities. For few Australians was the impact either as great or as lasting as it was for those who had left our shores so full of a sense of adventure and service in the Great War.

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 Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business, and that the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations, will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Finance, Services and Property. I also advise members that the Minister for Health will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Medical Research, Assistant Minister for Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[*Question time commenced at 2.23 p.m.*]

TOLL ROAD RATE INCREASES

Mr LUKE FOLEY: My question is directed to the Premier. What is the public policy justification for increasing any toll above the rate of the consumer price index?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I remember Labor's approach to tolls. Labor governments said they would take tolls away and did not, took them away and then did not, and so we never knew quite what they were going to do.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In the interests of building infrastructure, and remembering Labor's \$30 billion deficit that we inherited, we have said that we want to get on with the job of building all the required infrastructure. To do that, yes, the New South Wales Government is partnering with the private sector and, yes, the New South Wales Government is asking people to make a contribution in return for a benefit that they might receive if they choose to use the infrastructure. The model is consistent with many motorway models across the world. As the roads Minister has stated, the Government will impose a cap on the cost.

Many promises were made as part of the election campaign and issues were brought to light that deserve our attention. Sometimes foreign investment is involved in the construction of motorways, just as there sometimes is foreign investment in other parts of New South Wales. Just over an hour ago we were given a very interesting insight into the xenophobia that Labor brought to the recent election campaign.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. It seems to me that xenophobia has nothing to do with the question and clearly is not relevant.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has answered the question.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Xenophobia was one of the lowlights of the election campaign. All Labor members should ask themselves whether they are proud of a xenophobic campaign being run. I had heard nothing from any Labor member about that until the member for Kogarah showed some guts.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has answered the question and remains relevant.

Ms Linda Burney: He should explain the action of the member for East Hills.

The SPEAKER: Order! A point of order is not an opportunity for the member for Canterbury to speak into a microphone and debate the question. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: How is it that the member for Canterbury and all her Labor colleagues have not said they were against that xenophobic campaign?

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! I already have ruled on a point of order taken under Standing Order 129. The member for Keira will explain why he is taking that point of order.

Mr Ryan Park: What has the answer got to do with toll roads?

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Keira to order. The member for Keira will resume his seat.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Leadership sometimes requires difficult decisions to be made, which includes being honest with the electorate. If we build roads, we will need a contribution to the cost in the form of tolls. It also means for Labor Party members that when Sussex Street and the unions phone, Labor members will have the guts to stand up to them. One Labor member has done that. I congratulate the member for Kogarah for showing leadership and for welcoming foreign direct investment. To his credit he also said that Mandarin should be taught in more schools, with which I agree. He was absolutely right to say that the State should partner with Chinese investors, maintain the relationships we already have and strengthen them. During the election we saw from every single Labor member a xenophobic campaign that not one Labor member condemned. Now we have a new Labor member, the member for Kogarah, who has had the guts to do that publicly.

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

The SPEAKER: Order! I already have ruled on relevance. I remind the member for Canterbury she is on two calls to order.

Mr Michael Daley: I would have thought that a leader of a party who calls a candidate a paedophile protector—

The SPEAKER: Order! What is the point of order of the member for Maroubra?

Mr Michael Daley: Standing Order 73.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I congratulate the member for Kogarah on his speech. In the context of the debate occurring in the State, it was an important statement. All members of this Parliament should say to him, "Well done", because we do not want to return to that disgraceful campaign. To him I say, "Congratulations". May we continue in this State to welcome foreign investment—as we should.

LAW AND ORDER

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government making New South Wales a safer place in which to live?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is a very good question. I thank the member for Ku-ring-gai for his question and congratulate him on his election to this great place, which represents a great result for Ku-ring-gai—an electorate where former Premiers were elected. There is no doubt that the member for Ku-ring-gai has the potential to go all the way in this place. The people of New South Wales are very proud of the NSW Police Force. I pay tribute to the work done by police officers, day in and day out, on behalf of all of us. Those of us who have examined the work of our police have been absolutely in awe and inspired by the capacity of our police officers to put their lives at risk for us, for which we thank them.

It is why we are determined to provide support for them and we have. The Government has provided an additional 759 officers on the front line to help them with their work on a daily basis. We have done that since we came to Government in March last year. We have also delivered results. If one looks at the crime statistics, for the first time in more than 20 years they are either stable or falling across every category. We pay tribute to our police who have delivered that. As part of the election campaign the Government also announced that we will be recruiting and delivering an additional 310 officers to go onto the front line to continue to support communities across the State.

On top of that, 250 officers will be trained as specialist police to investigate the most serious crimes—cracking down on crime, including domestic violence. The Government is investing \$100 million in the landmark Policing for Tomorrow Fund—an important fund—equipping police with the latest technology. When it becomes available, we want our police to have it. We want to ensure they do not have to wait for the latest technology but that they can have it as soon as it becomes available and that is what we will be doing.

In terms of overall strategy, we have not only put more police officers on our streets but we have cracked down on gun-related crime and passed laws allowing outlaw motorcycle gangs to be declared criminal organisations. We have also made many announcements in the campaign which we are rolling into Parliament. I congratulate the Attorney General on bringing forward bills which are going to introduce life sentences for child sex offenders, something we are proud to be delivering. We are also increasing the sentences for gun-related crimes, for possession, use or discharge. We are introducing tough new powers to give police the upper hand against organised crime, including confiscation of assets—new powers that they have asked for.

We are leading the country in many respects on domestic violence reform and I hope that the Parliament comes together as one on that. The Government has introduced a comprehensive package to attack the scourge of ice in the community and we are certainly giving the police everything they need to keep our streets safe. I think we were all surprised to hear the Leader of the Opposition's campaign speech because in the 3,678 words there was not one mention of law and order. It seemed he did not want to keep our streets safe—it was not a priority. That is why this Government is proud to be delivering for the police and proud to be keeping our streets safe because that is what the community wants. I note the shadow Minister for Police is here in the Chamber.

Ms Jodi McKay: Where else would I be?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is great to have a world first in this House. We have two members for Newcastle in the same Chamber. It is fantastic. Newcastle has never been better represented. We have the member for Newcastle and, over there, the reserve member for Newcastle. This member for Newcastle actually wants the revitalisation of Newcastle. So we are actually backing this one and not that one over there. He does not want anything to happen in Newcastle but the member opposite is all for Newcastle. So it is great to have her. But I note that there was slight confusion because, just after the election, the Leader of the Opposition with the shadow Police minister said that a new Commissioner of Police could be being selected—and I thank Andrew Scipione for the extension. But they said the shadow Minister wanted to play a role in selecting the new Commissioner. I thought that I should make it clear that in an election you have Opposition and Government—and it is the Government that actually makes the decisions. The Government is proud to be keeping our streets safe and to be putting more resources into doing that. Law and order will continue to be a priority for this Government.

STATE OWNED ENTERPRISES PRIVATISATION

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Treasurer. In a recent article in *Lawyers Weekly*, the head of Minter Ellison's government practice said:

There will be a lot of activity in the asset-recycling space. In fact, we're acting for the government already on a couple of confidential projects that deal with services outsourcing and outsourcing income streams.

Treasurer, what are these confidential projects?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I would like to know what Labor's confidential projects are. We know what some of them are because there was a policy forum co-chaired by the shadow Treasurer. Today they asked us about tolls but this policy forum wanted to introduce a congestion tax. They wanted to introduce a congestion tax.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The Treasurer should find some new material.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is too early for a point of order on relevance. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is interesting that those opposite have a lot of plans but, as the member for Strathfield would know, Labor says one thing and does another. The member for Canterbury was promised certain things and Labor did not deliver. It is interesting that the shadow Treasurer should raise such matters because, when members opposite were in Government, they obviously said one thing and did another. It is interesting that I found this article which talks about a secret plan that the Labor Party had when in Government. It referred to "school playgrounds have been added to the long list of public assets that the cash-strapped New South Wales Government is desperately trying to sell off to pay public servants".

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The question was seeking information about what projects Minter Ellison have been briefed on by the Government in the asset recycling space. It had nothing to do with playgrounds. That is not a secret.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer should return to the leave of the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is interesting that Labor again demonstrates its hypocrisy. I know that the Labor Party has had a lot to say about asset recycling. Members opposite have had a lot to say about a number of things they said they would do but did not. I thought today that I would look up the shadow Treasurer's website to see what he has to say about the Labor Party's position. It said that "an error occurred retrieving information".

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have made my ruling. It is a little early to continue to get up to the microphone. Points of relevance are turning into an argument. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Michael Daley: You asked the Minister to return to the leave of the question. My non-existent website has nothing to do with Minter Ellison's briefs.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We will get to that on another occasion but the basic line is that we went to the election telling the people of New South Wales exactly what we were doing.

Mr Clayton Barr: That's unparliamentary.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is not what those opposite did when they sold Gentrader. Did Labor go to the 2007 election telling the people of New South Wales what they would do? No. They ended up putting their mates on all the relevant boards and they had to heavy their mates to get that through. There was never a starker example of how to be honest with the people of New South Wales and to talk about the future of this State. The Government was up-front with our policies on poles and wires.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The 120,000 jobs that will be created, the \$20 billion in infrastructure and the \$300 billion growth in the economy are exactly what this State needs. Compare this to those opposite, who never tell the public what they are doing. They get to Government and then try to sell everything. They appoint their mates to boards. For the shadow Treasurer to ask such a question demonstrates the Labor Party's utter hypocrisy. I say to the Labor Party: The people of New South Wales have given their verdict in relation to the future of this State—get on board and support it, instead of trying to waste the Parliament's time. If members opposite believe in jobs, if they believe in the future of New South Wales, get on board, it is not too late.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. What is the New South Wales Government doing to better protect children and to ensure that offenders are brought to justice?

Mr TROY GRANT: I thank the member for Tweed for his question. I congratulate him on his return to this House, supported by the wonderful people of the Tweed. I know his work will continue in support of the police in looking after the most vulnerable in his community. Everyone in this House will join me in acknowledging that children deserve to grow up safe and that they deserve to grow up free from predators. We all know that child sexual abuse devastates victims. It devastates their families and it devastates our communities. The punishment level for this devastation must fit the crime.

Sentences handed down by the criminal justice system must match the severity of the crime. Members heard me say in recent times, and I believe it to be true, that courts should be absolutely independent. There is no doubt about that. This Government believes courts can no longer be isolated from community sentiment when it comes to sentencing offenders for the most heinous of crimes. I want to see the police lock up child sex offenders. I want to see the courts hand down suitably tough sentences. I want to know prisons are keeping them secure and that offenders are working on rehabilitation.

As a Government, it is our responsibility to make it happen. The victims have been already robbed of hope by their abusers as a result of this heinous crime. The justice system cannot let them down again. I am incredibly proud of the work undertaken by the former Attorney General, Minister Hazzard, and the current Attorney General, Gabrielle Upton, for bringing to the community a clear and decisive commitment during the election campaign that we will act in this regard. In this place today the Attorney General will introduce legislation, as promised, that will look after our children. Child sex offenders will face life for sexually assaulting children under the age of 10. I am sure members on the other side will support those measures.

I was proud to be the Chair of the Joint Select Committee on Sentencing of Child Sexual Assault Offenders. I thank all members of the committee for their contribution and acknowledge the member for Liverpool opposite, Paul Lynch, those opposite in the other place, including Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, the member for Oxley, Melinda Pavey, who was in the other place at the time, and the member for the new electorate of Holsworthy, Melanie Gibbons. We heard harrowing tales and about the challenges faced by this Government and the justice system to prevent these offences, and the remedies for those who are eventually caught but, more importantly, we heard about the support that is required for the victims through their second-toughest journey. Survivors of child sexual abuse deserve to know that their bravery in reporting this crime assures them of justice. Their bravery and their courage will also ensure the protection of other children from abusers.

This Government is proud to appoint specialist judges to hear child sexual cases. We heard loud and clear in the Joint Select Committee on Sentencing of Child Sexual Assault Offenders that Children's Champions, which is a model that has been embraced in the United Kingdom, is working well. The same model will be brought to New South Wales to support child witnesses through the ordeal of the court process. One measure pursued by this Government will be to pre-record the cross-examination of child witnesses to help keep them out of the courtroom environment wherever possible. We will establish a task force to examine the anti-libido medical treatment options for paedophiles, which is chemical castration.

The legislation will add 13 child sexual assault offences to the standard non-parole scheme, which will provide the judiciary with a clearer guidance to their sentencing regime. The community expects this Government to protect children, and to keep the police and justice system as well as the prison system knitted tightly together. We give you that pledge. During my policing career I had the arduous task of taking evidence from children who had been sexually assaulted. It is one of the most unpleasant things one can do. The proudest thing one can do is to rectify that situation for future victims. That is exactly what we are doing in this place today. Life imprisonment for a child under 10 years old was a key election commitment for the Coalition Government and that promise will be delivered today. Again, I congratulate the Attorney General on the legislation she will introduce.

LOWER HUNTER HOSPITAL

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. When will the first patients be treated at the new Lower Hunter Hospital?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: When it is built. Congratulations on being elected to this place. Even people in the gallery will know patients cannot be treated in a hospital that is not yet built. Perhaps the member for Maitland and some of the new Labor members need to hear a bit of history about this. We made a commitment to purchase the land and to have a discussion to start the clinical services planning for the new Lower Hunter Hospital. Labor promised absolutely nothing, despite the fact that this was a huge population growth area and it was clearly identified that the hospital was needed.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: In the last term of Government, we undertook to hold an extensive consultation process that involved the local people and the local council.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I congratulate the former member for Maitland, who was absolutely on top of this issue. In fact, it led to the selection of the Metford site, which will enable the building of a new hospital that will be considerably larger than the existing landlocked hospital that is on a flood plain.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order and cease interjecting.

Mr Michael Daley: The Minister might think this is funny, but it is important to the people of Maitland. They want to know when the hospital will be built.

The SPEAKER: The Minister is answering the question. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I answered that question in the first sentence. The member should listen. The reality is that the new site at Metford is the most logical location for a new hospital. It was the subject of extensive community consultation. The hospital will be closer to the station and will enable easier road access from Port Stephens. It will relieve the load on other major hospitals such as the John Hunter Hospital and the Mater. It will also provide the community with a superb state-of-the-art modern hospital. The details for commencing building of the hospital will be announced in our budget papers. Money has been already allocated to it being built in this term of Government. The member for Maitland can shout as much as she likes; it does not get it built any quicker.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maitland will not ask a question and then interject.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Will the member for Maitland come on board and help us to sell the hospital to the local community?

Mr David Harris: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wyong will resume his seat. I call the member for Maitland to order for the first time. I advise members not to ask questions, and then shout and interject throughout a Minister's answer. If members continue to do so they will be called to order.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr LEE EVANS: My question is addressed to the Attorney General. How is the Government placing community safety at the forefront of the justice system?

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: I thank the member for Heathcote for his question. He is a strong advocate championing for his local community. I also congratulate him on his recent election. It was well deserved—well done. I know the member for Heathcote cares deeply for the safety of his local community. It is an honour to serve in the New South Wales Government under the leadership of Premier Mike Baird and to serve as the first female Attorney General in New South Wales. I take this time to acknowledge the contributions of Attorneys General who have gone before me, including the Hon. Brad Hazzard. I am acutely aware of the responsibilities that come with this role in this House.

Our justice system belongs to the people of New South Wales. Our justice system must keep our communities safe and it should inspire their confidence. It will do that if justice is fair and accessible to all members of the community, if it is tough on offenders and if it supports victims, particularly our vulnerable victims such as children and young people, and if it maintains the independence of our judiciary. More than that, the system of justice in New South Wales has to meet the community's expectation of what is right and wrong. It is more than just laws; it is more than just precedent. At the forefront of this Government's agenda is keeping our communities safe. Our community members must be safe, wherever they are—in their communities or in their homes. They deserve to have safe and secure places in which to live their lives with their families.

As the Deputy Premier said earlier, today I will bring to this House a bill with a new law which, with the support of the Opposition, will see tough new child sexual abuse laws come into place to better protect our children and our young people. I feel very strongly about this. In my former role as Minister for Family and Community Services I have seen the suffering, the intergenerational violence and abuse that can be brought about by child sexual abuse. In addition to these tough new laws, we will do some very practical things. The Deputy Premier mentioned those earlier today. We will pilot specialist judges who will deal with child sexual abuse cases before the courts. Also, we will provide children's champions. Why is this important? It is about having someone to hold the hands of the most vulnerable victims as they go through the processes of the court system.

Further, we will make better use of pre-recorded evidence. We will ensure that children do not have to give evidence under cross-examination, that they do not have to face the compounded difficulty that that brings to the most vulnerable of victims, so that they do not have to give that story time and time again and re-live their suffering. We will also make sure that the new bail laws do what our community expects. At the beginning of this year we brought in changes that put the safety of the community at the front and centre of bail decisions. Earlier today in Question Time the Premier said that we are also cracking down on ice dealers, who profit from the misery of others, by halving the threshold required to charge dealers with the supply of ice. That is appropriate.

Again, in my former role as Minister for Family and Community Services, I saw the misery that dealing in drugs put front and centre on social housing communities across New South Wales. That is just not appropriate. Among the many practical things that we will do is ensure that our local communities have at their disposal the opportunity to make their own communities safe through a \$10 million Community Safety Fund. A key part of our justice system is making sure the victims of crime are supported with care, compassion and respect. As announced during the election, we will help those people who were in the transition between the old and the new victim support schemes. As the new Attorney General, I will look to make our communities safer and to inspire their confidence in our justice system.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Ms JODI McKAY: My question is directed to the Attorney General. Given recent reports that the NSW Ombudsman is considering referring a deputy commissioner of the Police Force to the Director of Public Prosecutions to face criminal charges, will the Attorney General guarantee that her office had no involvement in providing confidential information relating to this matter to a media outlet?

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: I thank the member for Strathfield for her question. The member gets to ask a question. I am happy to take that question on notice.

TRAIN GRAFFITI

Mr MARK TAYLOR: My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. How is the Government tackling the scourge of graffiti on New South Wales trains?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for Seven Hills for his question. I congratulate him on his inaugural speech, delivered last week. It was an absolute cracker. I know that the member will serve the Seven Hills community very well in this place for many years to come. Our transport system has the job of getting tens of thousands of people to and from work every day. Though the Government has outlined a number of very big ticket items to improve the transport network, its real focus since coming to office has been on customer service. The reason is that people want to feel safe on the network. One of the biggest barriers to feeling safe on the network is the scourge of graffiti. It is one of the biggest customer complaints that the Government receives. I am pleased to be able to outline to the House how we are hunting down these offenders who are destroying our public property.

Last week I was pleased to stand next to Howard Collins from Sydney Trains to reveal a year-long trial of a covert operation running across the train network. It is called mousetrap—because it sniffs out graffiti vandals in the act. This is groundbreaking new technology whereby chemical sensors on board a train can detect the vapours emitted by spray paint and permanent markers. The detection system works by triggering an alarm to Sydney Trains staff and activating an on-board closed-circuit television, which gives the Police Transit Command and Sydney Transport staff the ability to catch these vandals in real time. In some cases, the offenders have barely packed away the spray paint before they have been caught red handed. This on-board system is also proving an excellent intelligence-gathering tool, as we are able to find out where and when offenders are most likely to damage train carriages, and this helps future operations to stamp out this behaviour.

I think it is important to commend the work of the Police Transport Command, which is assisting Sydney Trains to catch these vandals. Overall, there are 610 officers who have made 7,500 arrests, laid more than 14,000 charges and issued 150,000 infringements across the network. We understand the realities of vandals—people who think tagging trains is fun, who do not really understand that it affects not only the customer experience but also taxpayers. It cost \$34 million to remove graffiti from our trains last year. That is money that I would rather spend on improving the journey experience. We have a simple message for these vandals: The trains are not a canvas, and we are going to catch you out. You will not know when, and you will not know where the police will pounce. The technology is completely portable, which means it is random, and we will expand the trials.

Of course, not just new trains will carry this technology; the older-style Tangara carriages, V sets and S sets are now also mousetrap ready. Since the trial has been up and running, we have had 76 live graffiti detections courtesy of this technology, 30 people have been arrested and more than 50 charges have been laid. This type of technology has been receiving ringing endorsement right across the network. There has been a lot of media commentary on it in the past week, with people like Chris Smith calling it ingenious, and many other media commentators saying it is an absolutely terrific move. This type of technology will catch up with those who are committing offences across our network. People should not have to enter trains at any time of the day and see tagging, spray paint and permanent markers causing close to \$34 million worth of damage across the State's rail network. We will continue to deploy this technology. It will catch up with them. I say to those who are committing these offences: It is time to stop.

MINISTER FOR WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I direct my question to the Deputy Premier, and Leader of The Nationals. What is the Government's response to community concern at the statement by the member for Barwon that the Government has "kicked everybody in Western New South Wales in the guts" by scrapping the portfolio of Minister for Western New South Wales?

