

ASSYRIAN NEW YEAR .....	692
BAHAYRA YOUTH ASSOCIATION .....	696
BARBARA AND JOHN IKIN, GLOUCESTER ROTARY UNSUNG HERO AWARD RECIPIENTS.....	692
BETTER BUSES CAMPAIGN .....	700
BLUE MOUNTAINS SEPTIC PUMP-OUT SCHEME .....	703
BOHOLANO AND FRIENDS AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED .....	704
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE .....	634, 645, 676
CENTRAL COAST STORM DAMAGE.....	701
CLARENCE ELECTORATE .....	697
COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS .....	691
COWRA RAIL BRANCH LINES .....	686
DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES CURRICULUM .....	672
FEDERAL BUDGET AND HEALTH.....	670
FEDERAL BUDGET AND INFRASTRUCTURE .....	661
FEDERAL BUDGET AND TRANSPORT .....	668
GIPPS STREET RECREATIONAL PRECINCT .....	702
GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.....	657, 676
GRANVILLE ELECTORATE TRAIN TIMETABLE .....	687
GUILDFORD WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL MULTI-SENSORY ROOM .....	694
HEALTH SERVICES IN RURAL AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES .....	689
HEALTH SERVICES .....	666
HOLSWORTHY ELECTORATE SCHOOLS.....	704
HOLY FAMILY FAIR, EMERTON.....	696
HORNSBY ELECTORATE VOLUNTEERS .....	696
INAUGURAL SPEECHES .....	634
INNER CITY SUPER GROUP .....	695
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON COMPANION ANIMAL BREEDING PRACTICES IN NEW SOUTH WALES .....	675
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SENTENCING OF CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT OFFENCES.....	675
LAUREN MCSHANE, CAMPBELLTOWN ROTARY YOUTH EXCELLENCE AWARD RECIPIENT.....	694
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX UNIVERSITY GUIDE .....	693
LIVERPOOL MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE .....	693
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS .....	645
MAITLAND ELECTORATE HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE .....	705
NATIONAL MEDAL .....	698
NEPAL EARTHQUAKE .....	694
NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY WINTER SLEEPOUT .....	694
OBELISK HILL COASTCARE GROUP .....	692
ORANGE ELECTORATE NUFFIELD AUSTRALIA FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS.....	699
PARKES MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC SOCIETY .....	696
PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIAN .....	660
PARRAMATTA LEAGUES CLUB ELECTIONS .....	695
PARRAMATTA LIGHT RAIL .....	664
PETITIONS.....	675
PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS .....	684, 697
PUNCHBOWL STATION EASY ACCESS UPGRADE.....	684
QUESTION TIME .....	661
REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS.....	660
RETIREMENT OF JAN CLIFFORD .....	660
RETIREMENT OF SPENCER DAVIES.....	691
RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES .....	669
SERVICE NSW.....	673
SOUTH COAST ELECTORATE ANZAC DAY SERVICES .....	699
ST BENEDICT'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE.....	685
ST GEORGE HOSPITAL CANCER CARE CENTRE.....	688
SUTHERLAND SHIRE RELAY FOR LIFE.....	693
TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES .....	671
TRIBUTE TO ANNE TRIMBLE .....	692
TRIBUTE TO RON GREENWAY .....	693
TRIBUTE TO VANESSA TAMER.....	695

VARIATIONS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2014-15	74
VISITORS .....	660
WELLINGTON STREET, BONDI, TENNIS COURTS .....	695
WESTCONNEX.....	662
WOLLONGONG ELECTORATE LABOR PARTY PRESELECTION CAMPAIGN .....	696

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 14 May 2015

---

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

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

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Notices of Motions

**General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.**

**Pursuant to resolution inaugural speeches proceeded with.**

## INAUGURAL SPEECHES

**The SPEAKER:** I warmly welcome to the gallery the family, friends and supporters of the new member for Swansea. I also welcome former member of the Australian House of Representatives representing the seat of Charlton, the Hon. Greg Combet, and former member for Swansea Robert Coombs. All of you are most welcome to the Legislative Assembly this morning.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY** (Swansea) [10.10 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the custodians of the land on which we meet in this place. I pay my respects to the elders past and present and to their future leaders. I am proud to stand in this Chamber as the elected representative of the people of Swansea and so I also pay my respects to the first nations people of that land, the Awabakal people and the Darkinjung people. I am honoured to stand here knowing that the people of Swansea have put their trust in me to represent them. Being elected to the New South Wales Parliament by your community is one of the greatest privileges one can receive. Thank you. To the people of Swansea: I will represent you with integrity and with honesty, and I will always respect the interests of our community. I am humbled that you have given me this responsibility. You will not be disappointed.

Swansea has an abundance of natural beauty. It is surrounded by two significant lake systems, Lake Macquarie and the Tuggerah Lakes. It is also home to the stunning Munmorah State Conservation Area with its sparkling coastline and enviable nature walks. There are four surf clubs stretched along the 40 kilometres of pristine coast, which is the eastern border of the electorate—Lakes Surf Club, Catherine Hill Bay, Caves Beach and Swansea Belmont. I am proud to tell you that I am a member of the Caves Beach Surf Club, where I volunteer my time as a lifesaver. There has been a bit of competition about which electorate has the most beautiful beach. I am not going to weigh into that debate, because I know the answer. However, I can inform the House that I host the safest beach because I am there. You are all welcome to come and visit. Be assured that whilst you are swimming you will be safe. My patrol has not lost a swimmer yet.

I joined the Australian Labor Party when I was 19 years of age. I joined because it is the party that shares my values of fairness, justice and equality. I grew up in a working-class family. We were taught to love and respect ourselves and others, to treat people how you would like to be treated, to think about others and to stand up for what is right. But, above all else, we were taught to be proud of who we are and loyal to what we believe in. Today I am here to share not just some of my story but also the stories of the people and the communities I represent. If ever there were any doubt about my purpose for being here it was quickly dispelled last week in question time. The Minister for Skills was asked about the debacle in which this Government has left TAFE NSW—underfunded, understaffed, under-resourced, overpriced and inaccessible. The Minister's ill-considered response was, "We make no apology about the fees."

I know that in my electorate apprentices are paying between \$500 and \$1,500 extra for their courses. This is creating barriers for people in the Swansea electorate who want to learn. Labor has always valued vocational education. Labor values TAFE because TAFE means skills and skills mean jobs—jobs for our young people, jobs for the disadvantaged or jobs for those who are looking to make a positive change in their lives.

Every day we depend in some way on the services, skills or support of someone with a qualification from TAFE, such as the mechanic who fixes our car, the early childhood educator who looks after our children or the hairdresser who cuts our hair.

There are a large number of tradies in the Swansea electorate. They all relied on the local TAFE to gain their qualifications. In the 2011 census it was found that, at 10.9 per cent, Swansea has the State's third-highest proportion of residents employed in construction, at 24.6 per cent, Swansea has the sixth-highest proportion of residents with trade qualifications and, at 56.2 per cent, it has the fifth-highest proportion of residents who left school in year 10 or earlier. I commit in this House to being a champion of TAFE for the people of Swansea and New South Wales.

It is with enormous pride that I stand here today in the Legislative Assembly of the New South Wales Parliament, the oldest Parliament in this country, to deliver what will be the first of many speeches. To give some context, there have been 1,639 members of the Legislative Assembly. Only 57 of them have been women, which includes those who are here today. Being here in this Chamber as the elected representative for the electorate of Swansea is a privilege of great proportion and one that I will be reminded of every time I enter this place.

I was preselected as the Labor candidate in February 2015. As many of my colleagues will attest, winning preselection in a political party is no easy feat. I thank my local Australian Labor Party branch members, many of whom are in the gallery, for throwing their support behind me to be their candidate at the 2015 general election. I also thank Anthony Albanese, Jill Hall, Pat Conroy, John Graham and the Leader of the Opposition, Luke Foley, for their encouragement and support. To Greg Combet, it was your support and encouragement that gave me the confidence to stand for public office as a representative of the Australian Labor Party. You are one of the most decent human beings I have ever met. I thank you for your belief in me.

With the help and commitment of the local branch members we laid out a plan to run a solid grassroots campaign. Team Catley was headed up by Deahnna Richardson, Elle Lingard and Adam Shultz. They were fun, energetic and committed and I have already booked them in for four years time. To Rose Jackson, thank you so much for keeping us on course. However, Deahnna Richardson was the champion of the Swansea campaign. She ran a tight ship with military precision. She is my stalwart, she is loyal and I trust her with all my heart. You are my friend.

At 15 months it was a long campaign. I thank those of my dedicated campaign team who were with me from the beginning to the end: Councillor Kay Fraser, Steven Jones, Lindsay Hall, Councillor Doug Vincent, Sean Goss, Kathy Tudor, David Murray, Judy Wells, Christine Buckley and Val Symington. Their level of enthusiasm and energy never wavered. They kept me going. I also extend my thanks to you, John Robertson. John visited the campaign on many occasions and it was a great surprise when he came doorknocking with me in Budgewoi. The residents were very impressed. Thank you very much, John. So many volunteers spent countless hours knocking on doors, phoning people or supporting me at street stalls, shopping centres and markets. I know that many of you are here today. I am so grateful for your assistance and the Labor Party is so lucky to have you. With more than 64 per cent of the vote, it was a resounding victory for Labor and for you and your efforts.

Together we had more than 20,000 conversations with our community. It was truly a humbling experience. The issues have varied from croaking frogs to building airports, but in September I met Gary. He lives in Budgewoi and he is a crazy South Sydney supporter, but he described to me the tough times his wife was experiencing. "She has cancer but it's better now, though, since we don't have to travel to Nepean Hospital every week for treatment", he told me. You can imagine my surprise on learning this. Gary explained to me that even though he had pleaded with health officials to receive treatment locally, he and his wife had to trek down to the Nepean Hospital twice a week for six months. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case. This Government's cuts to health and health workers contribute to these dreadful stories that we hear all too often.

The guiding principles for the health of our community should not be determined by what people can afford. As a community we must ensure that health policy is guided by our values, not the bottom line. It is and always has been Labor governments that have invested in better public health. I am proud to stand for the party that introduced Medicare—a universal health care system and primary funder for health care in Australia, a system that allows access for everyone regardless of their economic or social context, where they live, or their medical needs. Health care should prioritise patient care and be driven by improving patient outcomes. It should never be relative to profits of shareholders or economic gain. I stand for a strong and progressive public health system. But that means keeping hospitals in public hands.

It also means investing in the nurses and the doctors of our health system instead of burning them out and taking them for granted. It means supporting cutting-edge medical research. I acknowledge the groundbreaking research at the Hunter Medical Research Institute, which I may say was funded by Labor governments. I make special mention of the member for Strathfield, who knows how important the institute is for the Hunter region. She was instrumental in securing State funding at that time along with the local Hunter Federal Labor members. We cannot afford the conservatives' privatisation plan for health and hospitals in New South Wales. Unfortunately, some private healthcare operators put returning profits to shareholders before patient care. It is right for us to have legitimate concern about the ability of the private sector to deliver health care to everyone who needs it, irrespective of their ability to pay.

Let me just go back to Gary for a moment. Gary and his wife are pretty working class. They live in a modest home and they provide for their family, but they struggle with the rising costs of living. They cannot afford private health insurance. They are pretty typical, in fact, of the many people who live in the Swansea electorate. Gary is relieved that the trips to the Nepean Hospital now are only twice every six months, but he was also very grateful for the treatment that his wife had received, even though it had had significant impacts on their lives. These people do not really ask for much, and they are very accepting. Madam Speaker, I, on the other hand, am not so accepting. The people of Swansea deserve access to quality health care and I will fight for that for them every day. Health care is not something on which I am willing to compromise and it is not something that the people of New South Wales should have to concede or negotiate.

There is a lot of inequality in our health system and those on the other side are happy to actively contribute to this disparity. I watch the gap between the haves and the have-nots in my community every day. I will work hard to reduce that gap and ensure that there is fairness in our health system. When I talk about fairness, justice and equality and what this means to ordinary people, there is no better example than the access to education and health. It has always been apparent to me that education leads to opportunity—a better future and a better life. A great education equips you with the skills that you need to get a good job and to establish a secure life for yourself and your family. It is fair and just that everyone should be entitled to get a world-class education, regardless of his or her background. Education is the great equaliser. You do not have to look far, though, to find those who simply would not be where they are without access to public education.

Last year I spoke to a woman named Linda. At the age of 32, Linda's husband had a stroke, which prevented him from working. He was a builder. Linda had always been a stay-at-home mum. She described to me how scared she was for her family's future. That was until she found TAFE. Linda retrained through TAFE and now she is the sole income earner for her family. She is a confident woman going forward. I was very proud to meet her. Likewise you do not have to look far to see how cuts to education devastate the lives of those who otherwise could not afford it. Earlier this year I spoke to a man in Lake Munmorah. He had two subjects to complete before he finished his assistant plumbing course at Wyong TAFE. To get by, he worked nights at the Sanitarium factory at Cooranbong. Before he could finish, Wyong TAFE stopped offering the course and the nearest TAFE campus which offered it was Maitland. Craig simply could not keep his job and finish his course. He was forced to choose.