Mr TROY GRANT: I think I thank the member for Canterbury for her question, but I am not sure. The decision to change the geographical ministries in the Fifty-fifth Parliament to dedicated parliamentary secretaries in the Fifty-sixth Parliament was a decision that the Premier and I took very seriously. We saw an opportunity for the Baird-Grant Government to dedicate those duties to people who could carry them out on a full-time basis rather than add them to a portfolio with an already heavy workload and associated responsibilities. Rather than having it as an add-on—

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Canterbury that she is on three calls to order.

Mr TROY GRANT: I will answer the question if the member for Canterbury allows me to do so. Rather than making it an add-on ministry we have changed the process to allocate dedicated parliamentary secretaries to geographic areas of New South Wales. We have also changed the way in which the work of the parliamentary secretaries will be carried out.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: They will be required to report to Cabinet on all issues across government affecting their respective geographic area.

The SPEAKER: Order! This is my final warning to the member for Canterbury, who is on three calls to order. I call the member for Blacktown to order for the first time. I call the member for Blacktown to order for the second time. The member for Blacktown will cease interjecting.

Mr TROY GRANT: We are very happy to have the Hon. Sarah Mitchell as the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional and Rural Health and Western New South Wales. She will do an outstanding job. We are very happy to have the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson as the Parliamentary Secretary for Southern New South Wales. She also will do an excellent job. We are very happy to have Mr Christopher Gulaptis as the Parliamentary Secretary for the North Coast.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: We are very happy to have Mr Scot MacDonald as the Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter and Central Coast. This is an opportunity for the Baird-Grant Government to give these regions—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has forgotten the member for Kiama. He will be desperately upset about that.

Mr TROY GRANT: I am trying to answer the question. We are very happy to have the member for South Coast as the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order is standing order 129, relevance. The member for South Coast is the Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira need not worry; the member for Kiama will not come anywhere near my electorate.

Mr TROY GRANT: I have every confidence that each member of those geographical areas will have a wonderful relationship with their parliamentary secretary and help them to get the work done. This begs the question, and those seated in the gallery may be interested in this: In the 16 years those opposite were in government how many geographic ministries did they have? The answer is none, zero.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira will desist from using unparliamentary language. If the member has a point of order he should say raise it.

Mr TROY GRANT: Here is another question for those opposite: How many Cabinet members in the 16 years they were in government came from regional New South Wales?

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order is standing order 129—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being completely relevant.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: He has actually been untruthful.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Minister is being completely relevant to the question.

Mr TROY GRANT: If they had some, they were not very effective. Those opposite did not do anything for 16 years. How many Cabinet Ministers did they have from the regions? Tony Kelly was one.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: Steve Whan was in Cabinet for a little while. My recollection is that he did a deal with Eddie Obeid to get into the ministry.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: On this side of the House we have nine regional members in Cabinet.

SOCIAL AND PUBLIC HOUSING

Dr GEOFF LEE: I address my question to the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing. How is the Government cracking down on antisocial behaviour in public housing?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I thank the member for his interest in social and public housing. I have had several requests from the member for Parramatta to visit his magnificent area to see what could be done for his community across a range of issues, including in Telopea. In the past year or so I have visited Telopea two or three times with the member for Parramatta. Telopea has many wonderful people in social housing who are trying their best. They offer us a lot, but we need to offer them more opportunity. One of the things people in public housing often tell us is that some in public housing do not value it.

Dr Geoff Lee: That is true.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: It is very true. Taxpayers' money goes towards supporting those whom we should support. The Baird Liberal-Nationals Government is very much driven by care and compassion for our fellow human beings in New South Wales. Not only are we endeavouring to get our economy booming so that we can deliver the necessary infrastructure and services but we also need to ensure that we do far better than the Labor Party. For many years social housing under Labor failed to get necessary maintenance—in fact, there was a \$300 million backlog when we came to government. On top of that, in many instances people in public housing did not feel safe. The former Labor Government failed to address the urgent needs of people in public housing.

Only last week at a function I was attending I was talking to a resident who has been in public housing for 20 years. She said, "Brad, I like living in public housing but I worry because there are drug deals going on and a lot of the issues happening in public housing are not being followed up." She told me that had been going on for years, but that in recent years she had seen some changes. The Government acknowledges there is still a lot more to do. Roughly one in 25 people in New South Wales now live in social housing and there is a waiting list of approximately 59,000—the waiting list is far better than it was under Labor. The Baird Government has been doing what it can and the standard is far better than it was.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Those opposite could not do a thing—I excuse the new members on the other side because I am sure they were all doing their best.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: A lot of those seated on the frontbench are literally lazing their way through their days now as they lazed their way through 16 years of government. They did not do what needed to be done.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: We are intent on ensuring that we have more public housing and that it is safer. It is not only about public housing but also about ensuring transition out of it. Public housing should be about supporting people to go to the next level, if possible. Both sides of Parliament recognise that there are many people in public housing who will need public housing for their lifetime. There are also people with a disability and mental health problems, whom the government of the day must support. Equally it is critical that people in public housing be supported by ensuring that those who cause their lives to be a misery do not get to stay in public housing. What we have said, quite simply, is that people will be on notice. I make this very clear—if someone is in public housing it is because they have a need but they should respect the fact that the homes in which they are living are a public asset. I make it clear to those people who are committing criminal acts, selling drugs or doing anything like that: Three strikes and they will be out of public housing. It is that simple.

In the first few weeks of this new Government I have been out talking to people in Western Sydney, Moree, Wagga Wagga and the Tweed. I have been listening to front-line Housing NSW officers. They have been telling me that they think we should have rental bonds. Community housing has rental bonds. Front-line officers say that rental bonds are necessary. Let me make it clear: Rental bonds are now well and truly on the radar of this Government. They will be done sensibly. They will be done on a paid basis so that people can pay them off. But there will be rental bonds, and tenants will lose them if they misbehave. Tenants will have money to help them move to permanent housing if they need it at the end of their term in public housing.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I am delighted that both sides of the House are screaming out for more information. I am always happy to provide further information, particularly when I am bringing good news about what the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is doing for public housing tenants. Let me just say—

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I just heard a classic leftie Labor interjection from a new member opposite—"What about the people?" If Labor had thought about the people when it was in government for 16 years the Government would not now have to be fixing up these problems. Let me make it very clear that this Government is determined to make sure that public housing in New South Wales is viable and safe. The concept of a bond was raised with me not only by front-line staff in Housing NSW but also by people who are currently tenants in public housing. Tenants in public housing feel that they have people living in public housing who do not value the asset they have. The Labor Party can make all the noise it wants, but it left a \$300 million deficit for maintenance. This Government is addressing that issue. We have had a 30 per cent increase in maintenance expenditure this year.

The Government is spending nearly half a billion dollars of taxpayers' money to maintain these properties—about \$10 million or \$12 million of that is due to straight-out vandalism and wanton destruction. The Baird Government and I will not put up with what previous Labor governments put up with in that regard. This Government will make sure that public housing tenants have a better experience in public housing in New South Wales. This Government will make sure that they have safe housing in New South Wales and it will make sure that they have more housing in New South Wales. The Labor Party did none of that.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: Earlier in question time the member for Strathfield asked me a question about media information. I provide the following additional information. The Director of Public Prosecutions [DPP] has the same functions as the Attorney General in relation to finding a bill of indictment, determining that no bill of indictment can be found in respect of an indictable offence, directing that no further proceedings be taken against a person who has been committed for trial or sentence and appealing the inadequacy of sentences. Under section 29 of the Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1986, if the DPP considers it desirable in the interests of justice that he should not exercise certain functions in relation to a particular case, he can request the Attorney General to exercise the Attorney General's corresponding functions. Any request made under section 29 of the Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1986 is given due consideration by the Attorney General with instructions to the Crown Solicitor to act where appropriate. I conduct myself with integrity and I reject any assertion of impropriety on my part in relation to any section 29 matters.

Question time concluded at 3.13 p.m.

PETITIONS

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

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**.

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**.

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**.

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**.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Law and Order

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [3.15 p.m.]: My motion deserves to be accorded priority because there are few roles more important for Government than that of ensuring the safety of its citizens. If a government cannot keep people safe it does not deserve to govern, and that is why members of the Liberal-Nationals are sitting on this side of the Chamber. Those opposite come from a party so concerned about law and order that its leader could not even see fit to mention it once in his 3,000-word campaign launch speech. My motion deserves priority because the people of New South Wales made it quite clear at the last election whom they trust to make our great State a better and safer place to live. The Baird-Grant Government is delivering more police and tougher sentences, and investing more in keeping criminals off our streets.

My motion deserves priority because this Government is delivering more police officers than ever before in the history of this State. This Government is equipping them with the capital resources they need to do their job. We should recognise the hard work of police officers across our State. They put their lives on the line to keep our State safe. We, as members of this place, should continue to offer them our support. The Liberal-Nationals Government has consistently delivered for the past four years in this area, and it will continue to do so for another four years.

My motion should be accorded priority because our police are achieving results. We are seeing operations such as Strike Force Raptor make our streets safer by taking firearms and organised criminals off our streets or out of our neighbourhoods. We have seen 16 out of 17 major offence categories trend downward or remain stable in recent crime statistics. We have seen crime hotspots such as Kings Cross become much safer through a combination of proactive policing and licensing restrictions.

My motion should be accorded priority because the New South Wales Government is today taking strong action against child sex offenders and delivering on its election promise to increase the maximum sentence for sexual intercourse with a child under 10 from 25 years in jail to life in jail. My motion should be accorded priority because no child deserves to be the victim of these crimes. We owe it to the victims and their families to deliver the maximum possible punishment for these vile and sickening individuals. This Government is serious about keeping our great State safe and is delivering on its promises. I commend my motion to the House.

TAFE Fees

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) [3.17 p.m.]: My motion deserves to be accorded priority because this has been a shocking year for people across New South Wales enrolling in TAFE. We have TAFE fees going through the roof, a TAFE computer system that still does not work and a junior Minister who showed us last week that he just does not care. All this comes at a time of double-digit youth unemployment—at a time when unemployment rates across regional New South Wales are hitting 9 per cent or 10 per cent, which the Government will not even acknowledge. This motion deserves priority. What kind of government sends TAFE fees skyrocketing and makes it harder for young people to train in the middle of a youth unemployment crisis? The Minister for Skills gave an embarrassing performance in the House last week. It was rambling. He was flailing. His colleagues on the backbench were all looking the other way. He did not know much about the computer problems, even though the Premier seemed to think they were fixed.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind Government members that during the last term of the Parliament an agreement was reached that no interjections would be made during the giving of reasons as to why a member's motion should be accorded priority. That agreement continues. Unless a member takes a point of order there should be no interjections.

Mr Ray Williams: Point of order: The member was making a personal attack.

The SPEAKER: Order! If a personal attack is made the member is entitled to make a personal explanation.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: He could not tell us how many students were still affected or by how much the cost of the Government's \$573 million computer system had blown out. On top of that, he had the gall to tell Parliament, "We make no apology about the fees." That is in *Hansard*. The Baird Government has cut

\$1.7 billion from education and training. It has sacked 1,100 TAFE teachers and support staff, cut TAFE courses, slashed class contact times and drastically increased student fees by up to thousands of dollars. Students and teachers contact me every day to tell me more and more stories about the decay.

These cuts are nothing less than a crime against our young people. It is all part of the Baird Government's Smart and Skilled—or Dumb and Dumber as they call it in TAFE—privatisation program. It is the result of a philosophy that views TAFE not as a human service but as a business. Under Smart and Skilled this year TAFE fees have increased significantly, with 40 per cent of students being slugged an extra \$500 to \$1,500 for their courses. For example, the cost of the Certificate III in Aged Care course at Ultimo TAFE has risen from \$419 to \$1,440. Labor proudly took a policy to the last election to invest \$100 million in TAFE and begin to reverse the fee hikes. After another four years of this Government we may barely have a TAFE system left. This motion should be accorded priority because it sticks up for TAFE, it does not destroy it.

Question—That the motion of the member for Oatley be accorded priority—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 47

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

Noes, 39

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

LAW AND ORDER

Motion Accorded Priority

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [3.29 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Supports the work of the New South Wales police who work relentlessly to keep our communities safe.
- (2) Notes the Government has delivered an additional 759 positions since 2011, with the authorised strength at a record high of 16,565 officers.

- (3) Notes the important legislation introduced into the House to increase the maximum sentence for child sex offenders, a key election commitment to protect the community.
- (4) Recognises that the people of New South Wales have endorsed the Government's plan to make New South Wales a safer place to live.

I am pleased that this House has voted to make this motion a priority. Law and order is of particular importance to all members of this House. It is one of the fundamental roles of our great Government.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Any member who wishes to have a private conversation should leave the Chamber.

Mr MARK COURE: The people of New South Wales have thoroughly endorsed the Baird-Grant Government's plan to make New South Wales a safe place in which to live. Our police officers work hard for the people of New South Wales and deliver positive results. Last month the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research [BOCSAR] released crime data for the past two years to December 2014. I am pleased to state that 16 of the 17 major offence categories either are trending downwards or are stable. The types of offences that are recording downward trends include robbery with a weapon, robbery a weapon that is not a firearm, breaking and entering in a dwelling, breaking and entering in a non-dwelling, and stealing from a person.

There are even better figures for my electorate. The most recent statistics state that the incidence of fraud has declined by 21 per cent in the Hurstville and Kogarah local government areas [LGAs]; that domestic violence-related assaults decreased; that rates of a theft from a person decreased; and that rates of malicious damage to property also decreased in the Hurstville area. Those statistics are a credit to the proactive work of our police officers as well as their efforts to investigate and prosecute crime across New South Wales. I state for the record my sincere appreciation of the efforts of my local area command's Commander David Donohue as well as the entire St George Local Area Command [LAC] for keeping constituents across the St George area safe and for working hard to combat crime. I have visited the Kogarah and Hurstville stations many times and can attest to the strong commitment and great work of officers in the St George LAC.

The Government has delivered even more police officers to combat crime over the past four years, with 759 additional police officers being deployed across the State since 2011. I know a number of members of this House whose communities have seen and enjoyed the benefits of additional local police officers. At the most recent graduation ceremony that was held on 1 May, there were 109 graduates. The Government has committed to boosting the authorised strength of the Police Force to 16,975 over this term of government. The Government is delivering more police, tougher sentences and investing more to keep criminals off our streets. The Government will continue to increase police numbers and provide the police with the powers they need to do their jobs well. The Government has invested \$177 million in capital works and on improving technology so that police officers do not need to return to a police station to file reports but instead can do that while they are out and about or on the road.

The Government is refurbishing police stations and has invested heavily in automatic numberplate recognition so that the police can catch criminals on the street. The Government has also established the Traffic and Highway Patrol Command across our State and provided additional vehicles. This Government is serious about strengthening our police and emergency services to keep our communities safe. This Government continues to deliver on its election promises. Today the Attorney General will introduce legislation to deliver on the Government's election commitment to increase the maximum sentence for child sex offenders. Under that legislation, anyone who is convicted of sexual intercourse with a child under 10 will be jailed for life. That is a crime that deserves the maximum possible punishment allowed by our justice system. This legislation will bring sentences into line with community expectations. The bill will better deliver justice for children and improve confidence in our justice system.

As part of the Government's election commitment, it will pilot the appointment of specialist judges to deal with child sex cases, introduce children's champions and support children through the court process. The Government will also allow cross-examination evidence to be prerecorded to keep child victims out of court. I am proud to be part of a government that is delivering on this crucial election commitment and that is beginning to deliver peace of mind to innocent victims of such sickening crimes. We want the victims and their families to know that they will never have to worry about their attackers being set free in their community again. The bill will achieve that aim.

Ms JODI MCKAY (Strathfield) [3.35 p.m.]: I was pleased that I received so much attention today.

Mr Brad Hazzard: We noticed that.

Ms JODI McKAY: I thank the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing. Keep it up!

Mr Brad Hazzard: I thought you were shy and retiring, but I discovered you are not.

Ms JODI McKAY: Not anymore. I learnt that while in Newcastle. I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Opposition in this debate. This is the first time I have been able to speak in this House as the shadow Minister for Justice and Police. It may be of interest to members to know that there has never previously been a female shadow Minister for Justice and Police. In fact, there has never been a female Minister for Police. I look forward to a time in four years, when Labor takes over government, when I hope we will have a female Minister for Police. The Opposition will not politicise the great work done by police officers in this State. In fact, Labor has not ever done that and will not do it. We understand the difficult job our police officers do and the risks they take, which is why Labor has always done its best to ensure that the police in this State are well resourced.

That is the reason, in the lead-up to the election, that Labor made a commitment of an additional 300 police officers, which would have boosted the NSW Police Force by 480 officers in our first term. We also committed to investing \$100 million in a police technology fund for the provision of improved technological tools for our police. We committed to a \$50 million secure stations fund to ensure that our police officers work in safe and secure facilities. Labor also has a \$17 million police wellbeing program and a \$10.7 million counterterrorism package. It is fair to say that both sides of politics value the work done by police officers in the State. The member for Oatley referred to a recent Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research [BOCSAR] report, which I will discuss briefly. It is important to acknowledge that while some areas of crime are trending downwards, Labor still has concerns about offences such as dealing and traffic in amphetamines, which has increased by 27.6 per cent; possession and/or use of amphetamines, which has increased 36.3 per cent; the possession and/or use of cannabis, which has increased by 16.7 per cent; and the possession and/or use of narcotics, which has increased 14.6 per cent. In addition to that, rates of domestic violence across the State have increased by 2.7 per cent over the past five years.

I note a range of reforms that will be introduced to combat domestic violence. Those reforms will change the manner in which police officers carry out their work in that area. I have met with three local area commanders to discuss it. I look forward to seeing the reforms achieving positive results. I add, for the benefit of new members of the House, that it certainly is worth getting in touch with local area commanders. It is one thing to talk in this House about the support we give them, but picking up the phone to understand the challenges in our electorates is certainly worthwhile.

I also mention in relation to the BOCSAR figures that regional areas, such as Moree Plains, Walgett, Tenterfield, Wellington, Dubbo, Coonamble and Kempsey, outpace significantly State crime rates in other areas, which means that police officers in rural and regional areas still find policing very difficult. That could relate largely to unemployment in those areas. In all respects, members of Parliament must provide people in those communities with genuine hope and economic opportunity. Having police on the beat is one thing, but making sure that we provide economic opportunity and hope for people in those communities is one of the best ways to reduce crime. We hope also that the Government does not forget regional New South Wales.

Another matter to which I shall refer relates to the comments made during question time by the Premier regarding a bipartisan approach in relation to the new police commissioner. It is pleasing that Police Commissioner Scipione will remain in his role for another two years. We note that there is extreme dysfunction within the senior ranks of the NSW Police Force, which has been played out in the media and in the upper House. I have written to the Minister for Justice and Police to say that we are seeking a bipartisan approach to this issue, as the Leader of the Opposition indicated in the lead-up to the election. Our offer stands and I certainly hope that we receive a positive response. There are two things that the Government needs to do urgently regarding Operation Prospect and the inquiry: release the terms of reference of the Tink inquiry because we still do not have them, and respond to the recommendations of the upper House inquiry. So far the Government has been silent on that issue.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [3.40 p.m.]: I support the motion and commend the member for Oatley for moving it. We support the work of the NSW Police Force across this great State of New South

Wales, particularly in regional areas. As the member for Tamworth, over the past five years I have seen a dramatic increase in the number of police on the beat. The Government will continue to strive to deliver those officers. Across commands, New South Wales police officers must be given the tools and resources they need to do their job, which is often dangerous and difficult. When officers pull on that blue uniform in the morning they do not know what they are going to encounter during the day. A 000 domestic violence call can turn into something serious. No-one knows what might happen. The late Senior Constable David Rixon, a highway patrol officer, was gunned down while making a routine car stop in the Tamworth electorate. He simply made a routine check and, sadly, he lost his life. We still support the Rixon family today.

The member for Strathfield spoke about NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research [BOCSAR] statistics. When crimes are reported a number of factors come into play. People are encouraged to report crime because we live in a different society from that of 10 or 20 years ago. If we see an empty backpack lying somewhere, we are obliged to report it as a suspicious object. If we drive past a house where the windows are covered in foil or blacked out, it automatically raises our suspicions. We need to report such things. On Saturday 30 May the Tamworth and Oxley local area commands, now under the control of Inspector Kylie Endemi, will celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Women in Policing. We pay our respects to the women in blue who do an outstanding job, particularly at the single-women stations in the Tamworth electorate. I pay tribute to them for their great work. I support the motion today and commend the member for Oatley for bringing it forward. I congratulate our women police on 100 years of policing, which will be celebrated on 30 May. Kylie and Debbie are doing a great job organising that event. I wish them the best.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [3.43 p.m.]: I refer to paragraph (3) of the motion accorded priority. I agree that the role of police in fighting child sexual assault is crucial. Police are confronted by intense and complex issues when dealing with the youngest victims of sexual assault in the State. Officers who deal with children in those circumstances must be supportive and provide children with a safe environment. They need to show compassion so that the young victims feel safe when reporting the crime. Sexual assault against children is unconscionable behaviour. It is disgusting and I am sure that everybody who hears of instances where a child has been sexually assaulted feels physically ill.