It is not only morally wrong to deny an education to people like Craig but also ultimately it leaves our society poorer. The short-sightedness of those who seek to erect barriers to educational pathways completely baffles me. I have always believed that education is a public good. All of us want to be confident that the electrician we employ knows how to wire our house properly, that the doctors who treat us know exactly what they are doing and that the bridge we are driving on is designed by a quality engineer. The fact that socio-economic status is still a key determining factor for educational outcomes says to me that there is much more to be done. This is just not good enough and I intend to be part of the solution to change it.

While education is crucial to empowering people to reach their full potential, there is nothing more dignifying than having a job. We all know that to raise a family in financial security and to get the satisfaction we all deserve in our lives, most people need a good, secure and rewarding job. But the benefits of a good job go beyond the individual and the family. They can be seen in vibrant communities, in safe streets and in strong regional and national economies. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that good jobs are at the heart of a strong society. That is why they are at the heart of what Labor stands for. But for too many people, finding or keeping that good job is not getting any easier. In fact, it is getting harder.

In the last year alone New South Wales has seen 24,000 more people become unemployed. In fact, since the Australian Labor Party [ALP] was last in power in New South Wales, we have seen 45,000 people join the unemployment queues. In Swansea the unemployment rate is approximately 8.1 per cent. But those statistics

mask the real cost of a lack of a good job. They do not show the worry felt at countless dinner tables as families struggle to make ends meet. They do not show the heartache of relationships broken down because of financial stress and the guilt of kids who blame themselves for that breakdown, regardless of what their parents say. They can never show the human cost but it is, in fact, the human cost that really matters.

The solution to too few jobs, though, is not more precarious jobs, lower wages or the abandoning of communities where generations have made their homes. It is investment not only in people and their skills but also in industries, technologies and infrastructure. The solution is not a government that sits on its hands and says, "Just let the market fix it." It is a government that says, "We have a responsibility to provide the vision, infrastructure and impetus for growth that creates good jobs."

In our region we know what it means to have to adapt to change. We have experience in the devastation that wholesale industry closures can have. But we also have experience in building the new industries and the new jobs that will underpin our children's prosperity. We are home to the CSIRO's National Energy Centre, which is doing cutting-edge research into solar and other new, clean energy. We are home to the Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources, which brings together the country's best thinkers to invent the energy technology that the whole world will need to tackle climate change. These are not just research centres for the sake of research; they are collaborative efforts with industry to create whole new industries. They are not just inventing the technologies of the future; they are helping to create the businesses that make the future a reality and, in the process, creating those good, secure, rewarding jobs that we need so desperately.

In the United States of America jobs in the solar energy industry have increased by 22 per cent since 2013. Some 170,000 Americans are now employed in turning sunshine into clean energy. But here, while we have the best solar resources in the world and while we lead the world in solar technology, our investment in renewables is the lowest since 2002. Rather than supporting this crucial industry, capitalising on our gifts and our smarts, Liberal-Nationals governments, at State and Federal levels, are sabotaging our future through policy incompetence and inaction. Whether it is renewables, ship-building or high-tech services that need the best broadband possible, we need a government that will fight for an advanced, dynamic and strong economy and, crucially, for the jobs that must sit at the heart of that economy. As long as I have the honour of representing the people of Swansea they can rest assured that their local member will be fighting for that economy and for those jobs—for them and for their children.

My father instilled in me the importance of having a job. Jack Catley was a seafarer. In his day it was not uncommon for seafarers to be out of work for long periods, worried about providing for their families while they waited on the roster. Jack and his colleagues campaigned to change these work practices and to install a system that was fair and gave workers some certainty. My dad is a life member of the Maritime Union of Australia. His union has fought for better working conditions for maritime workers, on our shores and internationally, for more than 120 years. I have been associated with that union all my life. I have walked with them in support of an apology for our Indigenous brothers and sisters. I have rallied with them against apartheid in South Africa. I have cried with them when a worker does not return home as a result of a workplace accident. And I stood shoulder to shoulder with them during the 1998 Patrick's dispute—one of the most despicable attacks on workers in the industrial history of this country.

The working men and women of the Maritime Union of Australia—whom I proudly call my friends—have had a significant influence in shaping my beliefs, which I know will make me a better parliamentarian. I extend heartfelt thanks to the trade unions that supported me and helped Swansea return to Labor. I thank the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union [AMWU], the CFMEU Mining and Energy Division, United Voice, the Independent Education Union [IEU], the nurses, the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association [SDA], the teachers, the fireys and, of course, the Maritime Union of Australia [MUA]. I give special thanks also to Daniel Wallace from the Newcastle Trades Hall Council.

Many of my friends, family and supporters are here today. I am delighted to be able to share this proud day with you. Thank you. Jack and Ann Catley, my parents, are also here today. They are joined by Roslyn, Lorraine and Richard—my sisters and brother. They will all tell you that, as the baby of the family, I am spoiled rotten. I would like to put it on the public record: You are right. You may have all spoilt me but I assure you it does not take away from the love and respect I have for each and every one of you and for your families. It is impossible to take on this responsibility without a strong support structure behind you. I have only to ask and you are there. I would not have been able to do this without you. Thank you so much.

My lovely daughters, Alex, Georgia and Charlotte: You are the loves of my life and my work here is driven by my desire to make this place a better one for you so that you have a better future. Please know that

there is nothing you cannot achieve. To my husband, Robert, you and I are lifetime partners. We make a great team. We share the same values: fairness, justice and equality. Everything we do is guided by those values, including our relationship. I do, however, hope that you look to using the shining example set by the partner of the former member for Swansea over the next four years. Congratulations to my Labor colleagues, those who have been re-elected and to the new members of this House—the class of 2015. Game on!

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! On behalf of the newly elected member for Mount Druitt, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the former member for Mount Druitt, the Hon. Richard Amery; the former member for Londonderry, Allan Shearan; Mr Youssef Hassan Shawki, Consul-General of the Arab Republic of Egypt; and Father Gabriel Yassa from the Coptic Church, Mount Druitt Parish. I also welcome to the Legislative Assembly local government representatives, family, friends and supporters of the newly elected member for Mount Druitt.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA** (Mount Druitt) [10.45 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Mr Deputy-Speaker, parliamentary colleagues, distinguished guests, His Excellency Youssef Hassan Shawki, Consul-General of the Arab Republic of Egypt, family and friends, I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered, the Gadigal people, and pay my respects to them and their elders, past and present. I also acknowledge the Darug people of the land I represent and pay my respects to them and their elders, past and present. I stand before you today to address the Fifty-sixth Parliament of New South Wales as the member for Mount Druitt. I am deeply privileged to be given this opportunity. I would like to thank the wonderful people of Mount Druitt electorate for bestowing this great honour upon me.

Like many other migration stories, my family's story is one of courage and determination. Our journey began more than 45 years ago when my parents made the brave decision to migrate to Australia, a country where we did not have any family or friends. I was born in Sudan of Egyptian parentage. In 1969 my father, who was a young and adventurous accountant seeking a fresh start and new opportunities for his children, decided to respond to an advertisement in the local newspaper from a firm that was seeking accountants in Australia. I was only eight years old at the time. Together with my parents and my two younger siblings, we travelled to what seemed to be the end of the earth. Our destination was Melbourne, as this was where my father's new job was based.

We arrived on Anzac Day and my family immediately experienced the true meaning of climate change. Coming from a country of extreme heat, the cold weather in Melbourne caused the entire family to fall ill within a few days. My mother, who sadly passed away five years ago from cancer, insisted that we return to Sudan immediately. My father, on the other hand, suggested that we give Sydney a go because—and I quote—“I noticed that the sun was shining when we were transiting to Melbourne.” Just a short five days later we arrived in Sydney, on 30 April 1969. Being complete strangers in a foreign land, our family relied on the advice of our taxidriver from the airport to help us find temporary accommodation. Redfern was our first stop. However, within a few weeks we moved to Marrickville, as it was where my father secured employment as an accountant. I was enrolled at Marrickville Primary School and, like many other students who were predominantly from a Greek background, I could not speak one word of English.

How we communicated with each other was a miracle—but kids being kids, we found a way. Within a few weeks, I mastered the Greek language and went home convincing my parents that I was speaking English. I guess my friends also went home speaking Arabic. Soon afterwards, my family discovered the newly established Coptic Orthodox Church in Redfern. The church was in its early inception and had a small congregation of about 100 members. We began to make new friends and assimilate in our new home. Please allow me to digress for a moment. From these humble beginnings, I am pleased to say that the Coptic Church in Sydney today has 29 parishes, three schools and approximately 70,000 members. I acknowledge the first Coptic Bishop to Sydney, His Grace Bishop Daniel, head of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Sydney and Affiliated Regions, who is represented here by Father Gabriel Yassa from the Mount Druitt parish. I would also like to acknowledge Father Shenouda Mansour, General Secretary of the NSW Ecumenical Council, and thank the Coptic community leaders and members for being here today.

Following our short stay in Marrickville, we moved to Prospect in Western Sydney in 1970. This decision was motivated by housing affordability and my parents' desire to embrace the great Australian dream of purchasing their own home. I am proud to say that Western Sydney is where my family placed their roots, and have remained ever since. So it should come as no surprise that, following my marriage in 1987, I moved to the Mount Druitt electorate, where I purchased my first home and raised my family. I first became interested in politics in the late 1980s when I had the opportunity to witness firsthand the hardship experienced by some

people in the community. This defining moment occurred in 1987 whilst I was employed as a junior engineer at Holroyd City Council. I assisted an elderly gentleman who could not afford to replace his set of dentures after they fell down a council stormwater drain. Thankfully, I was able to retrieve them; however, his inability to afford another pair struck a chord with me. I became acutely aware that people within our community—many of whom we often call friends and neighbours—struggle financially on a daily basis.

It was at this point I resolved to help ensure that all people would have better access to what I believe are the basic necessities in life. I wanted to be a voice for the voiceless in our community, and fight for equal access to health, education and basic services. I strongly believe every person should be treated equally, with respect and dignity, regardless of their postcode or where they come from. So in my pursuit to make a difference and with a strong determination to be part of the political process, I joined the great Australian Labor Party some 23 years ago. I was attracted to the party's principles of social justice, including equal access to health and education, employment opportunities, and greater equality of wealth and power. I was fortunate to be elected as a local councillor to Blacktown City Council in 2004 and as deputy mayor in 2006-07.

Over the past 11 years I have worked tirelessly to stand up for our community and make a positive contribution to our great city. My fellow councillors and I have recorded many achievements, and I make special mention of reopening Mount Druitt swimming pool, saving more than 800 homes from compulsory acquisition, stopping the privatisation of council's childcare centres, preventing the sale of many of our small parks and reserves, and restoring the 50 per cent pensioner rebate on rates in the upcoming budget. All of these triumphs have greatly benefited many residents and helped to improve their standard of living.

The Mount Druitt electorate encompasses 15 suburbs, with a population of more than 83,000 people. The area was named by Major George Druitt after he was granted 2,000 acres by New South Wales Governor Lachlan Macquarie. A local landmark cottage known as "The Manse", which is situated in The Avenue, Mount Druitt, was built as part of Druitt's property. It was later sold to Robert Kennedy, who, upon his death, bequeathed it to the Presbyterian Church. In 2000 the property was acquired by Blacktown City Council and I am pleased that, as a newly elected councillor, I was able to advocate and achieve the full restoration of this historic building. It is now the headquarters of the Mount Druitt Historical Society and open to the public. The building is listed on both the local and State heritage registers.

Since the inception of the seat of Mount Druitt in 1971, we have had three great Labor stalwarts representing our community—Jim Southee, Tony Johnson and, as many of you will agree, the greatest representative of all, my good friend and mentor the Hon. Richard Amery. To Richard, on behalf of the residents of Mount Druitt, I thank you for the distinguished service you have provided over the past 32 years. I wish you and Marie all the very best as you embark on a new chapter in your lives. I also sincerely hope you will continue to have an involvement in our community. There is no doubt that I have some very big shoes to fill and I will work extremely hard to address the needs of our constituents as the fourth Labor representative of this electorate.

My campaign slogan was "Standing up for us", and that is exactly what I intend to do during my time in public office. I will be a strong advocate for the electorate and will fight to secure the services and facilities that our area richly deserves. I am committed to having our community's voice heard in this great Parliament of ours, and I will lobby for changes to help improve the daily lives of our constituents. These changes include restoring local health services, improving local roads and transport services, increasing maintenance on public housing, addressing homelessness, retaining essential public services such as electricity in public hands, and reinstating funding to TAFE. I strongly believe education should be recognised as an investment in our nation's future and not as a burden on our budget.

I am pleased to say that the constituents of Mount Druitt are hardworking and honest people who are simply trying to get ahead in life. Despite the ongoing misrepresentation of the electorate by some media, Mount Druitt boasts a strong sense of community and unity. It is time we put a stop to the stereotypes and the stigmatisation often associated with the electorate, and start highlighting and promoting the positive aspects of our area. Mount Druitt is home to Blacktown International Sportspark. Initially constructed for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, this multi-sports venue is now utilised by many professional sporting organisations. They include Sydney Blue Sox, Western Sydney Wanderers Football Club, New South Wales Speed Blitz Blues and Sydney Thunder, and the Greater Western Sydney Giants. The precinct attracts more than 500,000 visitors a year and offers world-class sporting facilities.

The electorate also has a number of other quality community and recreational facilities such as the \$8 million state-of-the-art Mount Druitt Hub, Emerton Leisure Centre, Mount Druitt Swimming Pool, Western



Sydney International Dragway, and Nurragingy Reserve—a popular regional parkland. On the business front, it is anticipated that the soon to be developed Sydney Business Park will deliver some 17,000 direct jobs to Western Sydney. Located only a short distance away, the 256-hectare site will integrate industrial, commercial and bulky goods and service the Mount Druitt electorate. Labor has a proud tradition of delivering for the electorate of Mount Druitt. As the newly elected member, I will aim to continue this long and distinguished tradition.

In 1955 New South Wales Labor Premier Joseph Cahill introduced electric train services to Mount Druitt. This initiative put Mount Druitt on the map and connected it to other parts of Sydney. The availability of public transport also expanded job opportunities for constituents who could now travel more easily to their workplace. In the early to mid-1970s, the Whitlam Government directed large amounts of funding to Western Sydney, which resulted in sewerage being introduced to countless suburbs. The Whitlam Government was also responsible for the construction of Westmead Hospital. On a personal level, I was a beneficiary of the Whitlam Government's decision to abolish university fees in 1974. This enabled me to obtain a Bachelor of Engineering degree from the University of Wollongong and pursue a career in civil engineering for more than 25 years.

The Wran Labor Government, which was elected in 1976, delivered Mount Druitt TAFE and expanded the railway tracks between Blacktown and St Marys railway stations from two to four lines. Most significantly, it also delivered Mount Druitt Hospital. This was a direct result of constituents experiencing difficulties in accessing medical services at either Blacktown or Nepean hospitals. Sadly, over the past few years services at the hospital have been progressively downgraded. The cardiac ward was closed in the last term of government, forcing constituents to travel further to receive treatment for often life-threatening conditions. The health service was also renamed Blacktown Mount Druitt Hospital in a strategic move to reduce the importance of Mount Druitt as a stand-alone hospital.

Successive Labor Governments and continued Labor representation have resulted in the construction of a number of new schools throughout the electorate, including the establishment of Chifley College, the first senior-only high school; upgraded facilities and a new hall at Colyton Primary School; new libraries at Rooty Hill High School and Eastern Creek Primary School; the expansion of Mount Druitt TAFE; the construction of a new palliative care ward at Mount Druitt Hospital; lifts at Mount Druitt railway station; a bushwalkers rescue centre at Rooty Hill; a \$12 million courthouse at Mount Druitt; and a commuter car park at Mount Druitt railway station. In spite of all those achievements, more needs to be done for our growing electorate.

I will be actively lobbying for vital infrastructure works that are urgently required, including easy access lifts at Rooty Hill railway station and the duplication of the Francis Street overpass. I will also be very vocal in my efforts to restore full services at Mount Druitt Hospital; abolish the Smart and Skilled reforms to TAFE colleges, which resulted in many tertiary students abandoning their studies; and increase funding for the maintenance of public housing, which in the past two years alone has been cut by more than \$107 million. It is time that the constituents of Mount Druitt receive the basic facilities and services that others in Greater Sydney take for granted.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank a number of people who have helped me to stand in this place today as the new member for Mount Druitt: former New South Wales Premier, the Hon. Kristina Keneally, for taking the time to officially launch my campaign; Federal member for Chifley, Ed Husic, MP, for his continuous support and encouragement—I look forward to working with him in representing this great electorate; former Opposition Leader John Robertson, MP, for his ongoing contributions to the party; Michael Daley, MP; Guy Zangari, MP; the Hon. Sophie Cotsis, MLC; the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, MLC; and Opposition Whip Noreen Hay, MP, for their invaluable guidance and advice.

I thank the Mayor of Blacktown City Council, Councillor Stephen Bali, for leading our city and delivering the largest infrastructure works program in the council's history—may we continue to represent our community and our residents to the best of our abilities. I thank Councillor Tony Bleasdale, a wonderful friend and supporter throughout my time in public office, and his wife, Nina, for being here today. Councillor Charlie Lowles is a great champion of social justice, and I have learned so much from you. I am grateful for your leadership, friendship, loyalty and unwavering support. I also thank Councillor Susai Benjamin, Blacktown City Council General Manager, Kerry Robinson, and the directors and managers from Blacktown City Council who are here this morning.

I acknowledge the support I have received from NSW Labor, in particular Jamie Clements, Kaila Murrain and Dave Latham. I make special mention of Dom Ofner for being such a fantastic campaign organiser.

and thank him for his continuous support and guidance. I thank also former Consul-General to Chicago and former Federal member for Chifley, the Hon. Roger Price, and his wife, Robyn, for their assistance on polling day. I thank former member for Londonderry, Mr Allan Shearan, for his friendship and support, and the three branch campaign directors, Brad Bunting, Phil Desveaux and Peter Clapham, for their outstanding organisational skills and contribution to my campaign.

I express my gratitude for the continued support of various union representatives, including my union, Professional Engineers Australia, New South Wales Director, Paul Davis; Unions NSW Community Organiser, Alison Rahill; Australian Workers Union, New South Wales State Secretary, Russ Collison; Rail Tram and Bus Union State Secretary, Alex Claassens; United Services Union State Secretary, Graeme Kelly; and Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Industries Union State Secretary, Jim Metcher. I thank the State Electorate Council [SEC] Executive, Gayle Barbagallo and Tom Kenny, along with the many volunteers who worked tirelessly and contributed in many ways during my campaign. More than 200 people volunteered to help me in the run-up to the election, but time does not permit me to name them all. I offer my heartfelt and sincerest thanks for your invaluable contributions.

I thank also Derek Margerison, Anthony Pereira, Sophie Young, Fraida Pisani, Rosa Sharp, Mila Martin, Edith Johnson, Sam Barbagallo, Kate Barbagallo, Ben Price, Roy Amery, Richard Hoskins, Ted Kaciewicz, Arnold Metcher, Julie and Robert Muir, Lyn Muir, Alfred Said, Nicole Seniloli, Selepa and Pesa Tualai, Jela Villagas, and Shirley and Ian Watt for going beyond the call of duty. I also extend my appreciation to various local organisations, in particular the Egyptian, Sudanese and Filipino communities. I thank the Sub Continent Friends of Labor, represented today by Dr Moninder Singh and Ejaz Khan.

I thank my hardworking parliamentary staff, Sarah Hatch and Phil Desveaux, for all the great work they do in serving the people of the Mount Druitt area. Last but not least I thank my wonderful family—all my relatives who assisted with campaign activities. My 83-year-old dad, Mamdouh, in spite of his poor health, campaigned continuously on my behalf. Furthermore, I publicly thank my parents for their extraordinarily brave decision to move to Australia. Their desire to build a better life for their young family ultimately enabled my siblings and me to embrace the opportunities afforded to us in this great country of ours.

I am immensely proud of my siblings' achievements. My brother, Adel, is a commander in the NSW Police Force whilst my sister, Lillian, and her husband, Dr George Ibrahim, own and operate a medical centre in the Mount Druitt electorate. When my parents embarked on their remarkable migration journey, I am sure they never imagined that I would one day be standing here before you as an elected representative in the New South Wales Parliament.

My daughter, Tina, and son-in-law, John, I thank you for your continued encouragement and support. I look forward to becoming a grandfather for the first time when you welcome your child in August. My youngest daughter, Natalie, was only one year old when I was first elected to council. I thank you for your patience and understanding of my commitment to our community. I am confident that you are learning the value and importance of helping others. My mother-in-law, Mary, has lived with my family for many years. She is always looking after me and ensuring that I have eaten. My stomach and I thank you. Finally, I thank my beautiful wife, Dimyana, for all her love and support in my pursuit of public office. Dimyana has made many sacrifices over the years and I am extremely lucky that she has been beside me every step of the way. As they say, behind every man is a great woman; and let me tell you, she is the greatest.

Once again, thank you all for your support in this incredible journey. It is truly a great honour and privilege to have been elected as the new member for Mount Druitt. As part of Luke Foley's team, I look forward to working with my Labor colleagues in delivering services and infrastructure for Mount Druitt. I will be a strong advocate for the electorate because it is my home. I am committed to representing our residents and ensuring our community's voice is heard loud and clear in the Fifty-sixth Parliament of New South Wales. Thank you.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** On behalf of the newly elected member for Rockdale I acknowledge the presence in the gallery today of former members for Kogarah Cherie Burton and Brian Langton, former Senator for New South Wales Graham Richardson, Consul General of Greece Stavros Kyrimis and the family, friends and supporters of the new member. I welcome you—yassas—to the Legislative Assembly today.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER** (Rockdale) [11.23 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and pay my respects to

their elders both past and present. I also acknowledge the Dharawal people, who were the first people to meet Captain James Cook when he arrived in Botany Bay in the heart of my electorate. I speak for the first time in this place with a sense of great humility and awe. While it is traditional to leave acknowledgements to the end, there is one person whom I need to thank before all others and without whom I would not be here today.

Four years ago I suffered a loss at the 2011 State election. Never in its history was Rockdale not held by the Labor Party. At that point I do not think I could have imagined running again. I remember feeling lost on that Sunday morning. For perhaps the first time in my life I had truly tasted defeat. I will never forget the words of my wife, Magdalene, as I lay there moping and feeling sorry for myself. She told me to get up off my arse, get back to work and keep fighting to represent the community I love. Magda and I have been married for 31 years and she has always been there for me. I remember as teenagers we stayed up late at night discussing all we hoped and dreamed to achieve in our lives.

Together we have raised five wonderful children. We have four beautiful grandsons and—without any pressure, kids—we await many more. Magda, we have made a life built on your dedication and love of our family. Without your endless patience, kindness and care, all of our successes would have been nothing but a pipedream. Magda, I cannot thank you adequately for all you have done or what you continue to do, but I promise that I shall make you proud as we embark on this next stage of our lives, and I pay tribute to you today.

I feel so privileged to have come to this place representing Rockdale, where I have lived and worked my entire life. Rockdale is a vibrant and multicultural community. I would boast that there are not too many places in Sydney where you will hear conversations being conducted in half a dozen languages as you walk down the street. These days we take immense pride in our diversity, but it was not always so. Growing up, I remember feeling a deep sense of shame when my mother would speak Greek to me in public. Now I feel ashamed that I was ever embarrassed by my mum.

My mother, Fotini, is the strongest, bravest woman I know. She is the moral compass of our family; she has never had an ill word to say about anybody and she shows nothing but kindness and love for the world. When she was 19, with not a word of English and nothing but the clothes on her back, she left her village to migrate to Australia. Mum had seen nothing but a bleak future in a dying town. She knew in her heart that she never wanted to raise her own children in such a place. She risked everything to make her way to our great nation so that we could have a better life. I am so proud of everything she has done, and I am inspired every day by the courage of her spirit. I love you, mum.

My father's parents migrated here from a small northern Greek village during the early 1920s, fleeing from post-war struggle. They found their new village—Broken Hill—and that is where Dad was born. Dad spent the first dozen years of his life in western New South Wales before he and his five siblings were dramatically uprooted after my grandfather broke his back down a silver mine. They moved to Eveleigh Street, Redfern, which then was one of the poorest parts of Sydney. In many ways, my adult life has been defined by the death of my father. From humble roots and an immigrant background, Dad built a successful family accounting practice, which my brother, Bill, and I have grown to one of the largest suburban firms in the State. Bill and I have worked together our entire lives up until this point. I am sure my brother will still be the first person I turn to for counsel and wisdom.

Dad taught us both always to give back in everything we did and always to have respect for our society. He was the most giving man I know and instilled in me the values I hold dear today. He died when he was around the age I am now and I cannot help but feel that every day I live is now a blessing, a gift in time, a chance to practise my father's teachings and give back to my community. My father had never been a religious man, so it was more than a bit of a surprise when he told his family that he was travelling to Israel to find Jesus. Little did he know how true those words would ring when he suffered a fatal heart attack in the Monastery of St George near Jerusalem. My father was the backbone of our family, a proud Australian born and bred and I miss him dearly. My siblings and I were third generation Australians, but we were still always made to feel like we were different. I remember hanging out after school at Spiro's Worksburgers, hearing customers coming in and placing their orders:

Plain burger, packet of chips and a coke thanks wog.

Constantly overhearing casual words like those broke my heart, all the more so because my dad spoke with a broad ocker accent and I felt like I should have just belonged. I was driven to assimilate; more than anything,

I wanted to be accepted and so I threw myself into Australian life. I loved rugby league, cricket, and just about anything where I could get my hands on a ball. I was always first up on the hill at Jubilee oval, barracking for my beloved St George Dragons. It was not until much later in life that I found confidence in myself, in my family and our traditions, and I realised that in embracing my Hellenic heritage I was simultaneously embracing my own identity as an Australian.

Multiculturalism is the beating heart of our society and it pumps life through Rockdale every day. But there have been vast changes here since my childhood in Sans Souci. It is a beautiful place, bordering the sparkling waters of Botany Bay, but we are crying out for the amenities that will revitalise our area. When I was growing up, the Brighton baths were one of the premiere destinations in Sydney. We had a state-of-the-art hospital at Kogarah and we were second to none when it came to hospitality, dining and retail. Sadly, our facilities and services today have fallen behind. In many ways our suburbs have expanded and prospered while our utilities and businesses have languished.

Whatever time I have in this place, I will use every moment of it to fight for Rockdale. I will fight to see St George Hospital, the hospital I was born in, brought up to a modern standard of excellence. I will fight to protect our wetlands, our parks and our waterways, and I will fight to develop the commerce and industry that will see us prosper for generations to come. I will fight to restore faith in our local high schools, in James Cook Boys High School and the neighbouring Moorefield Girls High School, where my wife and I first met. I will passionately fight against domestic violence—a terrible scourge on our community which we simply cannot ignore.