The statistics released by Bravehearts relating to the percentage of children who have been sexually assaulted and the breakdown of the age of victims are disturbing. Of all victims of child sexual assault, 24.6 per cent are aged nought to eight years and 36.6 per cent are aged nine to 12 years. So some 61 per cent of children who are victims of sexual assault are 12 years or younger, and 13- to 16-year-olds constitute the remaining 39 per cent. It was good to hear the Attorney General state during question time that victims of crime are treated with compassion in New South Wales. It is disturbing that a large number of calls made to the NSW Rape Crisis Centre relate to child sexual assaults. These are last-resort calls from children. Also disturbing is the fact that this Government has been closing women's refuges—places of safety run by women. The Government is failing victims who need a safe place by closing those refuges. We will examine the legislation and give it due consideration.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [3.46 p.m.], in reply: The Government is delivering more police, tougher sentences and investing more to keep criminals off our streets. We will continue to increase police numbers and provide the police with the powers they need to do their jobs properly. This is a Government that is serious about strengthening our police and emergency services, and keeping our community safe. I am proud to be part of a Government that is delivering on this crucial election commitment and beginning to deliver peace of mind to the innocent victims of these sickening crimes.

We want them and their families to know that they will never have to worry about their attackers being set free in our community again. The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Child Sex Offences) Bill 2015 will achieve that aim. I look forward to seeing the Attorney General's bill pass in this place and I am looking forward to seeing justice delivered for the victims of these sickening crimes. This is a Government that is delivering on its commitments by increasing police numbers and resources, lowering crime rates and protecting the most vulnerable. I commend the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Child Sex Offences) Bill 2015 to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Pursuant to sessional orders government business proceeded with.

CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CHILD SEX OFFENCES) BILL 2015**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Gabrielle Upton, read a first time and printed.****Second Reading****Ms GABRIELLE UPTON** (Vaucluse—Attorney General) [3.49 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Child Sex Offences) Bill 2015. Every parent knows that from the moment their child is born, all they want is for them to be happy, to be healthy and, above all, to be safe. As a community, we recognise that we must be ever vigilant to protect our children. That is why when we read or hear stories of child sexual assault, we are all sickened. Child sexual assault is a depraved, cruel and truly awful crime. I have heard the heartbreaking testimony at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. I have sat with those victims. It reinforces the importance of protecting our children from harm.

The community rightly expects that offenders will pay for what they have done, for what they have taken from their victims—their innocence, their future, their dreams. The sentence given to the offender must be just and it must be fair. It must balance the punishment, deterrence, and, where appropriate, balance factors of rehabilitation. However, the community has seen sentences that have not aligned with our sense of right and wrong, our sense of balance. We have seen sentences that have left us questioning whether justice has really been done. We have seen the balance tipped in favour of the offender, not the victim.

The bill delivers on a key election promise to introduce new laws to better protect and deliver justice for children. It will help bring sentences in line with community expectations. As a former Minister for Family and Community Services, I believe that we can and should do more to support our child victims. The reforms have been informed by the work of the Joint Select Committee on Sentencing of Child Sexual Assault Offences whose report, "Every Sentence Tells a Story", was tabled in October 2014. I take this opportunity to thank the committee and Deputy Premier Troy Grant for their diligent consideration of complex issues and the recommendations that have been made.

The committee was appointed by the Government in 2013 to inquire into and report on whether current sentencing options for perpetrators of child sexual assault remain effective and whether greater consistency in sentencing and improving public confidence in the judicial system could be achieved through alternative sentencing options. The joint select committee made a number of recommendations relating to child sexual assault offences and sentencing. Its recommendations cover a number of areas, including methods to improve transparency and consistency in sentencing, measures to better support victims of child sexual assault at trial and measures to improve the treatment and management of child sexual assault offenders.

The New South Wales Government is strongly committed to better protecting our children and delivering justice through appropriate punishments for those who commit child sexual assault offences and fully endorses the underlying objectives of the committee's recommendations. A number of recommendations were directed at increasing sentences for the most serial offending against our children. The bill implements key recommendations of the committee in this regard. They are: first, to impose a maximum penalty of life on a new consolidated offence of sexual intercourse with a child under 10; and, secondly, a recommendation to expand the standard non-parole period scheme to include a number of child sex offences.

The joint select committee noted the average length of sentences for offences under section 66A of the Crimes Act, which is sexual intercourse with a child under 10. While acknowledging the limitations of sentencing statistics, the committee was concerned about the length of sentences for offences under section 66A being below the standard non-parole period for those offences. Whether committed in circumstances of aggravation or not, this offence, by its very nature, is exceptionally serious. The devastating and lifelong impact of an offence committed under this section should carry the harshest potential penalty available—that is, life imprisonment.

The committee's consideration of sentencing principles and practices was performed by the comprehensive work of the NSW Sentencing Council on the standard non-parole period scheme. The scheme provides guidance and structure to judicial sentencing discretion. It currently applies to a relatively small

number of serious offences, including four child sexual assault offences. Analysis of the scheme undertaken by the Judicial Commission of New South Wales in 2010 has shown that it has resulted in increases in sentencing levels for scheme offences, especially those offences involving sexual violence.

In September 2013 the former Attorney General, who sits beside me, asked the council to review aspects of the scheme, including what further offences should be included and the standard non-parole periods of those offences. In light of the establishment of the Joint Select Committee on Sentencing of Child Sexual Assault Offenders, the Attorney General asked the council to give immediate consideration to standard non-parole periods for child sexual assault offences and to report urgently on those that should be included in the scheme. Following extensive consultation with stakeholders and the community, the council recommended a number of child sexual offences for inclusion in the scheme. The standard non-parole period reports were provided to the committee and recommendation 8 of the committee's report endorsed the council's recommendation. The bill implements that recommendation and expands the scheme to include those offences.

The council determined that each offence is appropriate for the scheme because it has a high to very high maximum penalty. Its victims are children who are particularly vulnerable and for whom there is a special risk of serious, ongoing harm. At the heart of the council's and the joint select committee's recommendations about the scheme and this Government's response to them is a recognition of the particularly awful nature of sexual assault offences against children and the need for sentences to reflect the seriousness of this abuse. The council also identified the level of standard non-parole period for each of the additional sentences based on a fixed portion of 37.5 per cent of the maximum penalty for each offence, adjusted accordingly to the relevant consideration such as a special need for deterrence and the potential vulnerability of victims.

A number of other key recommendations of the committee will be implemented by two high-level working groups. A sexual offences task force will oversee a pilot program for specialist procedures to reduce re-traumatisation of child witnesses in sexual assault proceedings and will advise the Government on additional best practices for child sexual assault trials. A second task force will examine options for anti-libidinal medication treatment for child sexual offenders. In addition to those task forces, the Department of Justice will undertake a review of the sexual offences in the Crimes Act 1900. This review may result in revised offences. However, today's amendments are important and they have been advanced early, representing the commitment by the New South Wales Government to the electorate.

There is no reason to delay, and I turn now to the details of the bill. Schedule 1 amends the Crimes Act 1900. Schedule 1 [1] inserts a new basic offence, which will carry a maximum penalty of imprisonment for life. It removes the distinction between the basic offence and the aggravated offence. Any person alleged to have sexually assaulted a child under 10 will be liable to be charged with this offence, regardless of whether a circumstance of aggravation is found to exist. Should aggravating circumstances exist, the consolidation of the offences does not affect the discretion of a sentencing court to consider them when imposing a sentence in individual cases. The existing aggravated factors can and will continue to be taken into account on sentence for this new offence, should they be found to be present.

Under section 21 of the Crimes Sentencing Procedure Act 1999, where an offence is punishable by life imprisonment, a court may nevertheless impose a sentence of imprisonment for a specified term. A standard non-parole period for the consolidated offence of 15 years is set out under division 1A of part 4 of that Act. This is the current standard non-parole period for simple and aggravated offences, and is retained for the new offence. New section 66A (2) provides that if a person is sentenced to life imprisonment under this section they then are to serve the sentence for the term of the person's natural life. Schedule 1, items [2], [3], [4] and [5] make consequential amendments. Schedule 1 [6] is a savings and transitional provision that makes clear that the amendments apply only to offences committed after the commencement of the amendments. Schedule 2 amends the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999.

The table to division 1A of part 4 of that Act sets standard non-parole periods for a number of offences. Item [2] of schedule 2 amends the table to introduce standard non-parole periods for 13 child sex offences under the Crimes Act 1900. Schedule 2 [1] makes an amendment that is consequential on the amendment made by schedule 1 [1]. Schedule 2 [3] is a savings and transitional provision that provides that the amendments apply only to offences committed after the commencement of the amendments. In closing, the bill reflects the New South Wales Government's deeply held belief that the most vulnerable members of the community—our children and young people—deserve to live life free from abuse. This bill will help achieve that. It will help to better protect and deliver justice for our children and young people. I commend the bill to the House.

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

PESTICIDES AMENDMENT BILL 2015**Second Reading****Debate resumed from 6 May 2015.**

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) [4.01 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Pesticides Amendment Bill 2015. We will not oppose the bill. The licensing of aerial pesticide applicators and urban pest management technicians and fumigators has been managed separately by the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] and WorkCover NSW, creating an unnecessary administrative burden and division where division should not have existed. Under this bill, the EPA will become the licensor for both areas of pesticide management, and this will allow for a more efficient management of licences, with "certificates of competency", as it relates to pest management technicians and fumigators, replaced by the term "licence". We support this approach.

I can also confirm that the Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association [AEPMA], which is the peak body for the pest management industry in Australia, supports moving licensing from WorkCover NSW to the EPA. The pest management industry, I am advised, is a significant industry, with around \$1.5 billion in turnover each year. I am also advised that 75 per cent of this work is undertaken by AEPMA members. While the industry may be well used to separate terms of "certificates of competency" and "licence", the change proposed in this bill will certainly make it easier for the community to understand how the industry is regulated and provide for the start of a standardised national approach.

It is noted that there may be future changes to training and licensing as part of a national review process, but this bill ensures current licensed pest technicians and fumigators will not be inconvenienced in the changeover. Under this legislation, aerial applicators will no longer have a licence of infinite duration; they will require licence renewal every five years. This is in line with community expectations. In line with this approach, the EPA will also keep a register of all licensees that provide pesticide services. We are pleased that this register will be made available to the public. Of course, there is no mention in the bill how this change will affect the EPA, and it is presumed the authority will not receive further resources to undertake this work. The Government has given no indication of whether this change will impact on the current workload of the authority.

The bill also allows for enforceable undertakings, where the EPA will be able to act more readily on breaches of the Act and look to immediate action outside the usual legal framework that can take time when time is of the essence. While this is supported, it remains to be seen whether the breaches will in fact be dealt with quickly and appropriately. We only hope this is the case, and that is why we believe giving the EPA the ability to enter into an agreement with the company or person responsible for the breach is a step in the right direction. However, again I come back to the resourcing of the EPA. As we saw with the Orica chemical leak in 2014, the EPA response has not always been appropriate, or indeed has been done in haste. With this legislation, it is hoped that incidents involving pesticides will be responded to in line with community expectations—that is, promptly and with transparency.

The bill will also provide greater protection for landowners, ensuring that the definition of "damage" to property from pesticide use is clarified. In explaining this section of the Act, the EPA uses the example of spray drift, which may prevent the use of the affected land for grazing for a period. The Act seeks to clear up any confusion over the interpretation of "damage". The changes to the Act appear to be good news for farmers and it is hoped will better protect the productive value of agricultural land. Again, however, this comes back to the ability of the EPA to respond to instances of pesticide misuse. It comes back to the capacity and resourcing of the authority.

It is also good to see companion animals protected by this bill. While the offence will not apply when pesticide users can establish that they acted with due diligence, the amendments are intended to give better protection from pesticide use to companion animals on residential properties. The Act sets the maximum penalty for a corporation at \$120,000 and \$60,000 for an individual. I note that the amendments proposed by this bill are part of a wider review of the regulatory framework to ensure the proper usage, storage and disposal of chemicals in New South Wales. The Government has foreshadowed changes to the Environmentally Hazardous Chemicals Act 1985 in the term of this Parliament. We hope the Government will actively consult with industry and the community on those changes. I confirm that the Opposition will support this bill.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) [4.06 p.m.]: I speak in support of the Pesticides Amendment Bill 2015. Although the Holsworthy electorate has few farms, pesticide use is an important topic that deserves

appropriate regulatory foundations. So today I speak in support of these amendments to the way that pesticide use is monitored and protected across the State. The bill will provide an improved single point for managing and licensing pesticide users consistent with agreed national harmonisation reforms. It will also improve protections for property occupiers from pesticide misuse, and improve the currency and administration of the Act. As I mentioned, the most significant change in this bill is the replacement of WorkCover by the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] as the New South Wales licensing authority for pest management technicians and fumigators.

With 4,200 active licences currently issued, it is important that the Environment Protection Authority is equipped to quickly and effectively remedy or restrain breaches of the Pesticides Act. This has been achieved by entering into an agreement with the person or company responsible for the breach. This will mean that we can avoid costly and unnecessary legal proceedings as well as take action that will benefit the community. The bill also requires the EPA to keep a public register of all licensees that provide pesticide services. The register will be similar to the ones managed by the Office of Fair Trading for licensed building trades. They will no longer be required to publish newly issued aerial licences in the New South Wales *Government Gazette*. The amendments in the bill will allow courts to make orders in relation to any non-compliance with the terms of an enforceable undertaking. I was pleased to learn that this particular amendment is an Australian invention, and demonstrates the Government's commitment to ensuring that the independent environmental regulator has a suite of regulatory tools at its disposal to achieve fit-for-purpose results.

The appropriate management of pesticides is part of the wider regulatory framework to ensure the proper usage, storage and disposal of chemicals in New South Wales. This bill is the first part of the series of reforms by this Government to update and strengthen the ability of the EPA to oversee chemical use, and prevent adverse impacts on human health and the environment. The Government has acted to make environmental fines the toughest in Australia and continues to increase court-imposed penalties where they have fallen out of step with community expectations.

We all recognise the invaluable service working dogs provide to farmers and the important role that companion animals play in many people's lives. In fact, more than 1.8 million companion animals live in homes in this State. It is well known that one of the dangers associated with the use of pesticides is the potential harm it can cause to plants and animals exposed to the chemicals. In response, the Pesticides Act makes it an offence to cause harm to non-target plants or animals, but an exception applies where the harm occurs on a person's own farm or place of residence. This recognises that in most cases it is not appropriate to take action against a landholder's pesticide use on his or her own land.

Operational experience in administering the Pesticides Act has shown that the exception provision can prevent enforcement action. This is particularly true when another person deliberately or negligently poisons an occupier's companion animal on his or her own place of residence or farm. I am pleased to see that the amendment in the bill will address this anomaly. However, the amendment will apply only to a property owner or occupier's own companion animals or those on the property with his or her consent, and the poisoning must be deliberate or negligent. As the Minister for the Environment said in his second reading speech, this amendment will come into effect later in 2015 to give sufficient time for the changes to be communicated properly and for people to become familiar with the changes. This will ensure that the New South Wales Government's policy of transparency is maintained and adequate community consultation is undertaken.

Several other amendments contained in the bill will improve protections for property owners and occupiers from another person's wilful or negligent pesticide misuse. The first of these changes will improve existing protection for agricultural landholders. In addition to protecting human health and the environment with regard to ecologically sustainable development, protection of property and trade from pesticide misuse is a key object of the Pesticides Act. The bill makes it clear that this includes pesticide misuse that results in pesticides being deposited on another person's property and in doing so prevents its current productive use. More importantly, the amendments will provide improved protection of the livelihood of those men and women who work the land and are the backbone of rural and regional New South Wales. It recognises that in most cases it is not appropriate to take action for the landowner's pesticide use on his or her own land.

In a time where food security is a real priority, the bill strengthens existing protections and clarifies sections to confirm that the grower or supplier can be required to undertake laboratory analysis. Where alleged pesticide misuse is reported or discovered the legislation will now ensure that those doing the wrong thing are held accountable. One of the minor amendments is the removal of references to the now defunct Pesticides Implementation Committee, which was set up when the Pesticides Act was initially introduced. Its role was to

oversee the Act's implementation and the rollout of consequent regulation changes covering record keeping, mandatory training and notification of pesticide use. The committee consisted of a cross-section of representatives from industry, non-government organisations and State agencies.

The committee finished its work in 2004, and tabled its final report in Parliament in 2005. As the committee has not been active since that time, it makes sense to remove all mention of it in this legislation. Links to national agricultural and veterinary chemicals legislation regarding definitions and notices issued by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority will also be updated. These amendments also allow for future changes to regulations that would allow automatic cross-border recognitions of licences. This will help to simplify breaches made across State borders and, in turn, promote a collaborative approach in relation to the use of pesticides as set out in the Act.

The Pesticides Amendment Bill is another step in this Government's steady, incremental approach to reforms. That approach has now turned to the specialised legislation that the EPA uses to manage and prevent adverse impacts from chemical use on human health and the environment. The Pesticides Amendment Bill 2015 consolidates licensing of pesticide use at a single point with the EPA, allows implementation of agreed national harmonisation reforms, and usefully improves protections for landholders from pesticide misuse by others. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [4.14 p.m.]: On behalf of The Greens I make a brief contribution to debate on the Pesticides Amendment Bill 2015. I draw the attention of the House to the response I gave on 22 October 2014 when the bill was first introduced. The issues I raised on that occasion remain in my support for this bill, but we have a question that needs to be clarified. I acknowledge the commitment by the Minister to the modernisation of the Environmentally Hazardous Chemicals Act 1985. Indeed, a lot of work needs to be done to modernise and improve that Act. I am encouraged that in his second reading speech the Minister identified that as an issue that the Government would address. That is a very important step, but I place on record a question—and the Minister's office is aware of this question—to be responded to either in this or the other place at a later date: Will the new provisions in schedule 1.3, section 7 (1A) and section 10 (1A), related to damage to property resulting from pesticide use, ensure that damage to a farm's accreditation status by pesticide use could be prosecuted as an offence under these sections?

For example, if a farm is certified organic and the use of pesticides on a neighbouring property means that certification is revoked, whether temporarily or permanently, and organic farmers can no longer continue to sell into the market they previously relied upon, will this count as damage to agricultural operations that could therefore be prosecuted by the Environment Protection Authority? I thank the Minister's office and the department for their work on this very important legislation. I look forward to addressing the way in which we manage environmentally hazardous chemicals, in particular developing mechanisms for the regulation of chemicals of environmental concern throughout their life cycle. I look forward to the Minister's response.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [4.17 p.m.]: I make a contribution to debate in support of the Pesticides Amendment Bill 2015. I acknowledge that the member for Cronulla, who will be joining us shortly in the Chamber, is doing an outstanding job as a new Minister in the Baird Government. He will do an outstanding job as the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning. This bill will allow the licencing of urban pest management technicians and fumigators to be transferred from WorkCover to the NSW Environment Protection Authority [EPA]. Detailed provisions underpinning the transfer will be specified in parallel regulation amendments.

On 12 November 2014 this bill was introduced to the last Parliament. My colleague the member for Tweed, Mr Geoff Provest, who is seated behind me, made some excellent points in his contribution to the second reading debate at that time—for the benefit of those in the gallery that is not unusual—and those points remain equally relevant today. I note that the Hon. George Souris is seated in the gallery. He was an outstanding member of Parliament who made a great contribution to the former Government. I welcome him back. I return to the bill. What were some of the points made by the member for Tweed?

Pest controllers provide essential services from which we all benefit. Their work protects private, public and commercial buildings from structural damage associated with termite infestations. They help maintain public health by preventing outbreaks of disease through the control of rodent and insect populations. Fumigators provide important quarantine and food security services that help maintain the strong national and international trade reputation of New South Wales. Licensing provides a simple means for customers to know there is a strong system that ensures a pest controller has the required training to use pesticides safely in and around peoples' homes and workplaces, and that ensures accountability should any concerns arise.

The Environment Protection Authority [EPA] advises that the transfer of the licensing function to the agency continues to be supported by the industry's peak representative body: the Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association. It seems that the association recognises that this Government has ensured that the EPA is well placed to take on this role. It was a Liberal-Nationals Government that first established the EPA. It was the Liberal-Nationals Government that in 2012 re-established the EPA as a powerful stand-alone regulator after years of being run down by previous Labor governments. Returning members of this House would be aware that in the last Parliament the Liberal-Nationals Government implemented a series of legislative and regulatory reforms to the EPA's core legislation. This improved protection for the community against the impacts of environmental offences and, most recently, has provided for some of the toughest penalties in the country.