I cannot find words strong enough to express the disgust I hold for domestic violence. I have spent my entire life surrounded by strong women—my mother, my sisters, my wife and my wonderful daughters. The girls always get you: I am so lucky to have them in my life. I cannot comprehend how anybody would ever want to hurt any of them. Domestic violence claims the lives of two women every week in Australia and it sickens me that we are not doing enough to end this problem. We need to focus on early intervention and education. We need to get the message out there in our schools that, if dad hits mum, it is not normal and it is not all right. We need to break the cycle of intergenerational suffering. Most of all, we need to protect the lives of women and children.

I am a St George boy through and through, and I swear that I will always represent the best interests of my region and my people during my time in this place. I come to this place with a history, not only of running small businesses but also of representing the interests of the business community. The Liberal Party often touts itself as the party of small business and many in the Labor Party would like to claim that title for themselves. The truth is, as every small business person knows, neither party is the party of small business. In New South Wales, small business directly employs almost two million people.

Jobs should not be a partisan issue. I cannot stand it when I hear that we need to look after either employers or employees, enterprise or labour. Anybody running a business knows that caring for one is caring for the other. Enterprise should be encouraged. Going into business should be simple and easy. If we wish to ensure Australia's prosperity into the future, we need to take the politically difficult choices that will allow our economy to flourish. For 30 years since the 1985 tax summit, we have been ignoring the reforms our State and Federal tax systems so desperately need. Again and again, we commission reports that call for the same courses of action and again and again we stick our heads in the sand because we find it all just a bit too difficult.

Our nation is stuck in a fiscal holding pattern. We fail to take action and then insult Australian taxpayers by billing them for our failure. Too often we have seen legislation introduced not to provide solutions but simply to create the appearance of action. Too many times I have seen the minimum wage and our industrial rights scapegoated in this debate. The reality is that there are much greater issues at play, which if dealt with properly will see both business and the workforce flourish.

It is an indictment on all of us that prior to every election, both sides rule out even looking at the major planks of our taxation platform. We hear platitudes assuring us that there will be no change to negative gearing, to land tax, to the GST, or to superannuation. We need change, not wilful ignorance. We should be developing a tax system that provides adequate funding to the core social programs which we as a people expect. We tinker at the edges while our structural deficit grows year by year. We do not need cosmetic reform; we need wholesale reform.

When the Liberal Party was elected a little more than four years ago, after 16 years of Labor, many in the business community were celebrating. They had been promised lower taxes, less regulation and all the other

motherhood statements that conservative politicians regularly offer. Four years down the track and we have just seen more of the same. The Government's slogan is "NSW NOW", but all we are getting is "NSW tomorrow". For the small business sector, inaction and lack of interest have once again been the hallmarks of this Government. Small business owners and their interests need to be represented in this place. The Labor Party must recognise that the support of small business owners is worth fighting for and to do that we need to take up their cause on issues that matter to them. There could be no better example of this than payroll tax. The payroll tax system in our country is simply counterproductive revenue raising. We arbitrarily punish those who invest in enterprise and in our most valuable asset—human capital. We must seek alternative revenue streams and stop placing a ball and chain on employment in our State. We need governments to take a proactive approach in dealing with these issues, rather than waiting until industry pressure provides them with no alternative.

Technology is changing the world. Modern innovation is constantly creating new platforms from which we can all benefit, but legislation is not keeping up with the pace of advance. It is sad indeed when my youngest grandson, Stavros, is fluent in the use of an iPad but in the halls of power lawmakers are turning a blind eye to the sharing economy made possible by tablets and smartphones. As legislators we need to embrace the platforms and services which the people in our electorates are already using. At the same time, we need to recognise our responsibility and ensure that existing industries are adequately supported to adapt to those changes. It is never good enough for any of us, as elected representatives, to throw our hands in the air and declare that a problem is too difficult. I will always act to ensure that government is working for the people and not the other way around.

Without the work of so many people, there is no way I could have found my way into this place. First, I acknowledge the work of my predecessor, John Flowers. He was the first Liberal member for Rockdale and, if you will forgive me, I hope the last. To my core campaign crew, thank you so much for all the early mornings and long days, for every weekend we spent doorknocking and every night we spent calling residents. George Perivolarellis—thank you mate. I thank Michael Rosser, Mohamed Moubayed, George Vellis, Jack Boyd, Siobhan Armson-Graham, Uncle John Tsounis, Katerina and the entire Jovanovski family and, of course, my champion friend Khalil Ibrahim. I can never repay you all for the countless hours you sacrificed for me.

My sincere thanks go to the Labor Party activists who supported my campaign: Anna Lignou, Bill Kritharas, Vicky Roussos, Sam Almaliki, Bert Loveridge, Angelo and Irini Anestis, Kirsten Andrews, Linda Beattie, Adrian and Joanne Coates, Steve Kenny, Big Bill Kotevski, Phil Lang, Zlate Angelkoski, Daniel Barbar, Micky Pesic, Maggie Potts, Mick Shiels, Andrew Tsounis and the entire Tsounis family as well as all the other branch members and, I am sure, dozens of others I have forgotten. I could speak at length about each of you and the incredible contribution that you made in returning Rockdale to Labor, but we would be here all day.

To our local Rockdale City councillors: Shane O'Brien, Tarek Ibrahim, Andrew Tsounis, Joe Awada, Ron Bezic, Peter Poulos, Petros Kalligeros, Paul and Lydia Sedrak, Nick Mickovski, Mark Hanna, James Macdonald, Michael Nagi, Liz Barlow and last—but certainly not in any way least—my old schoolmate, fellow James Cook High boy and dear friend Bill Saravinovski: You all do our city proud and I look forward to working with you to make Rockdale a better place. To my friends and supporters: Andrew Daoud, Henry Yan, Grant "The Mango" Hawkswell, the Danias family, Greg Gav, George Giannaros, the Kosta family, Paul Harbord, Michael Doueihy, Victoria and the Panourakis family, Fouad Deiry, Robert Moody, Peter Efstratiou, the Stamateris family, Joe and Steve Brcic, Jim Angelis, Peter Antonopoulos, Alexandra and the Mitropoulos family, Reg Fadel, Brett Levy, the Tsounis family, the wonderful Bill Mougios, and everybody else: You have been there for me through thick and thin, and I thank you.

To the union movement, particularly to Mark Buttigieg, Rita Mallia, Brian Parker, Randall Millington, Tony Sheldon and all the others, thank you for your dedication to working people. To my friend Andrew Ferguson, you and I proved that business and unions can work together for the benefit of all. To Luke Foley, John Robertson and the Opposition staff, thank you for leading our party through such a difficult time and for your commitment to the Rockdale electorate. To my incredibly patient parents-in-law, Nick and Helen Salvanos, thank you for everything you have done for me over so many years.

To my children, Tina, Eleni, Paul, Nick and Chris, to my sons-in-law, Carl and Bill and my daughter-in-law, Stephanie, and to my grandchildren, Dean, Rossie, Stevie and Stavie: You give me reason in life. To my siblings, Angela, Despina and of course my brother, Bill, and their spouses, Ian, Craig and Gina: You have always been there for me. To my sisters-in-law, Katina and Jenny and their spouses, Emanuel and Don, to my proud uncle Nick Kamper, a Broken Hill boy, and to my entire extended family—there are too many of you to name—I appreciate everything you have done for me.

To my business partners John, Anthony and my gun nephew, Paul Kamper, and to the entire Kamper Accounting staff: Thank you for your support and patience over the past four years. To my best friend, John "Tank" Petropoulos and the entire Petropoulos family: Thank you for always being there—friends for life. To the members of Young Labor, thank you for your tireless work. Without you I and so many others would never have had a hope of being elected. To my volunteer coordinator Chris Donovan, thank you for your extraordinary support and effort.

To all the wonderful community organisations, local religious and cultural groups who embraced me so warmly, thank you. To the Greek Consul General, Stavros Kyrimis, your support was inspiring. To my political mentors Cherie Burton, Noreen Hay, Anthony Albanese, Sophie Cotsis, Doug and Robert McClelland, Brian Langton, Graham Richardson, and Morris Iemma: Without each one of you I would have been running blind. To my colleague Shaoquett Moselmane, you have embraced me as a brother and your insight into Rockdale politics has guided me throughout the past year; thank you. To my mates Chris Minns and Jihad Dib, how special for us to have walked into this place together, and how lucky we are to be in this Parliament with a Labor caucus with such incredible talent.

To everybody at head office, Jamie Clements, Kaila Murnain, David Latham, George and Courtney Houssos, David Dobson, Lewis Hamilton Jim Minns and all those who make up the most effective campaigning machine in the country: Thank you so much for your often underappreciated work. I know I have thanked so many people, but as I have campaigned over the past year I have been truly humbled by the assistance, counsel and kindness I have received from those hundreds of people around me. It only feels right to me that I acknowledge all of your contributions to a victory that is not mine, but ours.

Emanuel Tsardoulis, my dear and cherished friend. Emanuel came to run my campaign more than a year ago now, just months before his tragic death. You were taken from us far too soon. I miss you every day and I still check my phone waiting for you to call. I wake up thinking it is a bad dream, and that you will be back with us at any moment. We started this campaign together, and I know you are up there watching us right now. Zoi, thank you for being here today. Emanuel always had a sense of the divine, a sense of fate about him. I think it was in his design that he helped Edward McDougall find his way to run my campaign. Teddy you are a young man well beyond your years. You are the smartest person I know. You display an incredible loyalty and compassion to all those around you, and I am so proud to call you my friend.

Finally, to every person living in Rockdale, to those who supported me and to those who did not, I promise today that I will be deserving of your trust and faith. I will represent our entire community without fear or favour and, if I fail, I ask that you throw me out in all due haste: Thank you.

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Address-in-Reply**

#### **Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to permit consideration of the Address-in-Reply during the period in the routine of business set aside for consideration of Government business.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS**

#### **Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [11.56 a.m.]: I move:**

That this House opposes forced amalgamations of councils that are financially sustainable and have the support of their communities.

Councils play an essential role in creating attractive, prosperous, healthy and sustainable places to live, work and do business. Their roles go well beyond roads, rates and rubbish to cover also planning, heritage, late trading, parks and open spaces, sports and recreation, art, child care, public space, lighting, noise, companion animals and libraries, to name a few. Local government is the level of government closest to the people, which is important because each community neighbourhood is unique with diverse needs that their councils must understand in order to serve.

Changes to local government must be about building capacity to ensure that councils can continue to deliver high-quality services and programs into the future. The Government is set on merging boundaries and

creating super councils, despite significant disruptions, loss of representation and strong opposition within communities. Mega councils will make it hard for grassroots local representation and locally specific or targeted services. Residents and ratepayers will have less access to decision-makers and fewer opportunities to contribute to policies.

Bigger councils will not necessarily improve efficiencies. Economies of scale do not always work. Large organisations need more administration and management resources, and larger bureaucracies can be less efficient. Indeed, forced amalgamations would create mega bureaucracies at a cost of local democracy. Mergers have short-term costs and disruptions as councils combine staff, planning controls, rating categories, services and information technology systems. Conflicts between different work cultures can reduce productivity. There is no evidence that merging two financially weak councils will create one that is economically sustainable and delivers the same or better service. There are real risks that financially strong councils could become less sustainable if they merge with weaker ones. Larger councils may not provide better services either. Big councils will not be able to cater for specific neighbourhoods as policies and rules are standardised and local expertise is lost.

Amalgamations are not necessary. The Independent Local Government Review Panel made other recommendations to secure the financial viability of councils, such as allowing them to raise revenue and borrow money as well as reforming rate pegging, most of which had broad support from New South Wales councils. The Government should implement these recommendations before the idea of forced amalgamations is even considered. Councils should be encouraged to share services where it is appropriate and it will save money—most already do this through individual agreements and regional bodies. Even Professor Graham Sansom, who headed the review, stated that focus on amalgamations has been overstated and that all metropolitan councils should become financially sustainable in their existing boundaries.

But the Government appears intent on pushing ahead with its amalgamation agenda. Councils have until 30 June to argue their case against proposed mergers and, if the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] disagrees with their argument, they could be merged forcibly. But how will the IPART determine councils' viability? IPART has identified four criteria that it will consider: scale and capacity; sustainability; infrastructure and service management; and efficiency. Scale and capacity is a threshold criterion that would set population targets and which the Minister indicates is about making councils bigger.

There is no benchmark for social and community outcomes, yet much of what councils do—and what their communities expect of them—is not for profit; in fact, it provides where the market fails. Child care is such a perfect example. In rural areas the market will not provide services because it is not profitable, and in city areas market services are unaffordable for many. Sometimes this means that services must be provided at a loss. Omission of social and community benefits from evaluations devalues what councils do and puts vital services at risk. Councils will have to make their case starting from the position of proposed amalgamations—a process clearly stacked in favour of establishing mega councils.

It seems that the Fit for the Future process has been a farce so that the Government could claim it consulted and assessed. Councils do not want to merge, communities do not want mergers, and all other proposals to help councils' viability have been ignored. Now the final process will focus on the balance sheet in a way that will deliver the Government's preferred outcomes—mega councils. A heavy-handed approach could put the Baird Government on the same footing as the Kennett and Newman governments, whose communities saw them as arrogant. Many say Jeff Kennett lost the 1999 election partly because of his massive and undemocratic changes to local government. Victorians are still angry at how their communities and services were decimated in the process. The Government should not dismiss how important this issue is to the people of New South Wales and the anger that will result if amalgamations are forced here.