The stronger, better-resourced EPA is responsible for administering the New South Wales Pesticides Act, which applies to all pesticide users in New South Wales. The EPA already licenses aerial applicators of pesticides under the Act. The Act's regulation already stipulates requirements for pest controllers to keep records of their pesticide use and to provide notification of pest treatments in certain situations. There is a clear need to consolidate licensing of pest controllers with the EPA. It will simplify compliance for this industry sector, which is substantially made up of small businesses. As we know, small businesses are essential to the New South Wales economy, making up 96 per cent of all businesses in the State and employing about 50 per cent of the New South Wales workforce. The re-elected Baird-Grant Government has committed to growing employment by 150,000 jobs this term, and its measures to support small business are key to meeting this target.

Last year the Liberal-Nationals Government enacted the Mutual Recognition (Automatic Licensed Occupations Recognition) Act 2014, which cuts red tape surrounding building and related trades. The Act provides for automatic recognition of interstate licences in certain regulated occupations, cutting red tape and making life easier for tradespeople working across State and Territory borders and the communities they serve. Achieving a similar outcome for licenced pesticide users is one of the objectives of the national harmonisation agreement on controls of pesticide use that covers these occupations. The Pesticides Amendment Bill will ultimately allow for the regulations to establish cross-border automatic recognition for licensees once terms are agreed by all jurisdictions. This is a welcome bill that implements national reform commitments that New South Wales has agreed to and will deliver common-sense improvements that benefit both small business and consumers. Coming as it does from the "Minister for Common Sense", who has just joined us, I commend this wonderful bill to the House.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [4.23 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members for Holsworthy, Strathfield, Balmain and Camden for their contributions to debate on the Pesticides Amendment Bill 2015. On 10 September 2014 when speaking in this House on the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 the then Minister for the Environment noted the bill's place in the Government's successful delivery of a program of reforms designed to bring environmental law into the twenty-first century and to reinvigorate the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] as a strong, independent regulator with the full range of tools at its disposal.

To date, stand-out milestones in this program include: re-establishing the EPA as an independent regulator; introducing stronger laws to better manage environmental incidents—such as the release of a hazardous chemical by Orica in Newcastle—by ensuring that pollution incidents involving material harm must be notified immediately; passing the Protection of the Environment Operations Amendment (Illegal Waste Disposal) Bill 2013, which cracks down on illegal waste dumpers and breaks the business model of illegal waste activities; and passing the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, which strengthened a broad suite of environmental penalties and gave the EPA the powers it needs to more effectively protect the environment.

The Pesticides Amendment Bill is another step in our steady, incremental approach to reforms, which has now turned to the specialised legislation the EPA uses to manage and to prevent adverse impacts of chemical use on human health and the environment. The Liberal-Nationals Government will continue this important work. This bill will make a number of common-sense changes to the Pesticides Act 1999. It will consolidate the licensing of pesticide use in a single point with the NSW Environment Protection Authority. It will allow the implementation of agreed national harmonisation reforms and usefully improve protections for landholders from pesticide misuse by others. The bill also makes a number of necessary amendments to update and to improve administrative provisions of the Act.

In her speech in this debate the member for Strathfield made an observation to the effect that no mention had been made of resources for the EPA to do the work involved in the transfer of pesticide licensing

from WorkCover. The licence fees currently collected by WorkCover will be retained by the EPA, therefore providing the resources for the transfer of this new function to the EPA. I reassure the member for Balmain, in response to some of his observations, that it has always been the Government's intention that the Pesticides Amendment Bill 2015 cover all agricultural operations, including organic certified farming. The Government is keen to protect the State's reputation as a supplier of clean agricultural produce. The amendments contained in the bill to the Pesticides Act 1999 are intended to apply where pesticides impact on neighbouring farms with recognised organic certification. I commend the bill to the House.

Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Mark Speakman agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council with a message seeking its concurrence in the bill.

Pursuant to resolution inaugural speeches proceeded with.

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Before calling the member for Upper Hunter, I welcome his wife, Zenda, and daughter, Lucy; the Mayor of Dungog Shire Council, Harold Johnston, and his wife, Elaine; the Mayor of Gloucester Shire Council, John Rosenbaum, and his wife, Diana; Councillor Bob Keown, from Singleton Shire Council; Councillor Lorna Driscoll, from Upper Hunter Shire Council; Councillor Tessa Capsanis, from Singleton Shire Council; friends, family and, last but not least, the Hon. George Souris, former member for Upper Hunter. I welcome him back to this place. I thought he may have given this place a wide berth. I congratulate the member for Upper Hunter on his election.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) [4.28 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Like others before me, I truly appreciate the great honour and privilege of being selected by the people of the Upper Hunter to represent them here, in Australia's oldest Parliament. To be given this opportunity is not something one should take for granted. In fact, this weight of responsibility and expectation is welcome from my perspective. For most of my life I have worked in the community. That began when I was very young. My father was a long-term member of the St John Ambulance. That volunteering work provided him with the opportunity to become the first trainer of the Penrith Panthers when they entered the New South Wales rugby league competition. He was to remain with the Panthers for their first 10 years or so. As a child who grew up loving and playing rugby league, and as one who went to just about every home and away game for all those years, I can tell you that there were some very dark days for the Panthers in the 1970s.

My lifelong friend, Michael Durda, unfortunately could not be here today, but I am pleased that his wonderful wife, Margaret, and youngest son, Jason, are in the gallery. Michael has given me a constant reminder of the match when Manly beat the Panthers 70 to seven at Penrith Park. I must be a glutton for punishment because I married a Manly supporter, and Zenda has spent the past 29 years reminding me of that match as well. I remind the Premier that he may well be the member for Manly, but it is time to get over it. The match was played in 1973, and Manly supporters need to get on with life.

During his time at the Panthers my father also volunteered with what was called the Central District Ambulance and is now the Ambulance Service of NSW. He worked with the ambulance driver, thus providing two officers in the vehicle in those days. His time was taken up with volunteering when he was not working as a boilermaker for the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board, now Sydney Water. Much of the pipeline network around Sydney was built by my father and his mates.

Having grown up in Western Sydney in a typical battler family scenario, many would have thought I should be sitting on the other side of the House. My father was a strong unionist and staunch Labor supporter.

But, to be honest, I always felt life in "the burbs" was missing something for me. It was not because of the people or the lifestyle and not for any particular reason that I understood until I became more independent and grew into adulthood. My maternal grandparents were dairy farmers. My memories of spending time with my grandparents on the farm and eventually moving away from home to be with them were just magical.

When I attended Patrician Brothers' College, Blacktown, in secondary school the careers adviser asked, "What sort of job would you like?" I said, "I want to be a dairy farmer." He was stumped. I was the only one of around 1,100 boys who wanted to be a dairy farmer. I told him, "You need do nothing for me. I know exactly where I am headed." Now I understand why I was happier in the country than I was in the city. Rural life was where I was truly at home. It is a lifestyle that many in the city dream of.

There are wide open spaces, gentle undulating hills, lazy times on the riverbank, picnics with cows and horses grazing around you with a gentle curiosity, milk on demand, fresh garden vegetables just waiting to be cut and eaten, perfectly clean eggs lying in a box of freshly cut straw lovingly laid by those quaint little hens. Then there are those pigs—those funny little pigs—just begging to be shared on a Sunday morning with those fresh eggs on a freshly baked loaf of bread that is steaming and soaking up all the butter you can spread, freshly made from that milk on demand. Daisy, the cute jersey cow, just stands in the lush green pastures awaiting your extraction abilities to fill that milk can, so calm and gentle, almost smiling at you with that look of adoration coming out of those gorgeous eyes.

For those who relate to my description, I have news for them: It is nothing but a dream. Rural life is hard work. It is endless days and nights of planting and harvesting. Daisy is not calm and gentle; she wants to kick you and empty herself upon you. The horses are skittish and the pigs, like the horses, will bite you and do everything they possibly can to make your life more difficult and save their own bacon, thanks very much. That is just at home. Your farming activities are literally in your own backyard. It is more than just a business, it is your lifestyle.

That conundrum between living the life of a farmer and running your enterprise as a business often provides difficulties most people in cities simply do not understand. Whether you live in the city or country, you have needs. Doctors, schools, groceries and clothes shopping—we all have the same needs. Getting to town to fulfil those needs is mostly more challenging and often more costly. You drive to town on a road that rattles your teeth, so you need to see the dentist more often too.

The recent storm and flood events that hit my electorate hard have highlighted the practical challenges of rural life, with the residents of Torryburn only last Friday having access to a pedestrian bridge and no longer being completely isolated. That was 17 days after their bridge was washed away. A local dairy farmer had been milking his cows and simply pouring the milk down the drain, kids had not been able to go to school and normal life had been completely turned upside down. That is part of living in the bush.

My ancestors, William and Elizabeth Bird, came to Australia from England in 1848. William Bird was a blacksmith who ran his own business in Kings Nympton in Devon, southern England. When they arrived in Morpeth they purchased the punt on the Hunter River and ran that business for a number of years. They had three children—all boys—aged 13, 11 and nine when they purchased, sight unseen, land in Wingham just outside my electorate. William and Elizabeth gave their boys a map, horses and some supplies, and sent them from Morpeth to Wingham to clear the land, build a home and begin farming that land.

Three years later William and Elizabeth sold the punt and made their way to Wingham where their boys had done exactly that—cleared the land and built a home and they had begun farming. Today none of us could imagine sending our three children on such a journey, expecting them to be the pioneers they became at such a young age without the love and guidance of their parents. I am sure that having come to Australia from England would only have added to their anxiety, yet helped build their resilience as individuals and strengthened their bond as brothers.

It is this same spirit that drives country people. They have the resilience and stoic determination to forge a life for themselves and their families whilst building a community where members support each other and create a common bond, a sense of belonging, a sense of worth, a sense of purpose—indeed, a lifestyle our city cousins often admire yet simply do not understand. This is what drives me to be here today. I believe in equity of infrastructure, equity in the provision of services and recognition of the contribution of rural and regional New South Wales to the wellbeing of all of us in this great State regardless of where we live and regardless of our chosen lifestyles.

Perhaps it is in my blood. Perhaps it was my upbringing. Perhaps it is simply a sense of fairness. I know it is all these things and more that cause me not to sit on the sideline and watch the game being played. I must be in the middle of the paddock to drive the pack and set up the moves to allow our team to score the winning points, and those points are for regional New South Wales. There is no doubt I am a Nat—a proud New South Wales Nationals member since 1990. I have seen our party become more professional, particularly under the guidance of the now Hon. Ben Franklin, MLC, who was elected to the Legislative Council in March. His predecessors also played a key role in the evolution of the New South Wales Nationals and its standing in regional New South Wales. The New South Wales Nationals have a long and proud history, and I am honoured to be playing my part in our great team—a team that reflects the diversity that is regional New South Wales.

The Upper Hunter electorate is diverse in its geography and demography. It covers more than 27,000 square kilometres with 303 towns, villages or localities. It has 27 different postcodes. When other members of this House say to me they find it hard to get around their electorate that covers maybe 10 or 20 or even a couple of hundred square kilometres, please do not be offended by my lack of empathy. Major towns like Quirindi are the centre for vast agricultural production on the famed Liverpool Plains. Scone is the horse capital of Australia. Muswellbrook and Singleton provide around 68 per cent of the coal extracted in New South Wales and, of course, the vast majority of the mining royalty revenue that pays for many of the services that we all take for granted.

Gloucester, a town that once had booming dairy and timber industries, now is looking to its future in mining and tourism whilst at the same time still having strong and viable dairy and beef industries. Dungog—more recently the town that has been in the news for all the sad reasons—is a haven for agriculture and lifestyle living. On 21 April, the day of the storms and floods, I was meeting with drought-ravaged farmers in Willow Tree. They were struggling to find enough money to feed not only their animals but also themselves. Ironically, putting food on the table for farmers can be difficult at times as well. The very nature of our diversity was highlighted that day. While I was meeting with those farmers, homes were being washed away and people died in Dungog, just a few hours drive away in the very same electorate.

Mother Nature has blessed the Upper Hunter electorate, from the famous Barrington Tops to the beautiful Liverpool Plains. The resource-rich Upper Hunter is well recognised for its ability to sustain not only the local economy but also the New South Wales and, indeed, national economies. We produce our fair share in Upper Hunter and I am determined to return our fair share. Like other electorates, there are issues that need to be dealt with. Recently in the electorate, I had the Premier, Mike Baird, and the Minister for Planning, Rob Stokes, listening to the mining and equine industries as well as, importantly, the people of the town of Bulga.

Land use conflicts are very real. Scattered around or amongst the coalmines are world-renowned horse studs and vineyards. The mining, agriculture, viticulture, tourism and equine industries are all extremely important to our electorate and, indeed, to the State of New South Wales. It pains me to see community division on the issue of land use conflicts. There is no need for it. We can and do live together, but it also points to a great need for reform in our planning system. We need a planning system that creates certainty and provides opportunity. This is one of my key goals—not just for the economic contributions but also for the social aspects of building the required infrastructure to attract further investment and the jobs that result. The further demand then for services such as hospitals and schools are all critical to our future and point directly to the State and Federal governments.

As a local member, I intend to be a loud voice for the Upper Hunter—to be the champion they expect and deserve. I relish this responsibility and, quite frankly, I am very excited about our future. I mentioned earlier that I have been a community volunteer most of my life. I have been a Nat since 1990. Throughout my life I have had a number of mentors. Politically, my predecessor the Hon. George Souris, who is here this afternoon, has been a constant source of advice—regardless of whether or not I asked for it! George knows what I am talking about. George is very willing to assist and guide me in the electorate with his local experiences and here in Sydney. You do not spend 27 years as a local member, Minister, shadow Minister and party leader without learning a thing or two. I am very fortunate to have access to such experience and wisdom from someone so willing to share.

There have been many political champions I have looked up to and continue to study. The Hon. Tim Fischer was one of the first to congratulate me and send me some tips and traps to ensure my transition into the role of a local member was as effective as it could be. Many past and present political figures have made themselves available to me and I am extremely grateful. Throughout life there are inspirational people who make a difference to one's thoughts and actions. Whether it is a speaker at a conference or a local volunteer who

flies under the radar, helping out those less fortunate, or the selfless acts of heroism, or the entrepreneurial abilities of small business people, or the pioneering spirit displayed in extraordinary feats most of us could only imagine, there is always a source of inspiration to draw from. And usually it is right in your own backyard.

Today there are many inspirational people here in the gallery, sharing this experience with me because they believe in me. They have assisted me and they have demonstrated a level of loyalty towards my wellbeing that only true family and friends can do. Within the New South Wales Nationals I have many friends and supporters. Our head office staff have been extremely supportive and helpful. In fact, I congratulate Nathan Quigley for his talent scout abilities when he recommended me as a candidate. Now he has taken the position of the State Director of the New South Wales Nationals after Ben Franklin's election to the Legislative Council. He no doubt knows a good thing when he sees it.

On 2 November 1985, I married my most loyal supporter and best friend, Zenda. We have made a life together and raised two beautiful children, Ben and Lucy. Ben and his partner, Sarah, now have two equally beautiful children, Willow and Ned. Zenda and Lucy are here in the gallery today, as are many of my friends who have shared the best and worst of times over many decades. In my business life as a financial planner—I am one of the good ones, of course!—I have had very loyal friends, staff and clients. Today, the staff and some clients who were able to make it did so: Kirstie Knapton, who was taking a photograph a minute ago, now works in my electorate office; Zoe Donaldson, who now effectively runs the business; and Pauline Perry, who has been paying my bills and keeping the books for over 15 years as well—you had better keep doing a good job, Pauline! All are here to share this occasion. They too have been part of my community activities and their loyalty is unswerving.

As you recognised earlier, Mr Assistant-Speaker, other community leaders are also in the gallery this afternoon. I thank both the Mayor of Dungog, Councillor Harold Johnston, and his wife, Elaine, and the Mayor of Gloucester, Councillor John Rosenbaum, and his wife, Diana, for taking the time out from their busy schedules to attend, along with councillors from the Singleton shire, Councillor Bob Keown and Councillor Tessa Capsanis, and from the Upper Hunter shire, Councillor Lorna Driscoll. I express particular gratitude to Campbell Walker, who is my campaign manager and all-round very decent and capable man. His wife, Emily, and his children, Beatrix, and my godson, Fingal, are extremely patient. I do thank them for that. I must also mention a very close mate, Dave Brown. I coached his son, Chris, in junior league—which is why it is so easy for Dave to coach him in senior league—and we have been mates ever since. We have seen some fantastic highs and lows together and have been there for each other. Dave is here today, sharing this moment with us.

Pamela deBoer, George Souris' electorate officer and that of his predecessor, Col Fisher, is also here today. Pam has been a strong advocate and supporter for many years. Pam worked for the Parliament for 40 years and recently retired. Suzanne Andrews, who is a former staff member for George Souris, has always been of great assistance, as has Jaqui Townsend, who has remained on my staff. There are too many party members and non-party supporters to individually mention; it would have taken up the 20 minutes. To all of our members and supporters who did all the little things that matter in a campaign, thank you. Other family members here today in the gallery are my sister, Sharon Veasey, and my niece, Elizabeth Veasey—who, I might add, volunteered on my campaign for the whole three months leading up to the election day and who I thank very much. There are family members who could not be here today because they have passed away.

If you look at my political curriculum vitae, you will know I ran for The Nationals in the 1996, 2010 and 2013 Federal elections. I did so because I believe in our region. While many people thought I was wasting my time, as it may have been unwinnable for The Nationals, I did not see it like that; nor did those close to me. My brother was one of those people. Alan died around 8.30 p.m. on the night before the 2010 Federal election. As you would imagine, as a candidate it was a little tough to face the next day, to smile, shake hands and retain the required confidence that a candidate needs to portray; but I did, and I know that Alan and my parents would have been extremely proud of where I stand today—as the first among a huge family tree to gain such office and to be elected to such a position of responsibility that is placed upon a member of Parliament. My maternal grandparents, the dairy farmers, also would have been extremely proud. I have family members here today from my maternal side—my Aunty Peggy and cousins, Lynsay and Kelly. Thank you for making the trip to Sydney.

In closing, I add that during my election campaign I had a simple message about who I am and what I stand for. I am someone who demonstrates common sense, integrity and accountability. My passion for the Upper Hunter is stronger than ever. My drive to deliver equity for our communities is in top gear. My message to everyone in my electorate is very simple: Regardless of whether or not you voted for me, work with me. I will not let you down.

The SPEAKER: I welcome the family, friends and supporters of the member for Terrigal to the gallery of the Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) [4.55 p.m.]: (Inaugural Speech): I speak today with the privilege of being the member for Terrigal. There is no greater honour than being elected to the New South Wales Parliament to represent the good people of this electorate. It has been an amazing journey for me, beginning on a Tuesday in May—almost 43 years ago this week—when my parents announced the arrival of a bouncing baby Liberal, to a preselection on Tuesday 9 December last year, being sworn in on Tuesday 5 May, and now today—another Tuesday—to deliver my inaugural speech.

I am only the second member to sit in this historic Chamber to represent the wonderful people of Terrigal and I acknowledge the tireless work of my predecessor, the Hon. Chris Hartcher, who had the greater honour of being the first member for Terrigal from 2007 to 2015 after the electorate was renamed from Gosford to Terrigal. During his tenure he worked tirelessly—especially following our return to government in the historic 2011 election—to ensure that the Central Coast received record levels of funding for infrastructure after decades of neglect by Labor governments. The Terrigal electorate does not have the lengthy history of many of the other electorates in this House of which we are privileged to be the custodians, but it is no less important.

I want to take members on a short journey north to the Central Coast and in particular to the Terrigal electorate. It begins at St Huberts Island in the south, extends as far north as Forrester's Beach and reaches west through the leafy rural suburbs of Holgate, Picketts Valley and Matcham. The Terrigal electorate is also lucky enough to include the stunningly beautiful beachside suburbs of Killcare, Macmasters Beach, Copacabana, Pretty Beach, Avoca, Terrigal and Wamberal.

We are indeed spoilt for choice in Terrigal but the common thread is the undeniable Australian attraction to water. As a former competitive swimmer in my early years I am pleased that I am rarely more than a short drive to one of our amazing waterways, as are all the residents of Terrigal. Our link to the water on the Central Coast is evident in the seven surf lifesaving clubs that exist in the Terrigal electorate. With a combined membership of more than 4,200, these outstanding voluntary institutions play a vital role as part of our local community across the region. Beginning with our nippers—encouraged from the age of five—to the most senior members of our community, they take part in competitions and all have the opportunity to enjoy the strong social aspect and family atmosphere of our surf clubs.

The importance of our region has been highlighted by the extensive commitments that we have delivered as a Government over the past four years. This includes the delivery of the much-needed upgrade to the Central Coast highway. This is just one of many of the major road projects that has benefitted directly from the \$460 million in funding that the Government has provided. This will continue with the bold plan for our region made during the lead-up to the recent election, which includes an additional \$400 million of funding to boost Central Coast roads. Our dedication will ensure that the Central Coast and Terrigal will be well placed to adapt to the predicted growth in our region of an additional 60,000 people by 2030, with our commitment to essential infrastructure projects playing a vital part in the prosperity and success of the Central Coast.

I acknowledge the enormous responsibility that comes with being the only representative of the Government on the Central Coast. At the same time, I make it clear to my neighbours in Wyong, The Entrance and especially Gosford that we have a plan to deliver for New South Wales, with over \$1 billion in investment for the Central Coast. Unlike the litany of broken promises of past Labor governments who took the coast for granted, we will not make the mistake of forgetting the Central Coast. This brings me to the loss of my colleague Chris Holstein, the member for Gosford, from this place by one of the smallest margins imaginable. Despite working tirelessly for the past four years for the people of Gosford, he has, without doubt, been a casualty of one of the most shamefully deceitful scare campaigns run by New South Wales Labor and its union masters.

Going back to that Tuesday in May 43 years ago, I have to acknowledge my wonderful parents, Jill and Wayne Crouch, who unfortunately could not be with me this evening. I must confess to my colleagues in this Chamber that I have something in common with the new member for Newtown, and that is that I am also from Adelaide. I can assure you that this is where the similarities end. Growing up as an only child, my parents always instilled in me to have the courage of my convictions and never to be afraid of my own choices. They have always been supportive of my decisions and have given me the necessary guidance when they believed it was required, only occasionally using the secret weapon that I think parents are given, which involved using the three words "We trust you". I cannot thank them enough for encouraging me to be the person that I am today.

I was lucky enough to spend my youth also growing up in a beachside suburb, which saw me become a nipper and a competitive swimmer. I have always had a love of the water, which is why I think I have such an affinity for the Central Coast. Like all kids growing up I had the odd challenge. Mine manifested in growing up with a plethora of teachers in my family, which includes my mum, my grandma, my grandfather, Mike, and two aunties. So you can imagine that family dinners were animated, to say the least, especially with my grandfather who was a staunch one-eyed Labor voter. With my fiercely independent conservative views, he always was my main target in these debates which, to the uninitiated, would look more like a full-blown domestic dispute. We all have bonds with our grandparents and mine was with my grandma. We were mates. During many of these heated debates, she would give me a smile that I came to recognise—that she had always secretly voted Liberal and my grandfather, Mike, never knew. She was my shining star.

The final straw for Mike came on 29 February 1984 when, in year 6 at primary school, we were asked to do a project on the person we most admired. Unlike many of my classmates in South Australia who chose the obligatory sporting heroes such as the Chappell brothers or the late great David Hookes, mine was slightly different. At that time I received a reply to my letter from No. 10 Downing Street. I was thrilled and Mike was apoplectic. Yes, the person I most admired at the ripe old age of 12 was Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. I am proud to say that I still have that letter to this day and it now adorns my electoral office in Erina. She was a politician of conviction and this was a trait that I also admired in President Reagan and, later, in our former Prime Minister John Howard. With John Howard I was privileged to see a politician who never gave in despite repeated defeat. His dogged determination and tenacity as an underdog became an added inspiration for me in my future endeavours.

My parents made the enormous sacrifice required to send me to Pulteney Grammar School, one of the oldest schools in Adelaide, where my father attended and his father before him. At the time, like most teenagers, I did not fully appreciate what that provided me with. It laid the groundwork for my future when I became a vice house captain and captain of the swimming team. This gave me the basis of a leadership role and, at the same time, provided me with the ability to represent others, which I now relish. It was interesting to discover that in the school's 168-year history I am the first student from Pulteney to be elected to the New South Wales Parliament, an achievement of which I am particularly proud.

This brings me to the short journey that was my whirlwind campaign that officially began on Tuesday 9 December after a hard-fought preselection. It now sees me standing here on another Tuesday five months later. It is still hard to believe that this time has gone so quickly. There I was, the new guy, with no brand recognition, replacing a former member with almost 27 years of local history who everyone knew, and a Labor candidate who had the benefit of a 12-month head start. I was under no illusion, unlike others, that I had the fight of my life ahead to ensure that Terrigal did not become the victim of the onslaught of a well-funded scare campaign. I took the 2007 State election results as my benchmark and set a strategy from which we did not waiver. We immediately initiated the most amazing little campaign team that any candidate could wish for.

At this time I would like to acknowledge the brilliant team of people led by my campaign manager, John Barton. I took the step of asking John, who had never before run a campaign, to take on the manager's role because I wanted someone with no preconceptions and who was willing to think outside the square, and not be afraid to ask why something was being done a certain way and whether we could do it better. As I was to realise, a campaign manager very quickly becomes an integral part of a candidate's life, often being the voice of reason, especially as the final days drew to a close. My mornings now seem a little empty at 8.30 a.m. without my daily briefing and reality check from John, which always ended with the words, "Go well today."

In addition to John's unwavering support, the team had all worked on local government, State and Federal election campaigns and brought significant insight to particular areas, with the effervescent Jim Gorman arranging a constant supply of willing volunteers; Kathy Minassian working on my social media, events and the ever important street stalls; Debra Wales coordinating my local media and strategy; Councillor Jeff Strickson helping with letterboxing and signage, which became an enormous part of the campaign; the enthusiastic Taylor Gramoski organising the eager Young Liberals; and Chris Wicks looking after our information and technology [IT]. Last, but not least, the most important person in the final four weeks of my election campaign was Mick Waddell, the best electioneer and coordinator on the Central Coast. If Mick was happy I knew that all was well.

My fate and that of Terrigal was in excellent hands with my dream team. We had a job to do and we were unwavering in our commitment, dedication and single-minded focus on the task at hand. With the little time we had, we undertook a grassroots campaign, getting back to the tried and trusted street stalls and

doorknocking. These were held at beachside suburbs in addition to the successful and engaging street stall that was held twice a week at the front of Dan Murphy's at Erina. This is now colloquially known as Dr Dan's due to it supplying pain relief for my many volunteers after having to listen to the odd—thankfully not too many—Electrical Trades Union members.

In addition to these extremely effective weekly functions, we ensured that those who lived in Terrigal and commuted from Gosford and Woy Woy stations were never overlooked. Many pre-dawn sessions were undertaken on railway stations and I must acknowledge the tireless and dedicated assistance of some of our Young Liberals: Jack Wilson, Jessie Gale, Andrew Clark, Andrew Stephen, Anna Xena from Victoria, Taylor Martin and Taylor Gramoski, all of whom made themselves available. I ensured post-election that the supportive early morning commuters at the train stations were thanked the following week leading up to Easter by handing out well over 1,000 Easter eggs, which were gratefully accepted.

At this point I have to say more about our Young Liberals. This truly amazing team of young people have my heartfelt thanks. Not only were they willing to get up before dawn to man train stations with me but also they assisted with mobile street stalls, sign-waving, letterboxing and doorknocking. Without their invaluable and enthusiastic assistance, the result may have been very different. We should be so proud of this outstanding team. I benefitted directly from two visits from the Young Liberals Flying Squad, very effectively led by Dean Shachar and Josh Crawford. However, they twigged after the first visit when I slipped them copious amounts of fish and chips at Terrigal Beach that their youth was being exploited. Lunch was followed by letterboxing and doorknocking in two of the hilliest suburbs of Terrigal—Copacabana and Macmasters Beach but they remained undaunted by the challenges. With inspirational young people like those, our party and indeed our future are in very safe hands.

I was also privileged to receive a number of visits and commitments from Ministers and members from both Houses. I take this opportunity to thank all those members personally: Matthew Mason Cox, Jai Rowell, Rob Stokes, Ray Williams, Troy Grant, Adrian Piccoli, Anthony Roberts, Stuart Ayers, Dominic Perrottet, Duncan Gay, Gladys Berejiklian, Andrew Constance, Jillian Skinner, Natasha Maclaren-Jones and last, but certainly not least, Premier Mike Baird. Those visits were varied and wideranging, from roads to recycling machines, from boat ramp upgrades to new digital radios for our surf clubs, and well received multimillion dollar upgrades to our local schools, plus \$12 million to kick off a new performing arts centre on the waterfront at Gosford City.

At different ends of the funding commitments are two projects that are close to my heart for very different reasons. The first is \$1 million to be allocated to Empire Bay Drive and the Scenic Road roundabout in Kincumber. This announcement was welcomed by the community because once completed it will ease the traffic congestion at this well-used intersection. Many may think this is a small project for the area in contrast to the hundreds of millions of dollars committed for Central Coast roads but it became a key local issue for Terrigal in the State election. The particular intersection is a major congestion point and, as part of my strategy to improve connectivity between suburbs, this Government will deliver the through lane required. The result will be that hundreds of commuters, many being parents taking their kids to school or just simply trying to make their way to work, will no longer find themselves stuck in seemingly endless queues of traffic.

So tackle it I did, and after an extremely enthusiastic visit from Ray Williams, which I have now discovered is the norm with Ray, and representation from Minister Duncan Gay's office, my little roundabout very quickly gained the attention and funding it required. So I had gone from fighting for something to being able to deliver the solution almost immediately, which has become the cornerstone of the Liberal Government in New South Wales and what it stands for. The irony in all of this is that my opponent actually lives on Scenic Drive and will benefit from our solution. So never one to let an opportunity get away, I would happily remind him that, while he could not fix the problem just around the corner, we were getting on with the job and would deliver yet again.

At the other end of the scale is the \$368 million that has been allocated to the redevelopment of Gosford Hospital. This is very personal to me as the love of my life, my wife, Jill, graduated at the end of last year from her three-year nursing degree at our local Ourimbah campus as a mature-age student and commenced her new grad position at Gosford Hospital this year. What was not common knowledge was that Jill was diagnosed in mid-2013—halfway through the second year of her degree—with breast cancer. This, we discovered, had already progressed to stage 4, which at this time has no cure. We found ourselves in the extremely capable hands of the outstanding team at the Central Coast Cancer Centre, with Jill becoming a patient in the M2 oncology ward. After a course of stereotactic radiation and an additional seven weeks of

radiation therapy, my amazing wife, who had been pushed to the limit, came through her studies and graduated as a registered nurse. In addition to this, she is being presented next month with the University Medal. She is an amazing nurse and, I have to say, my inspiration that anything is achievable.

To say that the level of care provided by the staff at Gosford Hospital is outstanding is an understatement. I was thrilled when the announcement of additional funding for the hospital redevelopment was made, during the campaign at a meeting at the hospital with health Minister Jillian Skinner to overview the development. The day arrived and I had the opportunity to introduce Jill the Nurse to Jillian the Builder and this wonderful project. Knowing that we are going to deliver a state-of-the-art hospital that will be able to meet the future needs of the Central Coast, and provide the dedicated staff with the hospital they deserve, has to rate as a high point of the campaign.

The other people I have to thank at this time are all the volunteers that accompanied me, week in and week out, on my aggressive doorknocking campaign. In two months I doorknocked well over 2,000 homes and, in addition to losing nine kilograms, I can say that every suburb received a visit from me. Engaging with people in the electorate is what it is all about. They need to know that their elected representative is both approachable and accessible. We are there to represent and protect them. The key message I received above all others during this time was about the ongoing issues regarding the state of our local roads. My constituents see this as a priority. So, Duncan, I expect that we may well be speaking quite a lot in the future.

To those who joined me doorknocking and letterboxing—to Jim Gorman, Jim Spratt, Ron Spratt, Thelma McFarlane, Trevor Hartshorne, Nate, Jeff Strickson, Lois Marshal, Liz Reynolds, Simon Levy, Jennifer Green, Quentin Anthony, Michelina Strickson, Pat Aitkin, Craig Hillman and many more—thank you from the bottom of my heart. To my extended family and friends—Charlie, Jenny, Tegan, Jonathan, Lee-arne, Barry, Robyn, Brian, Maureen, Tim, Sharon, Janice, Mark, Wayne, Phil, Sarah, Joanne and Nadine—I must also say thank you for your love and your support. To my dedicated crew from the Woy Woy branch—many of you are here tonight—I say thank you.

Many people have mentors and I am privileged to have two—and these are outstanding mates—Detective Inspector Darren Jameson, Crime Manager of the Coffs Clarence Local Area Command, who has made the trip to be here today; and President of the Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Matthew Wales. In addition, I was also joined by two of our exceptional Federal members of Parliament, Lucy Wicks and Karan McNamara. These devoted and passionate ladies did not hesitate to assist in my campaign—especially Lucy, whose willingness to help, give advice, devote endless energy and offer friendship was gratefully appreciated.

Finally, I have to single out one person in particular for special thanks. This man gave of his time without question and ran up more driveways with me than any other—my friend and deserving new member of the Fifty-sixth Parliament, the Hon. Scott Farlow, MLC. His advice, friendship and good humour during those long days were invaluable, and the Legislative Council will no doubt benefit from having him as a member. On the subject of humour, there were many funny stories during the campaign but one that stands out involved Scott and occurred while we were doorknocking in Empire Bay on a stinking hot day. I received a call from a friend that evening who said that a resident had phoned to say how excited and impressed his wife was that I had doorknocked their home despite the heat. She was particularly impressed that I had been out doorknocking with Premier Mike Baird. We did not have the heart to burst her bubble.

In the weeks post the election I received some very clear reminders of why I had put myself forward to be the local member. These included the recent storms on the Central Coast and especially Anzac Day. Only a few weeks into the job, the Central Coast was battered by a storm event that is referred to as an east coast low, but which is better described as a "super storm". This three-day intense weather event wreaked havoc across the region, uprooting hundreds of trees and cutting electricity to more than 80,000 homes on the Central Coast. It was clear that power would not be restored for many days, and perhaps for an extended period, so we looked at how we could help the local community.

One way was for us to contact a number of local clubs from Forresters Beach to Ettalong, seeking their assistance to provide showers and power for people who were without hot water and electricity. We were able to get the information out to the community through the local radio stations, which were happy to assist us with this message. We were pleased that we could be of some assistance at short notice during these difficult times and keep locals updated with information provided to us by the State Emergency Service and Ausgrid. Sometimes just being able to give a resident a little information and reassurance is all that they need. I commend the community of the Central Coast as the majority of people understood the issues, were patient and understanding and quick to want to assist friends, neighbours and even total strangers who needed help.

Like a large number of people in this Chamber, I have attended many Anzac Day ceremonies. But this year took on special meaning, given that it was the centenary of the Anzac landings at Gallipoli and my first Anzac Day as the local member. The day commenced with the most surreal dawn service I had ever attended. It was conducted at Terrigal Beach by the Terrigal-Wamberal RSL Sub-branch. It was at this event, after laying my first wreath, that I met 93-year-old Mr George Craven for the second time in a week. George, before taking the stage to read the Ode, leaned over to me and said how wonderful it was to see so many young people attend the service, and that he was so very proud that he and his friends would not be forgotten. With surf boats delivering soldiers in period uniforms to the shore to the sound of gunfire, the beach was packed with thousands of locals for as far as the eye could see who were respectfully silent for the entire event.

If the closing of the ceremony was not emotional enough, the spritely digger again leaned over to me, clearly moved by the proceedings, and proudly produced a picture of his sweetheart and late wife of 67 years, Joy, on their wedding day. The photo was of him in his uniform, looking so very young as he headed off to serve in the south-west Pacific, in the 2-11 Army Troop Engineers. He did this to protect the country he loves so much, like thousands of Australians did, without question or hesitation. A tear rolled down my cheek as he told me what an honour it was for him to be able to talk to the "new guy". I had to correct him and tell him that the honour was indeed mine.

I was so proud to be able to attend all the Anzac Day events across the electorate. The final event of the day was a stunning twilight service held at the MacMasters Beach Surf Club. An inspirational address was delivered by retired Major General Tim Ford, AO. The symbolism of this final event for the evening could not have been more appropriate, the day having commenced with the beachside service to the sound of gunfire and concluding with another beachside service and a cacophony of lightning and thunder. It all seemed somehow appropriate—and no-one moved, despite the threat of a torrential downpour. That embodies the spirit of the Central Coast. The storm finally arrived at the end of the service. I would like to close with a quote from Margaret Thatcher:

What is success? I think it is a mixture of having a flair for the thing that you are doing; knowing that it is not enough, that you have got to have hard work and a certain sense of purpose.

With these words in mind, I pledge myself to the people of Terrigal.

By leave, private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO WALLSEND WORLD WAR I SERVICEMEN

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [5.20 p.m.]: It was on a chilly April morning 100 years ago that thousands of Anzacs battled on the stony beaches of Gallipoli. For many years, with pride, I have attended the Wallsend RSL Sub-branch Anzac Day dawn service. In studying and celebrating the broad sweep of history we often forget that it is the people who make history. More than 50,000 Australians were killed during World War I. Their names are inscribed on post offices, school halls and memorials all over Australia, and their bodies are buried all over Europe and the Middle East. History remembers the generals, kings, emperors and Prime Ministers, but in my view the people who make history are the ordinary men and women of our world. Today I will share with the House the story of a special Wallsend electorate family.

In 1893 William Kentish's first son, Arthur, was born. His brother, Alfred, followed in 1897. They grew up in Young Street, Lambton. Arthur trained as a blacksmith and Alfred became a driver. On 22 January 1915, at the age of 22, Arthur enlisted in the 13th Infantry Battalion. Seven months later Alfred followed his older brother and enlisted. In March 1916 he shipped out from Sydney aboard HMAT *Star of England*. Alfred was killed on 19 July 1916. He fought in the Battle of Fromelles, which is widely regarded by historians as a disaster for the Allied forces—historian Ross McMullin called it "the worst 24 hours in Australia's entire history." Alfred's body remains there.

On 16 December 1916 Arthur boarded HMAT *Ballarat*. He outlived his brother, but only by a matter of months. On 2 April 1917 Arthur followed Alfred. Arthur is buried at Villiers-Bretonneux—a town recaptured by Australian troops from German occupiers at the cost of more than 1,000 lives. He is memorialised there, just as he and his brother are memorialised at the Lambton Post Office and on Lambton Park's memorial gates, and we are memorialising them here today. An extract from the Newcastle *Herald* dated 12 August 1916, which was

recently republished by the *Lambton Local*, tells of William Kentish receiving news of Alfred's death. At the time Arthur was hospitalised with a bad shoulder wound. A third son, James, served with his battalion in Egypt and, thankfully, survived the war.

Alfred and Arthur gave what Abraham Lincoln called the "last full measure of devotion"—their lives. Can you imagine the anguish of their father, mother and surviving brother, James? I cannot. If I had the time I would speak of Daniel Docwra, and of Richard Boulden of Dixon Street, Lambton. For example, in 1917 when Richard enlisted his age was noted as 21 years and one month, when he died in September 1918—just two months shy of the armistice—it was noted as 19 years. If I had the time I would tell the stories of all the Anzacs from my electorate and from around Australia.

Each year we gather in parks and halls across Australia to give voice to words, weak and fruitless in the face of the grief and sacrifice of families like the Kentishes. As President Lincoln noted, we offer our respect, admiration, thanks and respect for their courage and honour—members will no doubt agree that that is the least we can do. Edward Docwra, Richard Boulden and Alfred and Arthur Kentish were the best of Newcastle and of Australia, as were the 50,000 others who lost their lives. Today, in the shadow of their sacrifice, I reaffirm my commitment to peace. The names of the fallen should never be forgotten and we must do all we can to make sure that the rolls of our honoured war dead do not grow longer.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.25 p.m.]: I acknowledge and commend the member for Wallsend for bringing to the attention of the House those from her electorate who contributed to the war effort and made the ultimate sacrifice. I take this opportunity to remind members that the New South Wales Government has given every member the opportunity to contribute to debate on the Centenary of Anzac. This will allow members to place on record the contribution of people from each electorate as we acknowledge and honour the sacrifice that they made on our behalf.

Pursuant to resolution inaugural speeches proceeded with.

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of family, friends and supporters of the member for Ballina. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of New South Wales.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) [5.27 p.m.]: (Inaugural Speech): I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Gadigal people of the Eora country, elders past and present and the Bundjalung people of my homeland, and their elders past and present. I congratulate Madam Speaker on being selected as Speaker for a second term and for continuing as the first woman in that role. In her remarks on the first sitting day Madam Speaker acknowledged a number of firsts by my female colleagues in this place, and I am proud to be part of that list as the first woman to represent the seat of Ballina. On that note, allow me to make special mention of my colleague and Greens "sister" the member for Newtown, Jenny Leong, and to note that together we are the first Greens women in this House.

The more closely the demographic of Parliament reflects our society, the better this place is likely to be in representing the people of New South Wales. I am honoured to be joining a stronger Greens team in the New South Wales Parliament. I acknowledge the member for Balmain, Jamie Parker, and congratulate him on his re-election. He has paved the way for many more Greens to enter the Legislative Assembly in the future. I am also looking forward to working with my new colleagues in the upper House—Jan Barham, Jeremy Buckingham, Mehreen Faruqi, John Kaye and David Shoebridge—in Parliament and in my electorate. In The Greens party room we have such wonderful diversity: people of passion and commitment who work hard every day for the people of our State and for the protection of our amazing natural environment.