Of great concern is that the Government is pursuing super councils while doing nothing to remove or reduce opportunities for corruption and undue influence in local government. Local government poses risks of corruption and undue influence, with council decisions able to deliver significant financial profits to individuals as well as permanent negative community impacts. Such risks have been identified and exposed extensively by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Changes to and reviews of State election funding have occurred, but nothing has been done to reform local government election funding, which has considerably more lax rules, including no caps and inadequate disclosure requirements. If we end up with amalgamated councils, it will ultimately lead to bigger election campaigns at the local level, increasing the need to raise funds. I have asked the Premier to task the Expert Panel on Political Donations to assess necessary local government election reforms.

We are yet to see a cost-benefit analysis showing the financial benefits of mega councils, and this must be delivered before long-lasting and potentially detrimental changes are made. Social impact assessments must be made available. Amalgamations are opposed by councils across New South Wales and this reflects their communities' opposition as identified in consultation. Yesterday I met with mayors and councillors from Temora, Coolamon, Gundagai and Junee shires—local government areas that oppose being amalgamated. They are worried that widening council boundaries will increase the remoteness of many communities and reduce their representation. They believe the focus on amalgamations is indeed political. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

In the inner city there is a long history of politically motivated boundary manipulations aimed at getting the government of the day's mates in charge of town hall. This Government has also manipulated City of Sydney elections by doubling the vote of big business and corporations, and empowering councillors to remove voting options on polling day. More broadly, the Government gave itself sweeping powers to impose orders on or to sack councils it claims are underperforming. The Government has shown its contempt for the fundamental principles of democracy at the local level; no wonder many in the community are worried about future plans.

In my electorate the Government plans to merge the boundaries of the city, Randwick, Waverley, Woollahra and Botany councils. This new super council would have a population greater than that of the State of Tasmania. The disruptions would be enormous to what are now sustainable and supported councils. There can be no justification for merging any council that is financially sustainable and whose community does not agree to an amalgamation. A forced amalgamation should be considered only as a last resort after implementing other measures to help those councils that are struggling financially. I was pleased to join representatives of Labor, The Greens, the Christian Democratic Party and the Shooters and Fishers Party in a press conference three days before the election, opposing any forced amalgamation—and I hope that their resolve stays strong. I call on all members of the Opposition to oppose any proposal that will force councils to merge their boundaries.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Minister for Local Government) [12.06 p.m.]: To have a strong future, New South Wales needs strong councils—strong councils that will provide the services and infrastructure that communities both need and deserve. New South Wales councils need to deliver better services, more infrastructure and place downward pressure on rates. I welcome the interest the member for Sydney shows in his local community, but I also recognise that the City of Sydney—which is flush with cash—can spend \$9 million on new artwork while some councils across the State are struggling to fix their swimming pools. New South Wales has 152 councils. They range in size from six square kilometres to 53,000 square kilometres. They range in population from 1,200 to 300,000 people.

The system of local government in New South Wales is not working as well as it should be. The local government sector called for an in-depth review of local government. Councils called for a report of the Independent Local Government Review Panel, which undertook three years of consultation with councils, communities and industry bodies to assess the situation. The panel concluded that the system of local government in New South Wales would operate more effectively if some councils increased their scale and capacity. In September last year we announced our Fit for the Future reform package—a record investment of up to \$1 billion for New South Wales councils. We are asking councillors and mayors across this State to show some leadership, to stop thinking of themselves and to put their communities first.

Sydney is the fastest-growing capital city in Australia. In the next 20 years a further two million people will make the city their home, and most of them will settle in Sydney's west. A new international airport will be established, and major growth centres will be developed in the north-west and south-west regions. New motorways and freight hubs will be needed, as well as hospitals, schools and large-scale sporting facilities. To cope with this growth and Sydney's emerging role as a global city, we need a modern, more connected system of local government.

Currently there are 41 councils in greater Sydney and each has its own local rules and regulations. That means multiple licences, fees and approvals for small business and different development rules for people who want to build or renovate their homes. It also means that people who live in different suburbs receive different levels of service. Our city cannot continue to be constrained by boundaries that were set more than 100 years ago. Regional communities also play a major role in supporting the State's economy. They put food on our table and sustain our major export industries. They also play a crucial role in education, retail, resources, manufacturing and defence. For New South Wales to have a strong future our regional communities must also be strong.



The Independent Local Government Review Panel made a range of recommendations for structural change in local government, including suggestions for mergers, joint organisations and rural councils. We cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach in New South Wales. That is why our reform package recognises that those living in metropolitan areas have different needs from those living in regional and rural areas and in the far west of the State. The Government is partnering with councils across New South Wales and asking them to use this work as a starting point to decide whether they have the right scale and capacity to be fit for the future. A council may accept the recommendation of the panel if a merger has been proposed or it can put forward a proposal that is broadly consistent with the panel's recommendations.

The Government has announced record levels of funding to help councils to make the changes they need to become fit for the future and to improve their capacity to deliver quality services to the many communities they serve. Councils that decide to join forces with their neighbours will receive generous funding, which will help to provide better services and facilities for the community. Whilst a council may be able to balance its budget today, the Government is concerned about building a system of local government that is also fit for the future—a future where the local population may have grown significantly or declined and where infrastructure demands may have increased, and a future where a coordinated approach with the State Government for service delivery is imperative to meet local needs.

All I have heard from members opposite is what they are not supporting: no support for local government; no support for local government reform; no support for the Fit for the Future reform, which offers up to \$1 billion in incentives; no support for the WestConnex; and no support for \$20 billion worth of essential infrastructure for New South Wales. Those opposite are not putting their communities first; they are only thinking of themselves. What is the Opposition's plan? It has no plan. If we turn the clock back to 2004 when Labor was in office local government was a complete mess. Labor broke promise after promise. Labor gave no support to councils, and communities received no information. Councils and the industry were calling for reform of the entire sector.

Clearly, it is not an option to make no change. The Government is providing, and will continue to provide, councils and communities with support and funding to make the changes needed. These changes are not simply about ensuring financial sustainability—even though councils are losing up to \$1 million per day, which is not sustainable. They are about creating a system of local government that is able to meet the long-term needs of local communities across the State. They are also about councils having the scale and the capacity to provide quality services and infrastructure—delivering the houses, jobs and transport that people need. For those reasons the Government does not support the motion of the member for Sydney.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [12.13 p.m.]: Labor opposes the forced amalgamation of councils. To forcibly amalgamate councils would be anathema to the basic principle that councils fulfil a vital role in ensuring that their local communities receive the best possible support and services to cater for their needs. There are two local councils within the Fairfield electorate: Holroyd City Council and Fairfield City Council. Both those councils have an acute understanding of the needs and concerns of their residents. This close connection would be severely diminished should a forced amalgamation occur.

I turn first to Fairfield City Council. The option being considered by the State Government is for Fairfield City Council to be merged with Liverpool City Council. Subsequent to community consultation, an overwhelming 91 per cent of Fairfield residents do not support the amalgamation of those two councils. The biggest concern about the amalgamation is the potential change to and possible deterioration of services and facilities. There is also great concern that rates would have to rise in order to meet the cost of amalgamation. Residents know that a focus on the development of local infrastructure, local priorities, local representation and local identity would be negatively affected by an amalgamation.

The Government's rationale that "weak" councils must amalgamate does not apply to Fairfield and Liverpool councils, with supplementary reports revealing that both councils have sufficient strategic scale to be able to stand alone. Fairfield and Liverpool councils have different demographic characteristics and, therefore, different priorities that are unique to their localities. Any merger will diminish those priorities, and neither council will benefit from an amalgamation. The increased size of amalgamated councils will mean that Fairfield City Council will no longer be able to provide efficient services and the focus on local priorities will be erased.

Indeed, amalgamation will ensure the existence of conflicting priorities between Fairfield City Council's focus on the disadvantaged community in Fairfield and the State Government's proposal to develop Liverpool as a regional city. Both priorities cannot occur concurrently under an amalgamated council, but they

can be addressed if the councils stand alone—that would be the optimal position. The New South Wales Treasury Corporation has rated Fairfield City Council as a financially strong and sustainable council with a high standard of service. Why fix something that is not broken?

I turn now to Holroyd City Council. The proposal being considered by the State Government is that Holroyd City Council will be forcibly merged with Parramatta, Auburn and parts of Ryde and The Hills councils. Some 92 per cent of residents are currently satisfied with the overall performance of Holroyd City Council. Once again, the rationale that "weak" councils should be forced to amalgamate does not apply to Holroyd City Council, which is currently debt free. It has a sustainable financial future. The Hands Off Holroyd! campaign is completely justified. There is no current need for amalgamation. The negative effects of an amalgamation are clear: Young families and the elderly will be worse off should a merger be mandated. For example, cuts to services for this demographic may include no more free immunisation clinics in Holroyd, no more free parking in Holroyd, and a negative effect on the Meals on Wheels program.

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.17 p.m.]: In September last year the New South Wales Government announced a record \$1 billion investment to support councils to become fit for the future and to strengthen communities across New South Wales. The Fit for the Future reform package responds to the final recommendations of the Independent Local Government Review Panel and the Local Government Acts Taskforce and reflects the priorities identified by the sector during the past three years of consultation. It is clear that our system of local government, with boundaries dating back to the nineteenth century, will not be able to meet the needs of growing and changing communities. Positive changes need to be made to ensure that councils will be fit for the future.

We need to build on the strengths of local government and learn from the best councils to develop ways of working smarter together. We want communities to be stronger and able to grow and prosper. The New South Wales Government has been working collaboratively with the State's 152 councils to design a more sustainable system of local government. Every council in New South Wales is being asked to submit a proposal by 30 June 2015 outlining their plans to become fit for the future. The proposals will be assessed by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, with the support of South Australian local government expert John Comrie.

Councils will need to demonstrate how they meet the threshold criteria of scale and capacity, with a proposal broadly consistent with the recommendations of the Independent Local Government Review Panel, and how they will become and remain sustainable and provide effective and efficient services. Councils are encouraged to continue to prepare their Fit for the Future proposal and to consult the community on proposals for change. Councils have until 30 June to make important decisions about their future and to take advantage of the support and benefits on offer.

The Government is encouraged by the number of councils actively exploring the option of voluntary mergers and leading informed and objective conversations with their community. This is their opportunity to invest in the long-term future of their community and to ensure the council plays a central role in guiding and shaping that future. The New South Wales Government has committed a funding and support package to assist councils to make the changes needed to become fit for the future. This includes \$258 million to assist councils that decide to merge and to make the changes needed to provide better services to our communities.

Councils that become fit for the future will have access to a range of further initiatives supporting them to provide improved services and infrastructure to their communities, including access to a State borrowing facility to fund local infrastructure, with potential savings to New South Wales councils of up to \$600 million in interest payments. The need for change is clear. It is now up to councils to act. Being financially sustainable is no excuse for councils to deprive their communities of the funding on offer and the better services, better infrastructure and downward pressure on rates that mergers can deliver. There is an urgent need for change, and that is why the Government does not support this motion.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [12.21 p.m.]: I appreciate the opportunity to speak in debate on the motion moved by the Independent member for Sydney. As a former councillor and mayor, I understand the situation facing the Government. The Greens acknowledge, as we all do, that some councils are in significant financial difficulty. That is true. We acknowledge that some councils are financially unsustainable. That is also true. We acknowledge that work needs to be done to address the future of local government. Rate capping, in particular, has led to some specific impacts on local government. But it is the view of The Greens that the proposal to forcibly amalgamate councils does not reflect the evidence and needs to be reconsidered because the debate has moved on from the independent panel.

I draw the attention of the House to Leichardt Municipal Council, one of the councils in my electorate. It is a strong and financially sound council. It has been analysed by the Treasury Corporation and found to be sustainable financially now and into the future. Yet it is at risk of being amalgamated into a mega council, meaning the loss of accessible and meaningful local representation, significantly higher costs, higher rates for many, a potential loss of services, the sale of council facilities, the loss of many local jobs and the loss of council's advocacy on behalf of local residents.

The Minister for Local Government came into this House and said that the independent panel conducted a review that found local government needs to be amalgamated broadly within these areas. The local councils in the inner west that are subject to amalgamation have taken the next step and commissioned an independent report to examine the details. They have taken seriously what the Minister for Local Government and the independent panel said and have gone the next step—that is, commissioned a report to look at the evidence that came out of the independent panel's review. That report examined the proposal to amalgamate Leichardt Municipal Council with the councils of Canada Bay, Ashfield, Burwood, Marrickville and so on. It looked at the evidence and the benchmarks that had been set by the Government.

The Morrison Low shared modelling project investigated four different outcomes. These included: Leichardt Municipal Council remains a stand-alone council, Leichardt Municipal Council ceases to exist and is amalgamated into a mega council, Leichardt Municipal Council ceases to exist but is part of a smaller amalgamation, and councils move to shared services. So Leichardt Municipal Council and those inner west councils took what the Government told them and commissioned a report. What did the report find? It found that a mega council would not meet the Fit for the Future benchmarks on day one, and neither would Leichardt Municipal Council. But after five years Leichardt Municipal Council would meet the Fit for the Future benchmarks, and would continue to do so after 10 years. The report, resulting from a deeper investigation and coming after the independent panel had produced its recommendations, found that the inner west mega council proposed by the independent panel would not meet the Fit for the Future benchmarks.

So if we are about meeting the benchmarks and moving on from the independent panel's recommendations we can see that amalgamation simply will not work in this situation. The Government has said that no change is not an option. But we need to look to the evidence, and the evidence states that the mega council arrangement will not meet the Fit for the Future benchmarks. So we need to look at the proposal again. If the Government decides to vote against this motion then it is voting for forced amalgamations—and that is not what the community wants and not what the evidence supports. As a former local government representative, I want councils to be strong and sustainable. The proposal to amalgamate councils in my part of the inner west does not deliver that outcome. The report demonstrates that, and I encourage the Minister to read that report and consider its implications. We need to consider other options.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** Order! Before I call the member for Kiama, I welcome to the public gallery student leaders from high schools across New South Wales who are participating in the secondary schools leadership program. I welcome you to the Legislative Assembly.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.25 p.m.]: Let me start by saying how wonderful it is to see the member for Northern Tablelands back in the chair as Acting-Speaker. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the presence in the Speaker's gallery of Phil Motby from the Gerringong branch of the Liberal Party. He is a long-time friend and supporter, and I am pleased that he can be in the gallery for this debate. One person who I am not pleased is in this House today is The Greens member for Balmain. His colleagues on Marrickville Municipal Council voted for a \$23 million boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign against the state of Israel. Talk about the core values of local government—that action displayed the real values of The Greens. I used to say that The Greens are like watermelons: green on the outside and pink on the inside. But they are not; they are like avocados—they are green on the outside and nuts on the inside. That was demonstrated for everyone to see through the actions of Marrickville council.

**Mr Jamie Parker:** Stop showing off, member for Kiama.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I do not need to show off for the member for Balmain; I would not even put on my best tie for the member for Balmain. I respect the member for Sydney but he has to stop thinking that just because the Government does something it is going to be deleterious to the people of Sydney.

**Mr Jamie Parker:** We've looked at the evidence.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** The member for Balmain claims to have looked at the evidence. There are 65 recommendations in the local government review. Only eight of them deal with amalgamations. It seems that that is what the member for Balmain is obsessed with. What I am obsessed with, and what the Minister is obsessed with, is making sure that councils are sustainable. I am sorry that the member for Shellharbour is not in the Chamber. She is a former United Services Union [USU] representative and the authentic voice of socialism. She wants a glut of inefficiencies and inequities in the system that will not result in better frontline services for ratepayers.

As the former chair of a council budget committee and deputy mayor, I am aware that council staff have many wonderful talents and abilities. But there are economies to be made by working together and ensuring that things such as asset maintenance are dealt with appropriately. Often local government officials want to build new infrastructure but they forget that the council has to maintain it. That is what Fit for the Future is about and what the Minister for Local Government is seeking to address. The Government has on offer around \$1 billion of incentives for councils to think about how they can achieve that outcome.

There are 41 councils across Sydney, with many high-level managers and employees. When councils are employing so many managers they cannot reinvest in the frontline services that ratepayers expect. Brisbane City Council is able to deliver services across Brisbane for all residents. But apparently in Sydney we need 41 councils. I think that is simply too many. In fact, in my inaugural speech in this place I made it clear that we must realise economies and efficiencies in local government. We need to build on the strengths of local government and learn from the best councils to develop ways of working smarter and stronger together.

We want communities to be stronger and to be able to grow and prosper. The New South Wales Government has been working collaboratively with the State's 152 councils to design a more sustainable system of government. Councils should not fear reform; they should embrace reform. It seems that the strategy of the Opposition is to listen to its union masters. I would never accuse the member for Sydney of doing that. I know he comes to this House with the most genuine of intentions. But the people who sit on the benches alongside him have other intentions because the union movement funds their election campaigns and they dance to its tune in this House. I encourage every council to back this program. It will deliver more resources to councils and create the efficiencies and economies that ratepayers deserve.

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [12.29 p.m.], by leave: I acknowledge the Minister at the table and thank him for respecting the motion moved by the member for Sydney and appearing here to listen to this debate. I strongly support the motion, even though we saw a wonderful and colourful exhibition by the member for Kiama.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** I have no colour.

**Mr GREG PIPER:** He said that, I didn't. The most colourful thing about him was his performance on this matter. I have a significant amount of experience in local government. I acknowledge in the Chamber the member for Charlestown, who is the current mayor of Lake Macquarie. I held that position for 8½ years and I served for more than 21 years on Lake Macquarie City Council. I see myself as a creature of local government and have huge respect for councils. Other members, including the member for Balmain, have expressed the same sentiment, but that does not mean we are saying that there should be no amalgamations at all.

This motion concerns the fact that there should be no forced amalgamations of councils that can demonstrate sustainability and that choose not to amalgamate. This debate is not about saying that there should be no amalgamations, because we know that some councils are not viable in their current form. Local government has made suggestions. I am sure we will hear from the mayor and deputy chair of Hunter Councils, the member for Charlestown, about the incredible success of Regional Organisations of Councils. Her organisation of councils led the way in New South Wales and it can provide economies of scale to councils within the region. It is a very good model for others to follow.

I am concerned about the ideology driving this push as a result of the independent review. The discussion has been almost entirely about economic sustainability but communities will be better served if we can achieve economic sustainability without putting other measures in place such as population measures that will force amalgamations. The Minister and the Premier have talked about the time line and said that many council boundaries were drawn more than 100 years ago. So what? A boundary is drawn and a community builds within it.

Let us talk about Victoria, which was formed in 1851. That is a funny little State struggling along down at the bottom of Australia. We should also throw in Tasmania and the economic basket case that is South Australia. Let us be a bit fair dinkum and bring those States into this discussion. We could hive off the bottom half of New South Wales—the electorates of Murray, Albury, Wagga Wagga, Monaro and Bega—and give them over to Victoria. That will make them much more sustainable.

**Mr Paul Toole:** Are you amending this motion?

**Mr GREG PIPER:** I see the Minister is taken with that suggestion. That is the same kind of nonsense argument that is being promulgated by the proposition of forced amalgamations. I strongly support the motion of the member for Sydney.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.33 p.m.], by leave: So we do not get lost in this argument, I acknowledge the contribution of local councils. We all support local councils but anyone who thinks that reform is not necessary is living in la-la land. At the election Labor committed to no forced amalgamations and the State did not vote for it. People did not vote for Labor members because they did not believe them. In 2000 Concord and Drummoyne councils were forcibly amalgamated into the City of Canada Bay Council.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Who did that?

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** I will tell you who did that. Labor went out to the community and found that 80 per cent of people in my electorate were against the amalgamation. What happened? It forced the amalgamation. It gets better. The current Labor mayor is leading the charge against amalgamation for the City of Canada Bay Council, but guess who voted for it in 2000?

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Tell us.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** The mayor of Canada Bay council. Look at what they do, not what they say. I fully support my Minister and the Government because local government needs reform. In fact, I urge the Minister to take it a step further. We have to reform planning and local government because the people of this State deserve better. We need the services that people are asking for. I spend 70 per cent of my time in my office dedicated to local government issues. Why? Because they are not delivering the service—

**Mr Jamie Parker:** Because you've got no public housing.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** The member for Balmain is just lucky his electorate adjoins mine and gets all the benefits of its infrastructure. He should say thank you. Councils called for reform and Labor promised not to do it. This Government is listening. We spent nearly four years on independent research to get it right. To ignore that research would be shocking. We have spent the time, resources and money to get independent advice. Now we have to show that we are fit for the future.

In my electorate, prior to the last election thousands upon thousands of dollars were spent to run front-page stories in the *Inner West Courier* and local magazines. The Labor Party was running riot printing material from garages saying it was against amalgamations and organising a community meeting. Eighty people showed up, and 55 of them were Labor Party members. This is a deadset non-issue, because people want to see infrastructure. When you consult with them you will quickly get that answer.

When I see infrastructure crumbling in my electorate because of a lack of investment by local government I say it is not on. We should all be working for a common cause to deliver a local government that we can be proud of and that will deliver the services for today and tomorrow, not yesterday. In this day and age it is unacceptable to have crumbling infrastructure, trees breaking footpaths and so forth, and for nothing to be done about it. It is not a local government we can be proud of.

As I stated at the beginning of my contribution, I love local government. We should all be proud of its contribution but we should also be part of reforming local government to a standard that makes our citizens proud. We cannot continue to have a wishy-washy level of services across this State whether by small, large, financial or non-financial councils. I commend the Minister for his stance on this motion. We look forward to being part of this discussion over the coming months to make sure that every council is strong, fit and delivering infrastructure to be proud of in this State.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON** (Charlestown) [12.37 p.m.], by leave: I support the motion moved by the member for Sydney. This motion is about opposing forced amalgamations, it is not about opposing local government reform. I do not think anybody in this House believes that local government reform is unnecessary, but this Government should be ensuring that it builds stronger and more sustainable councils, not imposing its baseless ideology. This Government needs to go beyond the sound bites that are either for or against council amalgamations and look at the real data. There is plenty of interesting data about amalgamated councils that this Government and Minister should be considering.

Let us examine the current Fit for the Future indicators that are now being applied to assess New South Wales councils and use those same indicators on 24 regionally significant towns and cities—it is a shame that the Government is not listening to the data—10 of which were amalgamated prior to 2004. There are some very interesting results that this House and the Minister should know. I am happy to share the list of councils. Let me apply the Fit for the Future criteria to be used by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] for assessing the operating performance of those 24 councils. Of the 10 best-performing councils in that group, only three were amalgamated councils; seven are not amalgamated.

A key element to consider when looking at a council's operating performance is that the size of the council has no correlation to its performance. Structural reform through amalgamation is therefore not necessarily the answer. It is certainly not the only answer, and it should not be the forced answer. Infrastructure backlog is another key performance indicator of how efficiently councils are managing their assets and will be used by IPART to assess councils. I have no doubt about that. The Office of Local Government has set a benchmark of less than 2 per cent backlog. In 2014, seven out of the 24 councils to which I referred earlier met the Fit for the Future criteria on infrastructure backlog and only two of those—I emphasise "only two of those"—were amalgamated councils. Again, that evidence suggests that structural reform by amalgamation is not necessarily the answer and, again, it is not the only answer.

Councils also are measured against their employees per capita. Of the 10 best-performing councils to which I referred earlier, in relation to employee costs seven were not amalgamated out of the 24 councils. Again, that uses the current Fit for the Future criteria. The overall performance of a council is influenced by the management of its resources, its people, its assets and its services to the community far more than by size. Economies of scale are a misnomer. Performance is the key. The assumptions of economies of scale made right throughout the Independent Local Government Review Panel's report are wrong. In fact, evidence from our neighbours to the north in Queensland demonstrates that many of the panel's proposed mergers will result in over-scale councils, which will exhibit diseconomies of scale.

There is no evidence that the 10 amalgamated councils in the larger comparable group of 24 councils in New South Wales, to which I referred earlier, are performing any better than non-amalgamated councils. Yet there has been a decade for those amalgamated councils to exhibit those purported economies of scale and general efficiency improvements. There is simply no evidence to show that bigger is better, that bigger is more efficient, and that bigger is better at representing community. I have just provided a whole heap of data that I certainly hope the Government takes into consideration when deciding whether or not it will support the motion moved by the member for Sydney.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** Madam Acting-Speaker, I seek leave—

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! Is leave granted?

**Mr Alex Greenwich:** No.

**Mr John Sidoti:** Yes.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** —and I will also—

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! Is the member for Castle Hill seeking leave to speak?

**Mr John Sidoti:** Leave is granted.

**Mr Alex Greenwich:** No. Leave is not granted.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** I beg your pardon?

**Mr Alex Greenwich:** Can I object to it?

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! You can.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** You can, but let me tell you that you will never get leave in your life again if you do that. So be careful. We have allowed leave right throughout the debate.

**Mr Alex Greenwich:** All right, all right.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! I take it that leave has been granted?

**Leave granted.**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.42 p.m.], by leave: I seek to amend the motion. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after "That" with a view to inserting instead:

this House encourages local councils to continue to embrace the financial benefits through Fit for the Future provided by the Government which will lead to sustainable outcomes for our communities.

From listening to the debate in the Chamber this morning, we can all be proud of the fact that we support local government. As a person who is a product of local government in currently what is the most financially sustainable council in this country, The Hills Shire Council, of which I was a very proud member between 2003 and 2008, I believe that this amendment will allow us to work together for the betterment of local government right across New South Wales.

We have heard the debate from members who are protecting their local government areas. We acknowledge that people are very passionate about their local government areas, as I certainly am. Personally I believe bigger is better in some cases because, for planning administration purposes, it gives a council greater ability to gather resources that will attract better planners. That is certainly the case for larger councils in the north-west areas of Sydney. It is certainly the case for The Hills Shire Council, the Blacktown City Council and the Hornsby Shire Council.

All larger councils in the north-western areas of Sydney with more than 200,000 residents attract planners with the greatest ability. When we have the best people making decisions, we get the best outcomes for our communities. I am speaking only in relation to the north-west areas of Sydney and cannot speak too broadly, but the Parramatta City Council also has the ability to attract the best and brightest people because of its size and its concomitant resources. In conclusion, I state that I have moved the amendment and seek support of all members in the House because I believe the amendment will lead to greater debate in the future and ultimately better outcomes for our communities, which is what all members of the House want.