I also acknowledge the dedication of the former member for Ballina, Don Page, who served our community as member for 27 years. He is a true gentleman who conducted himself with honour and steadfast determination to improve the lives of those in our region. I also give a shout-out to my fellow Byron Bay and Ballina Greens and supporters who are watching this inaugural speech at the Ocean Shores Tavern. My entry into this House comes as a surprise to many. It is the first time The Greens have won a regional lower House seat at a general election and it is the first time The Greens have taken a seat from The Nationals—with all due respect. This result is a genuine testament to the health of our democracy.

This place is truly a House for every woman and every man. It shows us that communities can unite, agitate and vote for change. It is a lesson to me—and I hope to all of us—that our job is to be responsive to our constituents, their values and priorities, and to put the collective interest ahead of vested interests. If I do not live up to that ideal, I do not deserve to be back here in four years' time. I make this commitment knowing that for tens of millions of people across the globe this right, this freedom and this wonderful democracy do not exist. And so it is an even heavier burden for those of us who are privileged to hold office—as the very root and branch of our democratic history—that we remain at all times mindful of the many who have no voice and no opportunity to be heard.

It is with an enormous sense of civic duty and humility that I stand in this place today before my peers and community, my family and friends, and pledge my whole heart to the role of being a member of this House. I am getting emotional. People told me that I would get emotional delivering this speech but I did not believe them. I pledge to advocate not only for the betterment of the people and interests of my electorate and a fairer, more just society at large but also for those things much more fundamental to our survival: clean air and clean water; the biodiversity of our glorious forests, rivers and oceans; and the rich land we need to grow healthy food. These intergenerational treasures do not belong to us; they belong to the future, and must be put beyond the reach of our mistakes and tribulations as the common wealth of all and the heritage of future generations. Our laws must do this, and it is the people in this place who make those laws. This objective spans the political divide.

This is a watershed moment for The Greens and for the North Coast. It is a moment that suggests that people from all walks of life, in greater and greater numbers, care deeply about the environment. They understand that our resources sustain our way of life and that the essentials of life must not be sold off to the highest bidder. They remind us that there are natural laws that trump even the ones made in this place. As environmentalist and civil rights activist Paul Hawken puts it:

This planet came with a set of instructions, but we seem to have misplaced them. Important rules like don't poison the water, soil, or air ... and don't touch the thermostat have been broken.

We have an economy that tells us that it is cheaper to destroy the earth in real time than it is to renew, restore and sustain it. The electorate of Ballina extends to the Gondwana rainforest of Nightcap National Park in the north and the forest and cascading streams of Federal in the west. It stretches to the most easterly point of Australia, in Arakwal country at Cape Byron, and to the heritage town of Wardell in the south. It is quite honestly one of the most beautiful regions of the world, and it is no wonder that its residents love it with a passion.

We are a community of teachers, builders and nurses; permaculture, aquaculture and organic food growers; cane and dairy farmers; artists; children and musicians. We saw in this election, in the Ballina and Lismore electorates, farmers and environmentalists, people from the towns and the bush, children and grandparents united against the industrialisation of our hinterland and standing up against the threat to our food and water security from unconventional gas mining. And where they saw that this place had failed them and that our laws were failing the environment, they peacefully and defiantly stood up and said, "No, you will not destroy what we rely on to survive and that which belongs to all." There is a moral lesson in this, but there is also a political one. While unconventional gas may have been the catalyst, I believe the mood for change runs far deeper.

At the last election people from all walks of life started to see themselves and their hopes reflected in the social and economic policies of The Greens. They see in The Greens a deep commitment to genuine grassroots democracy, where local people have a greater say in their economic future. They see in The Greens a commitment to ecologically sustainable development and they hear The Greens' message about the opportunities that renewable energy offers, creating a future free from the harm of fossil fuels. It makes no sense to them in the dying days of the fossil fuel industry—as new, cleaner technologies proliferate and the effects of climate change are felt more acutely with each passing year—that a society, backed by a responsible government, would seek to unleash a new, dirty, destructive industry on our lands. This industry would see our exquisite region dotted with gas fields, drill casings that leak methane into the atmosphere and that risk our clean, precious water when we have the radiant sun shining down on our region and we are on the cusp of a renewable energy revolution.

We are a lucky country and a lucky State but we are stealing the future, selling it in the present and calling it gross domestic product. People see this, and they are looking for another way—a greener way. As

Richard Di Natale said last week, "The future for us as a party is very bright; the issues of the twenty-first century are Green issues." I am proud of the role that The Greens have played in putting these issues on the political agenda across Australia. I was at the Sydney launch of The Greens in 1991 and I am a voter, supporter and member of the Greens because I guess I was born green. My primary drive, ever since I was old enough to run away from home and join a political march, has been to defend our environment and species that have no standing and to be an advocate for those in our Australian and global societies who do not have a voice and who are disempowered.

I acknowledge that The Greens' success in Ballina comes on the back of more than two decades of work by The Greens leaders and generations of grassroots activists, environmentalists and social justice advocates throughout the country and on the North Coast—people who have dedicated their lives to defending universal health care and quality public education; to protecting forests, waterways, threatened species, glorious communities and our rural and regional way of life. In the past decade we have seen the voice of The Greens gaining traction federally. I take this opportunity to commend retiring party leader Senator Christine Milne for her outstanding contribution to that voice, and in particular for her incredible work championing action on climate change.

The North Coast has been a seed bed—excuse the pun—for the growth of historic figures in The Greens. Byron Bay's Richard Staples was the first Greens councillor in our region and Broken Head's Ian Cohen was the first member of The Greens elected to the New South Wales Parliament. Ian's passion for the protection of our environment is unrivalled, and I take this moment to thank him for the support he has given me and for seeing the potential in me to do this work. Jan Barham, a current member of the upper House, was the first popularly elected Greens mayor in Australia—and possibly the world. It was her phenomenal work as Byron's mayor that staved off the overdevelopment of our region. That work is continued today by our current Greens mayor, Simon Richardson. The people in my community have stood up against mega-development in pursuit of unique village life, embracing our agricultural history, and riding the crest of the organic and slow food movements that have seen cottage and boutique industries from our region make it onto the world stage.

More than a million people a year flock to our region to surf and dive, fish, walk and swim our beautiful beaches. They come to escape the hurly-burly of fast-paced lives, soak up the beauty of the hills and rivers, and immerse themselves in the art, music and culture of the region. We are the jewel in the crown and we deserve to be resourced accordingly. I think my love of nature comes from my father, Lanny Smith, the son of a baker and Missouri farmers, who is in the gallery this evening, and my mother, Frances Norris, whose greatest solace in the world is the ocean.

My childhood was spent swimming and building cubbies in the bush behind our house in Hazelbrook in the Blue Mountains, and swimming in the Brunswick River and off Bribie Island on our annual holidays to visit my mother's family on the north coast and in Brisbane. My father taught me to bodysurf at Harbord Beach when we moved to Manly. As a young teen I learnt to ride a board and spent my early mornings and afternoons until dusk surfing North Steyne. My friends and I formed a board riders club aptly named "Wind and Sewage" as a protest against the outpouring of sewage from North Head into our beautiful beaches. Of course, the first rule passed by the club was "no girl surfers allowed".

As soon as I was old enough to venture out at 15, I headed to Byron Bay to surf and play music. It was there that I first got involved in the grassroots environmental movements to save our north-east forests and Fraser Island, to stop uranium mining at Roxby Downs and to stave off mega-development in the Northern Rivers—the home of my maternal great-great-grandparents, great-grandparents and grandmother, Josephine Frances Hegerty. I still surf, but today I am an avid ocean swimmer. I can be found on as many mornings as possible at 8.00 a.m. on the deck of the Byron Bay Surf Club, setting out with as few as two or as many as 100 fellow swimmers to walk around the bay to The Pass and swim back. It is always a thrill, and my love for our marine park and our beaches is fierce.

My strong sense of social responsibility comes from being vulnerable in my own life and from my professional life in education and law. I know what it is like to have to grow up quickly and leave school to care for a sick parent, and to do my Higher School Certificate at TAFE because I had outgrown the cultural context of my peers. I know what it is like to raise a family on one income, to be unemployed and to uproot my family and move 2,000 kilometres away from home to the outback because that's where the work is. I have been that working mum who is sitting up at night finishing her studies so that her child can have a better life. I was a teacher for 20 years in public schools in remote and regional New South Wales and the western suburbs of Brisbane, and I cut my teeth as a solicitor in Redfern and the Northern Territory.

Australians are strong, resilient and hardworking and ought not be divided by the Prime Minister into categories of "lifters and leaners" because that binary simply does not ring true for me. A caring country and State understands that any one of us may need to lean in to take shelter when the vicissitudes of life hit hard, and that meaningful work and quality education are the things that lift us to be our best and most productive selves.

I thank my campaign manager, Graeme Williams, and Rhianna Blackthorn and Justin Field for their genius and for their tireless work during our election campaign. I owe my election to them and the hundreds of volunteers who selflessly gave up their time to campaign for a different sort of politics for the North Coast. I thank my closest friends Professor Baden Offord, Christopher MacFarlane and John Ryan, who are in the gallery this evening and who have come all the way from Western Australia, for their friendship and love over the decades and for continuing to challenge me to think from the perspective of a thousand-year-old mountain.

I thank my sisters, Natasha and Nicole—both extraordinary women—for their encouragement and support. I thank my brother and acclaimed author, Dominic Smith, who is in the gallery this evening and who travelled here from Austin, Texas. He is that person whom I seek out for integrity and a compassionate position on any issue. I also thank my beloved daughter, Tara, who is also in the gallery this evening—an unparalleled champion of the rights of creatures great and small. Finally, I see my duty in this Chamber as being an advocate and cultivator of democracy in close collaboration with the community. I look forward to working with each of you as I work my hardest to do just that.

Pursuant to resolution private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TWEED HOSPITAL

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [5.46 p.m.]: The Tweed Hospital, which I am sure Mr Deputy-Speaker knows quite well, does excellent work. It is a regional referral level 5 hospital providing care to more than 45,000 patients per year. The good news is that despite the Labor-affiliated union scare campaign during the election, the hospital's services are and always will be provided free for public patients. The hospital supplies a broad range of services including cancer care, coronary care, surgical and medical services, emergency and outpatients, medical imaging, paediatrics, maternity and neonatal care, gynaecology, renal dialysis, intensive care and high-dependency units, and pharmacy and pathology services. It also provides a wide range of community and allied health services including a state-of-the-art dental training clinic, the Tweed Valley Clinic for mental health, BreastScreen, Early Intervention and many more.

It is important to recognise that while the Government provides up-to-date equipment and state-of-the-art buildings, it is the clinicians, nurses and the rest of the staff that make Tweed Hospital one of the leading hospitals in the State. In the December quarter of 2014, 100 per cent of urgent surgery, 98 per cent of semi-urgent surgery and 96 per cent of non-urgent surgery was performed within the recommended time frame. The emergency department treated 12,516 patients from October to December last year, which was an increase of 11 per cent over the same period of the previous year. The median time to start treatment for triage 2 category patients is six minutes, which is better than the State average of eight minutes. For triage 3 category or urgent patients it is 13 minutes compared with the State average of 20 minutes. Some 2,027 patients arrived by ambulance in that period—which we must remember was only 92 days—which was an average of almost 22 patients per day every day of the week. The number of patients admitted was 8,637, and 281 babies were born, which is actually fewer than in Lismore.

The Tweed Hospital also is a medical intern training hospital. In January this year I had the pleasure of welcoming 18 new interns. The hospital also provides postgraduate places for nurses and midwives each year. The \$48 million upgrade for stage 1 will deliver improvements for the emergency department, and enhancement of wards, specialist units, and a new multistorey car park. I compliment the Minister for Health, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, for her help in delivering funds for stages 1 and 2. There have been meetings with high-level health officials from Sydney. Just two weeks after the election, they were on the site and meeting with doctors and nurses—clearly delivering on the commitment we made during the election. I also thank Dr Ian McPhee, who is chair of the medical council, for his ongoing support and commitment to the good people of the Tweed and our clinicians.

I also thank Bernadette Loughnane, who is the Executive Director of the Tweed Byron Health Service Group. Bernadette does an excellent job as general manager. The administration staff are also excellent.

I compliment the Tweed District Hospital Auxiliary, which raises many hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. The delivery of health services is supported also by Murwillumbah hospital, which is a fine hospital in the Lismore electorate and which works in conjunction with the Tweed Hospital. The Tweed is one of the fastest-growing areas in the State. The Government is gearing up to satisfy future demand. I meet regularly with doctors and nurses. I am a regular visitor at the hospital just to ensure staff that they have the full support of their local member of Parliament and of the New South Wales Government. I am 100 per cent for the Tweed Hospital.

BUNDEENA RSL FIRE DAMAGE

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [5.51 p.m.]: In the early hours of 11 February 2015 the tragic news reached the media that the Bundeena RSL club had experienced a devastating fire. This club not only is the heart and centrepiece of the Bundeena community, it also is the emergency evacuation centre for the Maianbar and Bundeena hamlets. When I became aware of the disaster, I quickly made my way out to Bundeena to inspect the extent of the damage. On arrival I was faced with a scene of fire service personnel, police and local people just standing stock still in disbelief. The damage was significant.

The whole top floor was damaged and the roof had collapsed. As Murphy's Law dictates, the club had just completed an upgrade of the disability lift and the power board supplying the club. The President of the Bundeena RSL Sub-Branch, Paul Griffiths, was there to meet me. The sub-branch was in the final stages of organising its Anzac commemoration for 100 years. The next time I saw Mr Griffiths was on the Sunday before Anzac Day. That was when the community of Bundeena came together a week early to commemorate Anzac Day so that members of the community who chose to attend major events could do so.

What a spectacular day! The efforts of the members of the RSL were humbling. In full military period dress, members mingled with the huge crowds and handed out rosemary. Members of the Mounted Police Unit were in full period dress and their steeds were kitted out in period tack. We enjoyed the Bundeena Community Band's renditions of all the war-time greats and also enjoyed a flyover of period aircraft. An excerpt from the Bundeena RSL's website explains the spirit of this community:

Just two months after your much-loved RSL was destroyed by fire the club is back—sort of!

You'll have noticed a temporary "pop-up" club has been built adjacent to the old building and will operate for about three weeks.

The pop-up club, to be named Sparkie's (after the mascot of our rebuilding project), will be open from April 25th for its ANZAC day celebrations. It has already opened briefly for a benefit day, a ANZAC dinner dance and ANZAC Sunday.

The substantial lockable marquee is 20m by 10m and will have a bar, beer garden and bathrooms as well as a kitchen providing a special menu.

There have also been preliminary meetings with architects and extensive consultations with professionals including engineers, quantity surveyors and insurance experts.

Club management and the RSL Board of Directors are currently looking at new plants for the club.

I also mention and thank the staff of the RSL: Sara Watkins, who is the chief executive officer, Camilla Hargreaves, who is the operations manager, and Lyn Wootten, who is the president of the Bundeena RSL. One of the best things about our job is when all our communities come together when times are tough. The spirit of the Bundeena community, led by Mr Paul Griffiths and the team at the Bundeena RSL, have shown what can be accomplished by not only accepting the hand you are dealt but also going well beyond that. Well done! I look forward to visiting the phoenix when it has risen from the ashes.

NEWTOWN ELECTORATE

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) [5.56 p.m.]: This is my first private member's statement in this place. I see that these statements are an opportunity to bring matters concerning the people of the Newtown electorate to this place. Today I suggest that the biggest concern to those who reside and work in our community of Newtown is the looming threat of yet another short-sighted, politically motivated, and "pleasing our big-end-of-town and polluting mates" Federal budget. The Federal budget is due to be presented in a couple of hours in another place. Federal budgets have a significant impact on what a State government delivers and this Federal budget will have a significant impact on the people of New South Wales and it will be felt close to home in my electorate of Newtown.

We live in a society where State, local and Federal government boundaries do not dictate the way people live within a community. The decisions that will be handed down tonight at a Federal level will be decisions that are implemented and felt in the heart of the Newtown electorate. Vital public services will be forced to compete for ever-increasing scarce funds. This does nothing but further entrench divisions in our society in the already fragile and vulnerable parts of our community. For example, Newtown is home to the Asylum Seekers Centre, which I visited earlier this year with the Australian Greens Senator, and now leader, Richard Di Natale. The centre provides valuable services to many asylum seekers and refugees. In many ways it represents the acceptance and willingness of the people of Newtown to embrace those who have fled from trauma and government persecution, as well as addressing the ongoing detention of asylum seekers in our country.

Our community is also home to a significant number of renters and many people who are suffering from housing stress which has been brought about by failures of both State and Federal governments to address housing affordability. The Federal Government should be doing more to address this housing crisis. This is something that is felt every day by many people who live in the Newtown electorate. The Australian Technology Park is also within the Newtown electorate. Members may be aware that the Australian Technology Park, which has been slated for sell-off by the Baird Government, has faced threats to its innovation and research capabilities. Last year the Federal Government cut funding to NICTA, the National Information Communication Technology Australia research centre of excellence. This is yet another example of the way in which we are defunding research and innovation, which are both sources of interest and work to people who live in the Newtown area.

It is not only that our young scientists and academics are forced to leave Australia, it is also that the lack of investment robs Australia of future innovations and social capital that a thriving research sector requires. The Newtown electorate also is home to many unions in this country, including the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance [MEAA], which has seen its members suffer as result of cuts to the ABC and SBS, and the Australian Services Union, which has within its membership our support and community sector workers who are affected by regressive cuts in the Federal budget to community services and community healthcare centres. One issue that I believe is particularly relevant to the people of Newtown is the Redfern Legal Centre. Unfortunately, just the other day the centre had to send out a crowd-sourced funding campaign as a result of ongoing Federal Government cuts to its funding. The funding cuts will not allow the centre to deliver services that it previously provided and wants to provide to our community.

The University of Sydney is also within the electorate of Newtown and it is there that we have seen numerous protests against the Abbott Government's cuts to education and against the attempt to deregulate fees within the university sector. The New South Wales Government did not stand up for students to ensure they had access to ongoing affordable public education—it was the students, academics, general staff and the National Tertiary Education Union [NTEU] members, many of whom reside in the electorate of Newtown. They worked together to hold off the fee deregulation that was being imposed. The Federal budget is set to deliver various measures. I note that some members appear to be amused, but the impact of those Federal budget cuts will be implemented in New South Wales by decisions made in this place. We will have to pick up the pieces for the vulnerable people who will suffer as a result of Federal budget cuts. We must continue to fight against those cuts in this place.

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) [6.01 p.m.]: This evening I pay tribute to Rotary International. I speak on this subject as my first private member's statement because I was fortunate to be the beneficiary of a Rotary Foundation Scholarship that enabled me to study overseas for a year and to complete a Master of Laws degree. As many members may know, Rotary International was commenced by Paul Harris, a lawyer. Paul Harris moved to the great city of Chicago where he knew nobody. He devised a plan to meet people by gathering together people of varied occupations within Chicago to meet each week at one another's workplace. They "rotated" their weekly meetings and, as a result, the name "Rotary" was coined.

Rotary is still an organisation that is based on community and bringing people together, and it is that aspect of Rotary International that I wish to concentrate on today. The Rotary district that covers the electorate of Ku-ring-gai is District 9685. Four Rotary clubs cover the Ku-ring-gai electorate: the Ku-ring-gai Club meets at 6.30 p.m. each Monday at the Killara Golf Club; the Waitara Club meets at 6.00 p.m. on Mondays at the Hornsby RSL Club; the Turrumurra Rotary Club meets at 6.15 p.m. on Tuesdays at Peter Canisus's house on Mona Vale Road; and the Wahroonga Club meets at 7.15 a.m. on Wednesdays at the

Warrawee Bowling Club. Through the voluntary work of their members, those clubs do great things for Ku-ring-gai. The members of Rotary are truly great citizens. We appreciate their work for the less fortunate people within our community.

I have had personal involvement in two aspects of Rotary International. When I was a student at high school, a number of exchange students from Scandinavia attended the school. It was the first time that we had a window on people from another part of the world. One of the great things about international travel and meeting people from other parts of the world is that one gets a sense of the richness of humanity, and you realise that the world is not populated only by Australians. That is an important thing to learn when one is young because it gives one an appreciation of tolerance and difference, which are important for building social cohesion both within our communities and in terms of international peace and goodwill—two important values that Rotary promotes.

The other matter I bring to the attention of the House is the Rotary Foundation Scholarship scheme, of which I was a beneficiary. Each Rotary district sends one person per year to study internationally. When I was the beneficiary of a Rotary Foundation scholarship in 1987 it was valued at \$50,000. The scholarship pays for tuition at an international university, which can often be many tens of thousands of dollars. Accommodation, food and board are provided. One is given a weekly stipend—pocket money—and airfares are paid for. Rotary scholarships are a valuable investment in the intellectual capital of our community. Through these fantastic scholarships, the Rotary movement provides a special kind of education for Australians and offers them an opportunity they would otherwise not have.