**Ms JENNY LEONG** (Newtown) [12.45 p.m.], by leave: It is important to state for the record that in the past the Newtown electorate had three local government areas—South Sydney City Council, the council of the City of Sydney and Marrickville Council—but, unfortunately, as a result of forced amalgamations in 2004, it has only two local councils. I move:

That the amendment be amended by leaving out all words after "this" with a view to inserting instead:

House:

- (1) Opposes forced amalgamations of councils as a flawed and counterproductive vehicle for meaningful local government reform.
- (2) Notes the strong community and local government sector opposition for forced council amalgamations.

It is very important to recognise that local councils have a plan. Earlier non-Government members were accused of deliberate opposition, but there will always be opposition. It is important to remember that we do have a plan. The council of the City of Sydney has an amazing strategic plan that is making our city more diverse and more liveable. Marrickville Council has a great plan that is able to deliver a level of integrated cycleways, connected communities and amazing art spaces. That is what the plans are for local government areas in the inner city and that is what the council of the City of Sydney and Marrickville Council deliver for their communities.

I wonder whether my Government colleagues have spoken to the newly elected upper House member, the Hon. Shayne Mallard, who was a member of the South Sydney City Council prior to the forced amalgamation, and have asked him how he feels about forced amalgamation. I also ask whether we need to be doing this. What is the agenda? Members may recall that during my inaugural speech I referred to Lilian Fowler, who, as a member for Newtown in this House, also spoke about her rejection of forced council amalgamations. We are seeing that the issue has emerged again at a different time, but with the same agenda—an agenda of efficiencies.

It is not about efficiencies to provide better community services and community support to our local areas. It is about efficiencies that look simply at the bottom line and the level of profit that can be delivered rather than what types of services our communities are provided. Our local councils provide a number of programs that are about diversity in our communities, supporting people who are most in need and those who are most vulnerable. It is councils like the Marrickville Council, the council of the City of Sydney and councils in the inner city areas, such as the Leichhardt Municipal Council, that actually are delivering those outcomes for our communities. In a big city that is as dense, complex and challenging as is Sydney, we need to have local representation to be able to deliver for the community.

It is only The Greens in the New South Wales Parliament who consistently have stood up against forced amalgamations. The Greens is the only party in the New South Wales Parliament that has said that we do not support forced amalgamations, we do not support the idea of communities being run over and ignored, but we do support strong community consultation.

Over many years the City of Sydney, the Marrickville Council and the Leichhardt council have provided strong community consultation. It is something that The Greens will continue to stand up for in this place and we will continue to work with the community. The mayor of Leichhardt council—a member of The Greens—has been active in ensuring consultation with the community. I note the member for Balmain, a former mayor of Leichhardt council, has also made a strong effort to stand up for the community. I note that the former mayor of Marrickville Council is also present in the Chamber as the member for Summer Hill. There has been a strong and active community campaign within the inner west and the inner city to support local councils. Local Councils are the means by which we make our cities liveable. Members need to stand up for local councils.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [12.49 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members who contributed to this debate—a vocal and interesting one. I thank the Minister for Local Government and the members representing the electorates of Fairfield, Parramatta, Balmain, Drummoyne, Charlestown, Newtown, Kiama and Castle Hill. This was an interesting debate. It was interesting to hear the Government come out in support of forced amalgamations, but to then—at the last minute—seek to amend the motion to return to the vanilla position that was taken to the electorate in which Government members refused to answer questions about their intention of forced amalgamations. I thank the member for Newtown for amending the Government's amendment so that in the first vote after I have spoken we can have members move to the side of the Chamber that represents their stance on forced amalgamations.

Forced amalgamations are a method by which the Government may impose itself on local government, rather than address the real concerns of local government reform, allow local government to raise revenue, to borrow and to reform rate-pegging. We need local government reform, but it should not be undertaken by State government imposing itself upon local government. Forced amalgamations are likely to lead to disruption of services and are expensive. Amalgamations will potentially lead to rate increases, but most importantly they will lead to a loss of local representation and a loss of local democracy. The member for Lake Macquarie stressed also the loss of sense of community that may result. Local government has been the plaything of State government for too long.

Its boundaries are subject to stacking, mergers and de-amalgamations for State government political advantage. I share the widespread community concern that local government should, once and for all, be



recognised in the Constitution so that it ceases to be beholden to the government of the day, with democracy protected. Local government can be improved and if the Government is sincere in achieving this, it would start the process by implementing Independent Local Government Review Panel recommendations such as the removal of rate-pegging. Amalgamations are not necessary and create the risk of lost services, increased costs and reduced representation. Amalgamations should not be imposed on sustainable councils. I commend the amendment to the Government's amendment, which opposes forced amalgamations.

**Question—That the amendment of the member for Newtown to the amendment of the member for Castle Hill be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 38**

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

**Noes, 47**

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

**Pair**

Mr Foley

Mr Baird

**Question resolved in the negative.**

**Amendment of the member for Newtown to the amendment of the member for Castle Hill negatived.**

**Question—That the amendment of the member for Castle Hill be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Amendment of the member for Castle Hill agreed to.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

**Pursuant to resolution Address-in-Reply proceeded with.**

### **GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

#### **Third Day's Debate**

**Debate resumed from 5 May 2015.**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.12 p.m.]: It is a great pleasure to be granted this opportunity to inform members of the attributes of my electorate and the great fortune that has been achieved for this State by the Liberal-Nationals Government, led by Premier Mike Baird and Deputy Premier Troy Grant. Some people might say that blue ribbon Liberal electorates are unable to achieve great outcomes. No electorate is bluer than the blue ribbon Liberal electorate of Castle Hill—probably the strongest Liberal electorate in the country at present. I honour and respect the trust that the people of Castle Hill have placed in me. My electorate has been the beneficiary of no less than \$10 billion for infrastructure projects to which I have referred in this House. An amount of \$8.3 billion has been allocated for the North West Rail Link, which most members will remember has a history. In 1995 it was acknowledged that the rapidly expanding areas surrounding Rouse Hill were in need of infrastructure.

The Government at the time was that of Bob Carr, just prior to Morris Iemma taking over, then Premier after Premier taking over. It seemed as though each week we got a new Premier. At one stage I thought to myself that perhaps these people just want to get themselves a car and driver in retirement, so they would give everybody a bit of a shot at Premier and ultimately they would leave this Parliament with entitlement to a car and a driver in retirement. That may or may not have been the case. But the point I make is that the North West Rail Link had been the subject of promises as far back as 1995. Our area was growing at a rapid rate, especially Rouse Hill, Kellyville, Beaumont Hills, Castle Hill and Glenhaven—all beautiful areas that I represent, with wonderful people who vote the right way. However, it is one thing to have rapid growth; it is quite another to deprive the people of the infrastructure that they need.

I found myself standing as an Independent candidate in the lead-up to the 1999 local government election. I ran on the platform of the need for an upgrade of our main road, which was Windsor Road. I fought for that upgrade for a couple of years. I am happy to say that we shamed the Carr Government into action. The result was that about \$400 million was subsequently invested in that road. If one thinks about Windsor Road today, with the enormous volume of traffic traversing it from the upper reaches of the Hawkesbury, through The Hills local government area, my electorate, and the many electorates adorning it, as well as to Parramatta, one wonders how those areas could ever have survived with a single-lane road. The simple fact is that we were not surviving too well at all; we definitely needed to upgrade that road.

The plan in 2000 was to upgrade Windsor Road only to Garfield Road, Riverstone by 2013, just a little over a year ago. I can only imagine the massive gridlock we would have been facing at the moment had that road not been upgraded all the way to Windsor by 2006, as it subsequently was. The point I made very strongly at the time was that a funding mechanism applied to the sale of every home in that area. It was known as the Arterial Road Contribution Scheme, with contributions being paid directly to Roads and Maritime Services. As a matter of fact, developers had to pay that contribution to Roads and Maritime Services prior to the release of a linen plan for a block of ground. So Roads and Maritime Services received hundreds of millions of dollars at a time when the community was still suffering the dreadful constraints of a single-lane Windsor Road. But we fought the good fight, and we shamed the Carr Government into action in 2000. I think it was in April 2001 that Premier Bob Carr announced that Windsor Road would be upgraded all the way from Baulkham Hills to Windsor in a five-year period. That subsequently happened, greatly improving the flow of traffic through the area.

However, as we know, roads alone do not suffice to serve the needs of a growing area—and our area was continuing to grow. Hundreds of thousands of people continue to move to areas on both sides of Windsor Road, in the Blacktown shire and in the then Baulkham Hills shire, now The Hills shire. To this day, it is one of the most sought after areas in this country. I cite for the record some astronomical home prices being achieved. In the electorate opposite mine, the Riverstone electorate, represented by a good Liberal member, homes are

bringing above \$1.2 million; that is for a double-storey detached house of maybe three or four bedrooms, probably on a 500 square metre block of land in what is known as The Ponds estate. Homes on my side of the road are attracting sums well above that figure—in the range of \$1.5 million to \$1.7 million, that is, for similar homes on like blocks of land. The prices being brought by those homes tell us something. People with that sort of funding who could purchase a home on the North Shore, perhaps around beach areas, or in the beautiful electorate of Heathcote, are instead choosing to move out to the new areas of north-western Sydney.

One must ask the question, "Why?" I know I am a little biased when I talk up Western Sydney, but the point is that we have great parks, great playing fields, wonderful environmental areas and great riparian areas. I know the Minister for the Environment, who is at the table, will pay great attention to those sensitive areas around our creek lines, because The Hills Shire Council has embraced the opportunity to have cycling and walking paths—which have a very small footprint—on those riparian zones, so that people in those areas can go for a walk in the morning and in the afternoon. It is well known how much we in the north-west embrace healthy outdoor living; we love going for a walk. Indeed, I walk every morning with my good wife so that she can talk to me. We enjoy that. One of the great benefits to be achieved from wandering around the lovely Hills area—green health, I think they call it—is breathing the fresh air and undertaking some healthy activity. But that only comes through some very good planning.

The Hills Shire Council has been very adept at ensuring we have such wonderful walking and cycling trails, with the connectivity that they provide between the new suburbs and town centres, employment areas and playing fields. We have always embraced a semi-rural residential lifestyle. Being on the periphery of those rural zones I think is probably the great attraction for people looking for a home. I am happy to see those people moving in; bless them one and all. I think we have the largest proportion of families with children of any electorate in Australia. So they are good breeders. I do not know what is in the water out there, but they are producing great Australians in great numbers, pleasing not only our families and our communities but also our schools, which are overflowing at the moment. I acknowledge the wonderful teachers in my area; but I will go into that in a little more detail because I am always proud to support our principals and teachers, the great educators of our area. Whether they be in the public or the private sector, they are providing wonderful educational outcomes for the people of the area.

I come back to where I started. Roads alone, even with great parks and playing fields, just will not suffice to serve the needs of a growing community. We need high-quality public transport. That is where I commenced this debate. I acknowledge the support of this Government and the fact that we were the only party to support the North West Rail Link—to the point that, as we speak, four tunnelling machines are in the ground. I cannot remember their names, but they are named after wonderful ladies. They are all digging away, working on probably the largest infrastructure project undertaken in this country. And thank goodness; once completed, it will provide rapid rail services from the growth areas of the north-west around Rouse Hill right through to Castle Hill, down through Macquarie, North Sydney and ultimately the central CBD.

Of course, one of our priorities, announced prior to the last election, was that if we were successful in seeking a mandate from the community, we would lease 49 per cent of the electricity poles and wires over a 99-year period, retaining 51 per cent ownership in government hands. We sought and got that mandate with an undertaking to invest \$20 billion in new infrastructure. This will be congestion-busting infrastructure, and I am very proud to say, having achieved that mandate, we will be extending the North West Rail Link. I probably should check myself, because very soon I will not be talking about the North West Rail Link; I will be talking about the rapid metropolitan rail link. That is because that particular link, which started with the North West Rail Link, will now travel through the areas I have mentioned, through a new harbour tunnel crossing into the city CBD and to the various stations across the CBD, then proceed on to the south-western areas of Bankstown, thereby providing one continuous rapid rail loop in the Sydney metropolitan area.

This is a new type of public transport in this country and, having embraced the innovation and technology from around the world, it has been implemented. It will perfectly support the heavy and light rail outcomes currently operating across the metropolitan area but once complete, operating on two-minute intervals in peak hour, public transport on our rail networks will be increased by 60 per cent. It will be coming to Rouse Hill where it will provide the greatest benefit to the burgeoning communities I have spoken about before. In the planning mix on both sides of the road there are currently 30,000 new home sites within the electorate of The Hills such as North Kellyville and the Box Hill precinct, in particular the very popular Box Hill area, which is a private development at no cost to government.

That is another way in which the Government has sought to create better outcomes on behalf of New South Wales communities by working with the private sector. The Government saves a lot of money by the

private sector funding upfront the necessary infrastructure such as sewerage, water, local roads and gas and electricity utilities. The Government is also enjoying the stamp duty that is flowing from that, which allows us to continue to build on our infrastructure rollout above and beyond the \$20 billion Rebuilding NSW program. It was conveniently forgotten in all the talk prior to the last election that in its last term the Government had a record spend of \$61.5 billion on infrastructure factored into its budget.