KING EDWARD PARK, NEWCASTLE

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) [6.06 p.m.]: I too was the beneficiary of a Rotary scholarship in 1987. I went to South Africa and it changed my life. It is a wonderful thing. I congratulate the Friends of King Edward Park in Newcastle who, yesterday, won what will prove to be a landmark decision in the Land and Environment Court. The case related to a proposal to build a function centre on Crown land and whether the facility was for public recreation. In his decision, Mr Justice Sheahan ruled:

The use of the land for private functions ... such as weddings, is inimical to its use for public recreation, even if it is, at times, open to the public.

It is contemplated the public will be excluded from the function centre in this case, and from other parts of the land generally. The development is therefore not a commercial facility that provides for public recreation.

The recreational park was originally proposed for the people of Newcastle by the fledgling Newcastle Business Chamber. King Edward Park was dedicated as a recreational reserve in 1863. In 1965 some of the public land was leased to the Newcastle Bowling Club and functioned as such for many years. It was enjoyed equally by bowlers and non-bowlers until the membership of the club declined and it folded earlier this century. In 2010, after the State modified the plan of management for the park, a development application was received by Newcastle City Council to build a function centre. This was voted down by councillors. The application was resubmitted and in November 2011 the development was approved by Newcastle City Council with certain conditions, one being a boundary walk within King Edward Park. Stronach Group's Annie Street Commercial successfully gained council approval to develop the site and build a function centre, public kiosk and car park.

King Edward Park is on Crown Reserve land. It is a popular public park that offers picnickers, filmgoers, whale watchers and fitness seekers alike a unique experience in the heart of this State's second-largest city. It was for this reason that the Friends of King Edward Park went to the Land and Environment Court last year to appeal the decision. A three-day hearing followed and at its heart was an argument about privatisation and private profiting from public land. Yesterday afternoon, the Land and Environment Court handed down its ruling that the proposed private development on the Crown headland at King Edward Park was invalid. This ruling is a win for the people of Newcastle and, it would appear, people in other areas of our State who oppose the privatisation of Crown land in their communities. Justice Sheehan ruled that the proposed function centre was not valid because it contradicts the current plan of management for the reserve, which only permits conference centres and commercial facilities that provide for public recreation. This function centre was ruled out because it was to be hired out for private use.

Arguments were made that the plan of management did not validly include permission for a function centre. Section 112A of the Crown Lands Act defines "public recreation" as being accessible to the general public as a right and not to be used for private profit. The Friends of King Edward Park wondered whether it

was these words that motivated an amendment to section 34A of the Crown Lands Act, which greatly increased the powers of the Minister in the disposal of Crown land, and a white paper that weakened the Act's capacity to protect Crown lands. They asked about the local environmental plan that forbade its use as a function centre. In June 2012 the site was rezoned without community consultation and an exception was made for that site to allow for a function centre. It must be noted that the upper House Select Committee on the Planning Process in Newcastle and the Broader Hunter Region, which released its report recently, noted:

... the committee questions why the reserve was spot rezoned, given that the council had earlier rejected a proposal to rezone the land.

As Justice Sheehan found, the land should be opened to the public and not used as a source for private profit. Public land is limited across New South Wales and it is crucial that the Minister for Lands respects the court's ruling and the people of Newcastle when creating any new plan of management. The Crown headland at King Edward Park is a spectacular part of Newcastle. I am not proposing that there be no development; I am simply saying that any development on the site must be for public use, not private profit, and it must meet the plan of management. The community group Friends of King Edward Park, specifically Kim and Margie Ostinga, Virginia Leitch, Gael Davies and Liz Thwaites, must be congratulated on their dogged persistence in protecting public land for future generations.

PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS SCHEME

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [6.11 p.m.]: Tonight I inform the House of a looming challenge that is threatening community pharmacies. The Federal Government is looking to introduce a subsidised co-payment for any medication that is listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. This is a serious issue that will affect all community pharmacies in our electorates. It will have wide-reaching implications and will impact on low-income earners, pensioners and concession cardholders as well as the local pharmacies. The Federal Government is planning to double dip. It is a bad policy and very sneaky. It will mean that for any medication listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme a community pharmacy will be expected to reduce the script cost for concession cardholders from \$6.10 to \$5.10. The Federal Government is planning to introduce this policy on 1 July 2015.

Currently, concession cardholders pay \$6.10 for any script, regardless of the medication. The safety net for cardholders is 60 scripts. After the cardholder presents 60 scripts, all medications are free. The full cost of the script is then borne by the Federal Government. The Federal Government is trying to make budget savings. By reducing the cost of scripts by \$1, the threshold for concession cardholders will be increased to 77. This means the Federal Government will not have to carry the script cost until a customer presents 77 scripts, potentially saving the Federal Government billions of dollars annually. On 26 April 2015 the *Australian Financial Review* reported that health Minister Sussan Ley confirmed this would be the case. The Federal Government is hoping that ultimately no cardholders will reach their safety net, therefore, it will not have to pay for the medication of low-income earners and pensioners.

It is not mandatory for pharmacies to reduce the script price. Only the Federal Government will benefit because it will not subsidise community pharmacies and repay their lost income. This will impact on low-income earners, concession cardholders and pensioners. These groups will have to wait much longer to reach the safety net before receiving free medication. In some cases the safety net will never be reached, therefore, they will never receive free medication. This will impact on community pharmacies because it will cost those pharmacies \$1 for every script dispensed. Despite the scheme being called a subsidised co-payment, the Federal Government does not repay the pharmacy. It is not mandatory so small town community pharmacies will be reluctant or unable to pass on the discount. Customers will therefore stockpile scripts and shop at larger centres to receive their discounts. With an extra tax to pay, pharmacies may be forced to cut staff and reduce opening hours, including weekends and public holidays. This is not the way for the Federal Government to make savings.

This initiative will hurt smaller towns with only one pharmacy, such as Walcha, Barraba and Werris Creek, and it will disadvantage people in my electorate. It threatens the livelihood of community businesses and it may reduce the service to communities. Towns with only one pharmacy may be 80 to 100 metres apart and if they are forced to shut it will be difficult to drive to the next suburb to get medication. This is bad policy. The Federal Government is being sneaky, disingenuous and dishonest. We want our communities to stand up and fight. Tamworth certainly will. We have had meetings with Federal Minister Barnaby Joyce and we have notified our Nationals members in Federal Parliament. I declare an interest in this. My wife is a pharmacist in Tamworth and it is taking food off our table. We should not stand for it. Shame on the Federal Government.

PORT STEPHENS ELECTORATE OYSTER FARMERS

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) [6.16 p.m.]: In my first private member's statement I draw attention to the current plight of the Port Stephens oyster farming community. Port Stephens was one of the many areas that suffered recently from an enormous and unprecedented storm and was declared a natural disaster zone, as were many other communities. For many areas of my community, recovery from the storm is still ongoing, particularly farming businesses. Oyster farming is one of the most sensitive farming industries and the recent storm was worse than any previous storm experienced in our area, including the storms that affected the *MV Pasha Bulker* and the *MV Sygna*. The proud and longstanding history of oyster farming in Port Stephens is set out beautifully in a book called *Oysterman*, produced by a local champion, John Clarke.

Sadly, oyster farmers have suffered significantly as a result of the recent storms. The damage has been described to me as astronomical. Oyster racks have been smashed and lost, jetties have been wiped out, punts have been sunk, and sheds have been torn apart. The ferocious storm came from every direction and every nook and cranny of Port Stephens was affected. Oyster farmers experienced not only significant infrastructure damage but also enormous stock losses. If they had suffered only infrastructure damage perhaps the oyster industry would have survived.

Oyster farmers are a hardy bunch; they are tenacious and hardworking, but they have suffered a double whammy. Water quality issues are always high in the minds of oyster farmers. Storms bring potential pollutants to our waterways and oyster farmers are not able to sell their stock. Although they have stock to be sold, current regulations require them to hold steady—and they are more than willing to do that. Until the waters are safe and clear they cannot sell their stock, but they can only overcome their current adversity by selling their way out. It is a difficult situation in which they now find themselves. Past experiences with other events that have occurred in Port Stephens have resulted in oyster farmers in one area, Tilligerry Creek, not being able to sell produce for 2½ years. What they are facing is quite extraordinary.

Despite the significant hardships they are suffering now, and are likely to continue to suffer for some time ahead, these farmers do not want to sell unless and until they know their product is safe for consumers. Their first priority is to ensure the product they are farming and selling is of the highest quality and that it poses no risk to consumers. I am amazed, given the situation in which they find themselves, that that is their first thought. Oyster farming in Port Stephens is very important to our local economy. It is also important for local employment and is a big part of our history. These farmers are a tough and tenacious breed, and they have been helping each other to overcome their difficulties. I ask the Government to take practical steps to assist the oyster farmers in Port Stephens to overcome this natural disaster and to ensure the ongoing viability of oyster farming in Port Stephens.

PANANIA RAILWAY STATION

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [6.20 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to thank the people of East Hills for entrusting me to represent them for another four years. I always said that if we worked hard enough for the first four years locals would reward us with a second term, and they have done just that. No doubt the victory belongs to the whole team, and I thank everyone who helped. I look forward to opening the long-awaited and nearly completed commuter car park at Padstow. Just as importantly, I thank the former Minister for Transport, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, for her help with and dedication to that project, as well as for the much-awaited easy access on Panania station.

Those who know the East Hills electorate would know that this project is so much more than simple access to the platform. The rail line has divided the township since the train station was built and has made it very difficult for locals to travel from one side to the other. The ramps that exist are too steep, so much so that we would often use them for football training when I was a young bloke playing with the East Hills Bulldogs. Our area, like so many electorates, is facing the challenges of an ageing population, and the right infrastructure needs to be built now so that life as the locals know it can continue into the future. It is worth noting that for decades the Labor Opposition said the easy access could not be built. I have seen letters from Labor transport Ministers stating that lifts at Panania station were not a priority for their Government.

Last year, along with then transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian, I had the pleasure of announcing that the Baird Liberal Government would in fact build lifts at Panania station, and we are now in the design process. Not surprisingly, Labor supporters were disappointed with that announcement. Rather than supporting the project and getting behind it, they mocked the timing of the announcement and continued to tell locals it would

not be built. The lifts at Panania demonstrate a government getting on with the job and delivering for the people of New South Wales. It represents an attitude shift between one government and the next. I know this project will benefit our community and that it will lead to a better quality of life for our seniors. It will help young mothers and families. It will help our community to stay connected. I thank all the people who have fought for this project.

SURF LIFE SAVING ILLAWARRA

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [6.25 p.m.]: Thank you, Mr Acting-Speaker.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): It is a pleasure to have you here, member for Wollongong.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Thank you and congratulations on your re-election as the member for Heathcote and as Acting-Speaker.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): And congratulations to you too, member for Wollongong.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Thank you, Mr wonderful Acting-Speaker.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Indeed.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Today I recognise the Illawarra surf lifesavers and I will mention a couple of issues. In January this year a group of lifesavers from Towradgi Surf Life Saving Club in the Illawarra, in the electorate of Wollongong, were awarded the National and New South Wales Rescue of the Month for January after saving the life of a 15-year-old surfer who found himself in difficulty in a strong rip. On 30 January, at approximately 8.30 p.m., Richard Walsh from Police Rescue called Craig Zulian about a 15-year-old who was in trouble about 300 metres south of Fairy Meadow Surf Life Saving Club and 100 metres out to sea. Craig then notified Don Allan to open the surf club and start up the all-terrain vehicle along with the rescue watercraft.

Craig, Don and fellow clubmate Sonia Zulian discussed the situation and the many risks involved with the rescue, such as the fading light and the large surf. Knowing that the boy was in serious trouble, and the trio not being aware that anyone else would come to help them, they launched the rescue watercraft at Towradgi Beach. Craig's skill and experience, along with the assistance of Richard, Sonia, Don, Nathan and Konrad, ultimately saved the life of the 15-year-old surfer. The Surf Life Saving NSW Rescue of the Month award aims to recognise excellence in lifesaving. Each month, a "rescue of the month" is awarded at State level for the most outstanding rescue performance for that period.

Recently, I attended the launch of Surf Life Savers Illawarra's new vehicle, which they managed to obtain with some assistance from Community Building Partnership funds. I was very happy to have been able to assist them to obtain \$24,000 of those funds. Their effort was recognised at the launch on Saturday of a \$48,000 "rescue ready" vehicle, which will change the way some of the Illawarra's most critical surf rescues are handled. Surf Life Saving Illawarra has eight volunteer duty officers who can be called on to do jobs around the clock on beaches anywhere from Stanwell Park to Windang. Until now, the men have used their own cars to drive to jobs, often stopping at one another's houses to trade equipment, costing valuable minutes, according to Surf Life Saving Illawarra president Val Zanotto. I am referring to a report on the launch of the vehicle in the *Illawarra Mercury*.

The rescue vehicle is a Nissan Navara four-wheel-drive. It carries comprehensive first aid equipment, including a defibrillator, spinal boards and stiff-neck collars. There is a night operations kit with an infrared night vision camera, capable of detecting a stricken swimmer up to 500 metres out to sea. I, as the local member of Parliament, was delighted to attend that launch. Amazingly, those people were thanking us for giving them a vehicle. I made the point that I was there on behalf of the community to thank them—all of them volunteers who go out there, no matter what the weather or the conditions, and do their best to save lives on behalf of the community. The equipment that they needed to get out there and save lives was this vehicle. The remaining \$24,000 was contributed by Coledale Camping Reserve. The boss of that organisation noted the great value of safe beaches to the region's tourism trade.

Anthony Turner, the Illawarra's director of life saving, said the new vehicle was a game changer. Covered in "swim between the flags" and other messages, it will serve as a roving educational tool when not in

use. Investors in a second vehicle would be very welcome, the club said. I encourage people to get on board and help, because this kind of equipment supports these volunteer lifesavers, who are 100 per cent dedicated to helping those who get into trouble in our community. They need our assistance.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE RELAY FOR LIFE

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) [6.30 p.m.]: Today I recognise and commend the efforts of the Cancer Council and Sutherland shire community for the successful Sutherland Shire 2015 Relay for Life, which was held in my electorate on 2 and 3 May at the Sylvania Waters Athletic Track. I was delighted to participate with my colleagues Mark Speakman, the member for Cronulla, and Acting-Speaker Lee Evans and member for Heathcote. I also acknowledge the support of Sutherland Shire Council and the participation of Mayor Kent Johns and Deputy Mayor Carmello Pesce in the relay.

The Relay for Life, or simply the relay, has a proud history in our shire and across the globe. It was launched in 1985, when a single American surgeon ran for 24 hours straight to raise money for his local cancer charity. The Relay for Life put down its roots in Australia at the turn of the millennium and an event has been run in the Sutherland shire every year since. Every community in New South Wales has been touched by cancer and is passionate about engaging in the Relay for Life; the shire is no exception. For the past 15 years the relay has pulled together thousands of people in the Sutherland shire to meet the challenge of fundraising and to assist in the fight against cancer. In that time the shire has raised more than \$5 million; it has raised almost \$400,000 this year alone. With more than 7,000 attendees, this is the largest relay in our State and the second largest in Australia—second to the Australian Capital Territory—and this should be applauded.

The Relay for Life offers so much more than fundraising, and this year was no exception. From the rides and games for the kids, to the entertainment and music on the 24-hour schedule, families and friends alike braved the wet weather and burned the midnight oil to fulfil their pledges and support for the Cancer Council. In my inaugural speech I emphasised the importance of nutrition and regular exercise for our young people in tackling childhood obesity. I was gladdened by the initiatives that the Cancer Council organised for children at the relay. Those activities encouraged children to work through a circuit, incorporating both physical exercise such as jogging and star jumps, with quizzes and healthy eating tips. This was in addition to the many children and teenagers who showed their compassion for cancer-affected families by participating in the relay itself, despite the adverse weather conditions.

It was heartening to watch the Survivors' Lap of Honour and to applaud those who have fought and beaten their illness. This is a demonstration that the Cancer Council is not only caring for the families affected by this terrible disease but also laying down the foundations of healthy living for the next generation and investing in the wellbeing of our whole community. I support the Government's commitment to abolish co-payments for chemotherapy patients. It will help patients access their treatment and alleviate the financial burden on the already struggling families, which several survivors and those fighting the illness told me about at the relay. An enormous amount of planning is involved in putting together an event of this scale and a large round of thanks must go to the community groups and Cancer Council volunteers who made it possible.

It is not possible to name each individual but, in particular, I acknowledge the relay committee headed by co-chairmen Rod Coy, OAM, and Luke Barbuto, as well as MP liaison officers Tony Cain and Alison Todd for their organisation and promotion of the event. Events like the Relay for Life are the embodiment of the shire's community spirit and generosity. I congratulate all the families, schools, community organisations and businesses that took part in this year's event and I look forward to seeing new records for attendance and fundraising next year.

ROTARY CLUB OF WINSTON HILLS AWARDS

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) [6.33 p.m.]: It is an honour to have Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) in the chair for my first private member's statement. Voluntary service is the fabric of our community and an excellent sign of a healthy community. In my electorate we have many active volunteers in a variety of areas, including summer and winter sports, youth groups such as scouts and girl guides, and service clubs such as Lions and Rotary. Tonight I will inform the House about Rotary. Recently the Rotary Club of Winston Hills held its awards night and, in particular, well-deserved awards were presented to two remarkable people who contribute great things in the Seven Hills community. President John van den Burg presented the Pride of Workmanship Award to Alison Middlemiss and the Community Service Award to Marina Gilmore.

Alison Middlemiss was nominated by Deborah Gersbach, the chief executive officer of North West Disability Services. Alison was primarily nominated for her consistent dedication and skill in a challenging environment. As Deborah eloquently articulated in her nomination, Alison has a determination to achieve excellent outcomes for all participants in her programs and equally considers the impact of service delivery on her team of staff. Carers regularly commend her for her efforts and participants pine for her company. Staff members constantly remark that it is a pleasure to work with her. It is testament to Alison that management finds her to be such an excellent coordinator in a difficult environment. Management has great faith in her conduct of sensitive duties. Her commitment is her greatest strength and she is always concise and thorough. Alison has clearly demonstrated pride in her work; beyond this she has contributed enormously to our community. I congratulate Alison on her award and thank her for her work.

Marina Gilmore was nominated also by Joan van den Burg for the outstanding job she has done in Bushcare, particularly at the Third Settlement Reserve, Winston Hills, which I mentioned in my inaugural speech, where the Australia Day ceremonies are held each year. Marina's interests in bush regeneration, music and art have easily flowed into her passion for volunteering and contributing to the betterment of our great community. Marina is a well-known volunteer in the Winston Hills area, having been involved in Bushcare for more than 20 years. Her work in the restoration of the Third Settlement Reserve and Toongabbie Creek is an amazing testament to her dedication to restoring the area to natural bushland.

Marina also finds time to get involved in a number of other community groups, including the Toongabbie Music Club and the Parramatta Art Society. Marina is well regarded by the Parramatta City Council, Hills Shire Council and several other organisations. The Rotary Club of Winston Hills is extremely grateful for her long-term support of the Australia Day breakfast and citizenship ceremony. I congratulate Marina on her award and thank her for her work.

DO TIME TO STOP YOUTH CRIME

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [6.37 p.m.]: On 24 April 2015 I was proud to "Do Time to Stop Youth Crime." Each year the Fairfield-Cabramatta Police Citizens Youth Club [PCYC] hosts this event to help raise vital funding for at-risk youth in our area. A makeshift jail cell was placed in the middle of Freedom Plaza, Cabramatta. I was placed in it and I had to raise bail to get out. The concept of being locked up as a member of Parliament is lighthearted, but it serves to send a message that all in our community must do their best to prevent our youth from taking a path of crime. Each year club manager Mr Tony Cincotta, Senior Constable Christopher Kay, Senior Constable Nick Mougios, police from our local area command, businesses and community leaders band together to champion this great cause. Without fail generous members of the local community always dig deep and show their support. This year, as a result of a tremendous community effort, we raised more than \$20,000 and this will go towards youth development and crime prevention programs under the guidance of our local PCYC.

The funding received will make a huge difference for at-risk youth in my local area, and I am truly thankful for the kindness and generosity of my local community. The Police Citizens Youth Clubs NSW [PCYC] movement was founded in 1937. Today there are more than 60 clubs and centres across the State, with approximately 85,000 members. The PCYC is one of Australia's leading youth organisations. Having seen the Fairfield Cabramatta PCYC in action, I can understand why it has such a great reputation.

My local PCYC staff have a fantastic rapport with youth from the local area. The PCYC is well known for its boxing and weights gym. When I witnessed Tony, Nick and Chris in action with the young guys, it became clear to me why they are well respected. The Fairfield Cabramatta PCYC is not just a hangout for young kids or a place to go when you are bored. It is a family, and each and every person attending the PCYC is treated as a family member. With a wide variety of activities and no-holds-barred advice from the community liaison workers, youth in my local area need look no further than the PCYC when they need support through tough times.

I acknowledge the outstanding work the Fairfield Cabramatta PCYC does for at-risk youth in my local area and thank the Fairfield City Council for its support of this event. I also acknowledge my parliamentary colleague the member for Cabramatta, Mr Nick Lalich. He has given his support to the PCYC and youth in the local area. Further, I acknowledge and commend the following clubs and businesses that contributed to this year's PCYC Time 4 Kids: Guildford Leagues Club, Club Marconi, Smithfield RSL Club, Cabramatta Bowling Club, Cabramatta Rugby Leagues Club, Fairfield Hotel, Ray White Fairfield, Barone Pharmacy, Iron Chef Chinese Seafood Restaurant, Dragon Style Kung Fu and Kickboxing, Paradiso Receptions, Canley Heights RSL and Sporting Club, Cabra-Vale Diggers Club, Mounties, Buckets and Westpac. I congratulate everyone involved in this year's PCYC Time 4 Kids. I look forward to seeing what else is in store from the PCYC in the year ahead.

FORSTER SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB AWARDS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [6.41 p.m.]: Last Saturday I attended the Forster Surf Life Saving Club awards presentation night. What a fantastic night it was, celebrating the hard work of volunteers over the past summer. The night had two masters of ceremonies: the two amigos—there was a Mexican theme for the night—Ruby Jones and Sarah Ward. It was great to see young people in the club taking on roles such as emceeing and being part of the executive. It was a great night, and a number of awards were presented. The patrol award went to Jodie Blair and Gavin Williams. The president's award went to Jodie Blair and Anthony Harris. The surf sport award went to Laura Thurtell. Laura Thurtell is the wife of the superintendent of police. She won a number of gold medals at the surf lifesaving sports awards—

Mr Geoff Provest: Where were they held?

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: —which were held in New South Wales. The Gordon Godwin clubperson's award went to Keely Quinn and Gavin Williams. The top patrolling award, juniors, went to Zac Hender and Ruby Jones. As I said, Ruby Jones was one of the two amigos who were emcees for the night. A number of members received 100 per cent patrol awards. They were: Karen Kelly; Kylie Nicholson; Jim Wills, who is the medical superintendent of the Manning Base Hospital; Mick Coulton—I played rugby league against Mick Coulton back when I played for the North Sydney Junior Rugby League team—Ruby Jones; Gavin Williams; Bruce Higgs and Lorraine Morgan. These people are volunteers and patrol at the main beach in Forster throughout the summer. They turn up every single time they are rostered. Many of them filled in for others as well, which is absolutely fantastic.

The club has a number of sponsors, including Club Forster. On Friday night it won a most prestigious award—the ClubsNSW Clubs and Community Award for Outstanding Regional Initiative—for the Road to Recovery campaign for Curtis Landers. He is the young fellow who last year broke his neck playing football. He had only a 2 per cent chance of ever walking again. Notwithstanding that medical prognosis, through hard work, dedication and good medical treatment at the Royal North Shore Hospital and Westmead Children's Hospital, he is now walking again. He is still having physio but his progress is absolutely fantastic. Club Forster raised more than \$500,000. The Professionals Forster Tuncurry were also there, as was the masonic club and Beach Bums Cafe. Anyone who goes to the main beach at Forster goes to Beach Bums Cafe for breakfast. It is a fantastic place to eat. Adam Ward Earthmoving and Berg Building were also sponsors.

Behind any great club there is always a great committee. I pay tribute to the president, John Quinn; secretary Sheridan Jones; treasurer Denise Morgan; and the patrol director and nippers director, Beth Lee, and her husband, Simon Lee, the club captain. I think everyone understands how important surf lifesaving is to our society and our community. Surf lifesaving is an integral part of what we think it means to be Australian and allows us to enjoy the things that we in Australia love—sunshine, the beach and surfing. Throughout summer surf lifesavers patrol the beaches for us as members of the community.

Mr Alister Henskens: And friendship.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: And it is about friendship. The surf life saving club at Forster is one of six surf clubs in my electorate. I have previously mentioned Pacific Palms Surf Life Saving Club. Last year it won a number of national awards for rescues. The Forster Surf Life Saving Club performed a number of rescues this past summer. Luckily and thankfully, there were no deaths at the beach. I pay tribute to it and to the other surf clubs not only in my electorate but up and down the coast of New South Wales.

CENTRAL COAST STORM DAMAGE

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) [6.46 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about the recent storm event that devastated much of New South Wales, and refer particularly to the impact of the storm on the Central Coast region and my electorate of The Entrance. It is widely acknowledged that the storm event on 20 April and the days that followed was the worst natural disaster to occur on the Central Coast within living memory. Flooding affected much of the region, as rising oceans stopped swollen creeks and rivers draining to the sea. Tremendous winds brought down hundreds of trees and powerlines, resulting in more than 75,000 homes being without power for many days—and some for more than a week.

In the face of this destruction and the resulting unsafe environment, the response of the Central Coast community was one of great compassion, patience and cooperation. Emergency services workers—both the

professionals and the volunteers—responded promptly and professionally, as they always do. The police, fire brigade, Ambulance Service, Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service and Volunteer Rescue Association on the Central Coast, and the helpers who came from outside the region, did a fantastic job. They protected Central Coast residents in the hours following the storm and did a tremendous job. I also thank the employers of the volunteers for allowing staff the appropriate leave to attend to their volunteer duties.

I particularly acknowledge Alan Benson from the Wyong State Emergency Service. His became a reassuring voice on our local emergency radio service on the ABC. He spoke to Scott Levi every day about the state of play and advised us of the status of the disaster recovery efforts. The media on the Central Coast did a tremendous job, working cooperatively. We have a bunch of radio stations on the Central Coast that serve residents well: 2GO 107.7, Sea FM 101.3 and Star 104.5 FM. Their presenters gave over much of their broadcast time to advising the community about road closures, school closures and danger spots so that they could respond appropriately.

I mention particularly the Central Coast Volunteer Rescue Association and its president, Mark Constable, who does a tremendous job. That local group was formed on the coast 40 years ago. I recently toured the premises and was terribly impressed that the unit—the primary rescue service provider in Wyong shire—does so much with so little. The volunteers did a tremendous job giving up their time to help the State Emergency Service [SES] workers make our area safe.

About 1,600 of our public sector electricity staff worked on the Central Coast during these storms. Our local provider, Ausgrid, was assisted by Essential Energy staff from rural New South Wales. The loss of electricity made the term "essential service" clear to all of us on the coast. That electricity services are slated for privatisation under this Government remains a major concern for people on the Central Coast, who voted against it by a majority on 28 March. I remain opposed to privatisation of the electricity network. I have a real concern whether in the event of privatisation the for-profit sector will be willing or able to provide the same level of service that we received after these recent storms.

Our council workers did a fantastic job acting promptly and quickly to make the area safe and working with the community to get us back on our feet. Central Coast residents adapted to the storm in a marvellous fashion. Those with power offered help to those without and those with gas hot water offered hot water to those who needed it. The public sector workers at the local disaster recovery centre also did a great job. This morning I spoke with Genine Somers, who gave me a very professional briefing on how that service is assisting the people of the Central Coast. This natural disaster on the Central Coast showed that our community is at its best when we cooperate and work together for the common good. I congratulate the community on its efforts.

Private members' statements concluded.

Pursuant to resolution matter of public importance proceeded with.

INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY

Matter of Public Importance

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I call the first female member for Cootamundra.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.52 p.m.]: Thank you, Mr Acting-Speaker, for being the first to acknowledge that in this place. I ask the House to note as a matter of public importance that this House acknowledges the commitment, compassion and professionalism of the nurses caring for patients in the public health system; recognises that International Nurses Day is celebrated on 12 May each year, which is the birthday of the world's most famous nurse, Florence Nightingale; and notes that International Nurses Day is a time to reflect on the round-the-clock care and support that nurses give to more than 1.5 million patients in New South Wales public hospitals, at home or in the community.

Last week on 5 May we recognised the contribution of midwives through celebrations on International Day of the Midwife. Today on International Nurses Day we recognise and celebrate their nursing colleagues. We acknowledge and recognise that as the largest healthcare profession in the world nurses—the constantly present and integral component of contemporary health care—are central to the provision of effective, safe and compassionate care. On 12 May each year we celebrate the important work that nurses undertake in their provision of care to those in their time of need. The date of 12 May is an important day for all nurses because it was the birthday of one of history's most famous nurses, Florence Nightingale.

While the provision of nursing care has progressed significantly since Ms Nightingale's time, the nursing care cornerstones of compassion, empathy, kindness and advocacy continue to be solid and steadfast. We have more than 48,000 nurses and midwives working across NSW Health services. These staff are often the first and the ongoing contact for people seeking health care through public health services. The 2,276 nurses and midwives in the Western Local Health District and the 1,916 nurses and midwives in the Murrumbidgee Local Health District perform a vital role for people living in western and southern New South Wales.

Since 2013 NSW Health has held the Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Awards. Each year the Minister for Health presents winners and finalists with a trophy in acknowledgment of the outstanding contribution they have made to patients and the health system. In 2014 Ms Wendy Cloake received the Enrolled Nurse Award. Ms Cloake has worked in oncology nursing for 14 years and is currently employed at the Calvary Mater Newcastle. She was nominated by her peers as the ward resource for wound care. She has made it her mission to learn the latest evidence-based wound management care so that she can best serve the needs of her patients. Ms Cloake focuses on not only wound healing but also maintaining patients' dignity and enabling them to maintain a normal lifestyle, which is so very important for oncology patients. Wendy mentors new staff and provides guidance and moral support. She is a great example of the dedication of so many nurses and is a credit to her profession.

Ms Kelly Huntsman was the winner in the graduate category, which was a new award in 2014. Ms Huntsman is working for the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network. During her transition to professional practice year she impressed her colleagues with her strong commitment to patient advocacy and her focus on extending her clinical skills through professional development. She fostered productive and cohesive relationships with patients and all members of the multidisciplinary healthcare team. Whilst working within her scope of practice Kelly has developed skills outside her expected clinical and development roles that have enabled her to practise at an advanced level for a graduate nurse. Catherine Bateman, a clinical nurse consultant from the Southern NSW Local Health District, won the Judith Meppem Lifetime Achievement Award for 2014. The award was named after the State's first chief nurse, who served in the role between 1990 and 2002.

The decisions that nurses make each day, multiple times a day, impact positively on the health outcomes of patients and their families. It is for this reason that on this day we celebrate the exceptional work of our nurses in New South Wales. This year NSW Health welcomed more than 1,800 of its newest nurses and midwives to public health services. Those new graduates will be working across rural and metropolitan New South Wales within a range of healthcare settings. Many of them will have come from Cootamundra TAFE, which provides amazing training in the nursing profession.

Nurses are working across a range of specialties in NSW Health services. This year is especially important for child and family health nurses because it marks the 100th anniversary of the start of public services to promote infant, child and family health in New South Wales. Over the past 100 years almost 7.4 million babies have been born in New South Wales, most of whom have been cared for by NSW Health's child and family health nurses or their equivalent at the time. I am certain that many people in this room were assisted and supported by child and family health nurses when they had their children.

I am also sure that many, if not all, people in this room have had contact with a nurse at some point. It may have been associated with recovery and a return to health but sometimes nurses are also the rock that we lean on in times of loss. We recognise and acknowledge that important aspect of their role as well. Each day nurses undertake a difficult job that should never go unnoticed. Today's International Nurses Day celebrations across the country and worldwide reflect our gratitude for the integral role that nurses play in our society and in caring for us and our loved ones.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) [6.57 p.m.]: In one of my first addresses in this place since making my inaugural speech I am delighted to speak in this discussion on the matter of public importance. International Nurses Day is celebrated around the world on 12 May. As members may or may not be aware, that date is also the birthday of Florence Nightingale. Today we come together to celebrate and acknowledge nurses for providing an invaluable service to our hospitals, communities and families. International Nurses Day is an opportunity for us to recognise registered nurses, enrolled nurses, assistants in nursing and student nurses for their contributions to improved healthcare services and the delivery of better health outcomes for people across our electorates, the nation and the world.

The nurses are, essentially, the public face of our health system. They provide the support and care that can make a patient's experience easier and more comforting than might otherwise be the case. None of us wants

to go to hospital but when we or our partners, wives or husbands are admitted, we want to be sure that we and they will be cared for. Nurses, who make an invaluable contribution, provide that important care. The nursing workforce is the largest group of health professionals and is a vital resource for the health of our population. New South Wales has more than 48,000 nurses and midwives within the health system who provide round-the-clock care to the more than 1.5 million patients who are admitted to our hospitals each year. A recent survey identified nursing as the most ethical and honest profession in Australia—an achievement of which all nurses should be very proud. I especially acknowledge the professionalism and dedication of nurses. I thank them for the contribution they make to the wellbeing of the citizens of New South Wales.

I also acknowledge the organisations that campaign, lobby and take the extra step to ensure the safe care of all patients by calling for the implementation of mandatory safe nurse-to-patient staffing ratios and similar standards. I believe that, at heart, their actions are intended to ensure we act in the best interests of patients. I take off my hat to those unsung heroes for providing a service to our community that is in many instances beyond expectations. During election campaigns members and candidates meet many nurses, as I did during the recent campaign when I visited many communities in my electorate. Members do not have to speak to nurses for too long to discover the extra steps they take and the additional contributions they make in the interests of good health care.

For example, I spoke to a nurse in Campbelltown who said that she would work back a bit because she did not wish to leave her day's work unfinished, which essentially was looking after a particular patient. Going the extra mile is consistent with nurses' sense of duty and is a credit to their character and work ethic. On a personal note, while I am speaking about Campbelltown, I thank the nurses at Campbelltown Hospital, which is where my two sons were born. We continue to frequent the hospital for ongoing support. I am continually humbled by the dedication, care and concern of the nursing staff. We visit the hospital once a month with my eldest son, who requires ongoing paediatric care.

I am very pleased to acknowledge the contribution made by nurses in so many ways in all our communities. The nursing profession has come a very long way since the achievements of one of its greatest, Florence Nightingale. The future of the nursing profession is very bright. We thank all nurses for their lifesaving work and for all their care. Earlier I mentioned that nurses care not only for our patients at a time when it is essential that they receive care but also for relatives of patients, who also need comforting. Currently my father is quite ill and is being cared for in hospital. When I visited him in Brisbane I left the hospital knowing that he will be okay because of the fantastic hospital staff who were doing an unbelievable job. They made my dad feel very comfortable and they certainly gave me much hope and comfort from knowing that he certainly is in good hands. I know members will join me in acknowledging the invaluable work of our nurses. I commend the matter of public importance to the House.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.02 p.m.]: I thank the first female member for Cootamundra for bringing this matter of public importance to the attention of the House. International Nurses Day is celebrated around the world on 12 May, which, as mentioned earlier, is Florence Nightingale's birthday. Florence Nightingale is widely considered to be the founder of modern nursing. The International Nurses Day theme for 2015 is "A Force for Change: Care effective, Cost Effective". The International Council of Nurses has celebrated this great day since 1965 so I say this: Whatever your background, wherever you are from and whatever your age, this is the day to salute, praise and acknowledge the outstanding work of our professional nurses that is done for the benefit of our community and society. Today I read comments by nurses who were asked what they love most about their professions. Among other things, empathy, compassion, dedication, flexibility and patience were mentioned. Some of the comments were:

I love what I do. I spend a quarter of my life here and I pretty much love every minute...

Others said that they would never try any other job and went on to say that their job comes with its challenges but they would not do any other type of nursing. I say this: Thank a nurse, not only on International Nurses Day but every day. Their vital work helps everybody. The invaluable contribution they make to our health system is nothing short of breathtaking. Nursing continues to help to shape and deliver quality care and optimal patient outcomes. International Nurses Day is an opportunity not only to acknowledge past and present achievements but also to look forward to the future. Nursing will always play an important role in strengthening our healthcare system.

Today we acknowledge and thank every nurse in New South Wales for their continuing commitment to providing quality, compassionate and patient-centred care. Their expertise and hard work is the cornerstone that

makes our health environment one of the best in the world. Finally, on this important day when we acknowledge the critical role that nurses play I compliment and thank the Minister for Health, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, for her ongoing commitment to nursing in this State, and particularly in my electorate.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [7.05 p.m.], by leave: It is my pleasure to contribute to this discussion of the matter of public importance and to mark International Nurses Day, which is celebrated annually around the world on 12 May, which is the anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale. I recognise the member for Cootamundra for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. Some of the best people I know are nurses. That might not be surprising since it was my profession. I spent some 25 years in nursing. It is where I met my wife, who is currently a nurse. Many of my friends are also nurses, and I understand their commitment and dedication to their careers.

Nurses are there for us from the cradle to the grave. They are often the professionals at the bedside who help to ease our passage into the world. More often than not, they will also be the ones at our bedside at the end, providing not only care but also comfort—holding our hand, physically as well as metaphorically, as we inch towards our final breath. I did that on several occasions when I was a nurse. Nurses work by adherence to an egalitarian and professional code: No task is too demeaning and none is too difficult. If a job needs to be done, then a nurse is the person to do it.

Nurses are in our hospitals, our doctors' surgeries and clinics, our aged care homes, residential care facilities and hospices. They are in the community assisting those with disabilities and special needs, and they take important healthcare education to the front line. Some work on battlefields, in refugee camps, or in other areas of crisis and conflict. In this centenary year of Anzac, it is appropriate to note the strong contribution of nurses during wartime. More than 2,500 Australian nurses served during World War I—most of them overseas. Approximately 3,500 nurses served during World War II. Nurses also served in Vietnam, Korea, the Gulf conflicts and other theatres of war. Nurses were there at the ready on the day of the Gallipoli landing, attending to hundreds of injured men from the decks of the hospital ship *Gascon*, which was moored off Anzac Cove. Sister Ella Tucker, who was on duty, later recalled working from 9.00 a.m. to 2.00 a.m. the following day, caring for the 76 patients in her makeshift ward.

Today nurses throughout New South Wales have been marking International Nurses Day in a variety of ways—with morning teas, barbecues and the like—but they have also used the day to highlight issues that they regard as critical to their ability to perform their duties effectively, such as the need for appropriate nurse-to-patient ratios, the protection of universal health care, the importance of registered nurses in aged care and guaranteed minimum midwifery staffing for all maternity services throughout the State. A strong and suitably resourced nursing workforce is essential for the smooth and cost-effective running of our health institutions.

It is no coincidence that nurses frequently top surveys of the most trusted professionals. Of course, politicians would love to have that type of approval rating. We will not get a much better indication of the value of a profession than the type of rating nurses achieve, with a staggering 92 per cent of Australians aged between 14 and over rating nursing as the most ethical profession. I take this opportunity to wish the 43,000 nurses across our State a happy International Nurses Day. I thank the member for Cootamundra for bringing this matter of public importance to the attention of the House.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.08 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Campbelltown, Mr Greg Warren, for his contribution. I congratulate him on his inaugural address earlier today and I thank him for the positive comments he made this evening. I thank the member for Drummoyne, Mr John Sidoti, for his contribution this evening and also for his compliments to our wonderful Minister for Health, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, who works so hard in that portfolio. I also thank the member for Lake Macquarie, Mr Greg Piper, who raised some valid points during his address. On the Centenary of Anzac, it was appropriate that he mentioned the service of nurses on the battlefield during wartime and the service they provided for our boys. They continue that service in the many countries where Australia is serving around the world.

The nursing profession, with an approval rating of 92 per cent, is the most ethical profession. I am sure we would all like to have that level of approval in our chosen careers. I pay tribute to all nurses in New South Wales who are such a vital component of our community. At any one time, in the State's public hospitals, in private homes and in the community in general, there are approximately one and a half million patients. I congratulate the training facilities on the fantastic training they provide and I congratulate new recruits to the nursing profession. I encourage people to take up the nursing profession because it is of value to the community.

I mention some of the wonderful trainees and graduates. I give a special shout out to my nephew, Maximilian O'Brien, who took up the nursing profession a couple of years ago when he finished school in the Illawarra. He has a wonderful, caring nature and I know that anybody who ends up in Max's hands will be in safe hands indeed. He is a lovely, strong young man who cares very much for people. There are many nurses who have been providing care for many years such as my sister-in-law Judith Saeck. She has worked for many years at the Queanbeyan District Hospital.

Nursing is a wonderful profession for people who want a terrific job that assists the local community. They can be assured that they will be genuinely appreciated and warmly accepted by the community. At some stage everyone will need a nurse, whether one is getting married and having babies or falling ill in one's senior years. Life can present obstacles and we will all find that we need nurses. I wish nurses well on this International Nurses Day and I thank all members for their contribution to this discussion.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.12 p.m. until
Wednesday 13 May 2015 at 10.00 a.m.**