The Government also said that it would work within its means. When we came to office in 2011 the net State debt was \$30 billion; it is now \$8 billion. Those opposite know only too well how to increase debt. They do not mind spending other people's money. Unfortunately, we cannot live like that forever. We need to take check and live within our means. The Federal Government was left with much more debt by Labor than this Government; however, we are still paying off that \$8 billion debt. The Hockey-Abbott budget, which was handed down on Tuesday, will probably go down in our history books as one of the greatest budgets. The \$1 billion investment on the stock exchange yesterday demonstrates that mum and dad investors right across this country have embraced that budget. One of the great attributes of that budget will be the effect it will have on small business. We should never disregard the effect small businesses have on our communities. Indeed, small businesses employ around 50 per cent of the New South Wales workforce. I represent a plethora of small businesses in my electorate, including tradies, builders, electricians, air-conditioning fitters, concreters, tilers and plasterers and they all do a wonderful job.

This Government is responsible for the highest number of housing starts in 50 years, which is necessary if we are to meet expected population increases in Western Sydney of 1.4 to 1.6 million people over the next 15 years. Madam Acting-Speaker Gibbons, from her days in local government in particular, would remember that there has been a lot of talk in local government about the 2031 milestone, which is just over 15 years away. I am advised that the expected population increase of 1.4 to 1.6 million has recently been reviewed and updated in the metropolitan strategy. Those people will need to be housed and be provided with necessary services as well as the infrastructure to move around employment zones such as the Norwest Business Park in my electorate.

The Norwest Business Park has provided The Hills local government area with the benefits of employment to the point where 50 per cent of the workforce in The Hills shire live and work in their local area. If we could replicate that in every other employment zone across the many local government areas in this State it would be a great outcome. If that number people were living and working in their local areas it would ease congestion on our roads and reduce overcrowding on public transport. Whilst we are waiting for the North West Rail Link to be built the only form of public transport from The Hills shire to the city is provided by our capable Hillsbus network. Prior to becoming a member of Parliament I worked for Hillsbus for 22 years which in those days was known as the Glenorie Bus Company. Glenorie Bus Company was purchased by a multinational company, then ComfortDelGro Cabcharge ultimately purchased it and it has now morphed into Hillsbus.

Members have commented on the issue of overcrowding. In the first quarter of this year there was a 16 per cent increase in the number of people wishing to travel by bus. If local companies are to deal with that increased capacity they need our continued support, which is why this Government has invested in more buses. In the coming months the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure will be making announcements about the new buses which will service the Norwest area. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I acknowledge that a large number of people in our community are not happy because they have to stand when travelling to and from work. It is wonderful that people are embracing public transport but it is a long haul from The Hills into the city. The Government has recognised that shortfall and more buses will be provided. I will not take away the thunder from our capable Minister for Transport and Infrastructure who will be making more announcements in the coming months about this Government's investment in new buses. In the past 18 months approximately 150 additional buses are providing express services in The Hills area. My electorate is being well served by the New South Wales Government.

Sadly, in the 16 years of the Labor Government Showground Road was neglected. People regularly visit Castle Hill Towers shopping centre yet they are subjected to driving on a single-lane road. In this Government's last term in office the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight said that the \$60 million upgrade of Showground Road would start this year. That half a kilometre upgrade is expected to take a year to complete. This will open up the area to more people and provide more jobs. We are never averse to talking up our area and encouraging people to shop at Castle Hill Towers and Rouse Hill Town Centre, but people are discouraged to do so because of traffic gridlock. As for the Glenhaven Road traffic lights, this has been a nightmare intersection

for a long time. We greatly appreciate the 50 per cent funding support from The Hills Shire Council to provide that intersection, with support also from the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight. The lobbying I did as Parliamentary Secretary for Roads and Transport has again proved beneficial for my area.

Such results come only from a government that is responsible and trustworthy, and that is living within its means. Governments cannot continue to make unfunded promises—which is what caused problems at the Federal level. Governments cannot continue to hand over hundreds of millions of dollars and think there is no limit to spending other people's money. But there is a limit. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government recognises that we must live within our means. We must be efficient, spend taxpayers' money wisely and deliver outcomes. I am proud to say that the wise options chosen in my area have delivered record spending. It is wonderful to have this opportunity to reply to the Governor's Speech. The Government is doing a great service to my electorate, providing almost \$10 billion in funding in its first term. We are looking forward to an even larger slice of the cake in this term.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Stephen Bromhead and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

*[Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.32 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

### VISITORS

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome to the public gallery today 30 students and their teachers from Thomas Hassall Anglican College, Middleton Grange, guests of the shadow Attorney General and member for Liverpool. It was lovely to meet and talk to those students about half an hour ago. I welcome Philip Motby from Bomaderry, guest of the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast and member for Kiama. I also welcome to the public gallery 30 students and their teachers from TAFE Western Sydney Institute. Finally, I welcome to the public gallery today 15 students and their teachers from the Australian Careers Business College. I welcome them all to the House.

### RETIREMENT OF JAN CLIFFORD

**The SPEAKER:** I would like to take this opportunity to farewell a long-serving member of staff from the Opposition Whip's office. Sadly, today will be the last sitting day during which Jan Clifford will serve this Parliament, after more than 26 years of service. Jan joined the staff of the Legislative Assembly in 1989 working with Parliamentary Building Services for two years before serving Security Services for six years. In 1997 Jan began her illustrious career in the Whip's office. She served as Whip's Secretary to Bill Beckroge, MP; George Thompson, MP; Gerard Martin, MP; our beloved Richard Amery, MP, who has joined us here this afternoon and it is always lovely to see him; and Noreen Hay, MP.

With her unflappable and friendly demeanour, Jan has served the Parliament as a whole. Working in the Whip's office, in both Government and Opposition, Jan had a reputation when working for the Government Whip for organising fair access to private members' statements, something which is very important, ensuring that Government, Opposition and Independent members had appropriate access to make those statements. Jan has been praised in this place for her professionalism and for setting the benchmark for the running of a Whip's office. Each of the whips she served has spoken of how they were experts from day one because of the professional assistance rendered to them by Jan.

Members on both sides, and I stress that this comes from members on both sides, describe Jan as a wonderful and remarkable lady who brings much-needed friendliness and collegiality to the workings of this place. Her experience and advice will certainly be sorely missed, as will her jar of lollies. I take this opportunity to wish Jan all the best for the future. I thank Jan for her service to the Parliament of New South Wales.

### REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I inform the House 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.

### PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIAN

#### Appointment

**The SPEAKER:** I inform the House of the appointment of Ms Debbie Bennett as the Parliamentary Librarian, effective from 14 July 2015.

**QUESTION TIME**

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

**FEDERAL BUDGET AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** My question is directed to the Premier. Does the Premier stand by his words from yesterday that the "Federal Government is helping infrastructure investment in this State" when the Federal budget delivers Western Australia an extra \$499 million for new infrastructure projects while the only new money New South Wales receives is \$250,000 for a flagpole in Bathurst?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will be placed on calls to order if they continue to interject. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time. The Premier has the call.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I do not know what the Leader of the Opposition has got against the member for Bathurst. He has been fighting very hard for that flagpole. He is very excited by it. The Leader of the Opposition has not made a great start. Before the election I never had a Leader of the Opposition or a shadow Treasurer who read budgets. I had high hopes that this Leader of the Opposition would read them. It is not an unusual thing to ask or hope for. The only person in the Opposition who has ever paid attention to the budget is the member for Cessnock. They have rewarded him with a shadow portfolio. Mind you, he is seated on the other side of the bridge. Why is he the only shadow Minister there by himself?

**Mr Michael Daley:** Because no-one likes him.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** No-one likes him.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I digress. I caution the Leader of the Opposition not to go to his shadow Treasurer but to his shadow finance Minister for advice. At least he reads budgets. That is a good thing to do. If he read this one he could have told the Leader of the Opposition about the investment that the Federal Government is providing in New South Wales. Did he miss the \$1.5 billion for WestConnex or the \$2 billion concessional loan? I do not know whether he read about those.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order—

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Don't pretend you've read the budget because we know you haven't.

**Mr Michael Daley:** I remember some of your calculations. Madam Speaker, the Premier misunderstood the question. It was about new money.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The list goes on. It includes \$2.9 billion from the Federal Government for Western Sydney roads around Badgerys Creek airport, which is a \$3.5 billion project, and \$2 billion has been confirmed as coming to this State on the back of our Rebuilding NSW program. Members opposite said they did not want that \$2 billion. We heard their friends down in Victoria say that they did not want \$1.5 billion so that came flying back. They do not want to build infrastructure. We have got news for them: we want to build infrastructure.

We want to make a difference in the lives of people across this State and that is what we are doing. That \$2 billion will go into public transport, roads, and sports and cultural facilities. It will make a difference and make this city great. We are very proud of that. I acknowledge the work of Jan Clifford. It has been great to have her here. We thank her for her wonderful contribution to this great Parliament, but I have to say that I would call it a day too if Noreen was my boss.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Point of order: The Premier should address members by their correct title.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I apologise. I should have said the Whip. If we were thinking about the slogan "a new direction" who would come to mind to make the new Whip? Is that a new direction?

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: It is Standing Order 129. This is a serious issue. We have been short-changed and the Premier wants to address everything except the rip-off New South Wales suffered in yesterday's budget.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier is addressing those issues. He also responded to an interjection.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I hope that members opposite listen to the member for Cessnock because he reads budgets and he can explain to them what happened. He should run through what happened in the past couple of days because they do not understand. A record amount of infrastructure has come to this State. We are determined to deliver it because that is what we do and have done for the past four years.

### WESTCONNEX

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** My question is addressed to the Premier. What is the Government doing to deliver better infrastructure for Western Sydney commuters?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I congratulate the member for Drummoyne, who actually achieved a swing towards him at the recent election. He is loved in his community because he looks after them and does an outstanding job. It is great to have him back as the member for Drummoyne. We are very proud to be delivering the largest road project in a metropolitan area in the history of this country. The 33 kilometres of WestConnex will make an incredible difference to people's lives. I will run through some of the statistics because members opposite have not paid much attention to them. WestConnex will bypass 52 sets of traffic lights and take 3,000 trucks a day off Parramatta Road.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** No, there will be no traffic off Parramatta Road.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I did not know who Madam Speaker was talking about then. I could not understand why the member for "Newcastle" was interested in Parramatta Road. But at least that member for "Newcastle" is backing revitalisation, and that is great.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Strathfield will cease loudly interjecting.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I know that Labor members do not care about 40-minute savings in travel times, but Government members do, and that is what WestConnex will deliver. It will be a \$20 billion benefit to the overall New South Wales economy. We know that Labor is against jobs. I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition told the Labor caucus that he is against jobs and that Labor will vote against a bill that will abolish a tax on new jobs, which is what the Leader of the Opposition seems to want. The project also will produce 10,000 construction jobs. We have the economy moving and the city moving, and that will make a difference to people's lives.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I understand that some reports on WestConnex have been published. The Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore, put out a report. It is interesting that the report states that without WestConnex "... Sydney traffic congestion will worsen". It also states that with WestConnex:

Parts of the inner south see a reduction in traffic on local roads, as through-traffic is diverted onto the motorways ...

and Petersham, will see reduced traffic volumes after the construction of Stage 3 ...

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I point out to the member for Balmain that this is not a debate, and there is no need for him to respond.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I note that it will make a difference across the whole of Western Sydney and this Government is proud to be delivering it. As I went through the report, the only problem with it is that it

reminded me of Labor's infrastructure plan. Did anyone see that during the election campaign? It was spectacular. I do not know who the shadow Minister for Roads was. Was the member for Maroubra the shadow Minister for Roads?

**Mr Michael Daley:** I was.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The member for Maroubra indicates that he was the shadow Minister for Roads, so it all starts to come together. Labor made a decision because it was in trouble in Newtown—I welcome The Greens new member for Newtown—and was trying to hang onto the Newtown electorate, so decided to cancel stage three. Labor members said, "Let's just cancel stage three. Let's forget about the project, cancel stage three, and then we'll work out what to do with the M4." Labor members said that they wanted the M4 to come to the city, "But", they said, "the only problem is that we don't know where it's going to go." They had four years but they do not know where on earth it will go. We could play bingo: Is it going to come out at the Opera House?

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

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** How about the Hilton? That is another option.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Is it going to come out at Hyde Park? Where on earth will it come out?

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** What about Goat Island?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Goat Island, or why not Parliament House? While we have got on with beginning to deliver the infrastructure this city needs, Opposition members absolutely have taken for granted the people of Western Sydney. This comment, which is very clear, states:

There is nothing in the positions unveiled by ... Luke Foley to suggest the party has spent much of the past four years giving serious thought to how to make Sydney or NSW better places to move around.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The article goes on to state:

But what was Labor's vision? Less of the same.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Canterbury will cease interjecting.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** That is what Labor stands for—nothing.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Strathfield to order for the second time. The member for Strathfield will cease interjecting.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The Government has done the hard work. We have found the money, controlled the budget and allocated the money to the most important project in this State.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** That is how we will get this State moving.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Prospect to order for the second time. He will cease interjecting.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The Government is very proud to deliver this significant project to the people of the State. This project not only will strengthen the economy but also will provide the capacity by which people can get back to their families more quickly. The Government thinks that that is important. The Government will continue to work towards achieving that aim. The Government will not listen to whatever rubbish Labor serves up about infrastructure because this Government is doing the work and this Government will deliver the infrastructure that makes a difference to people's lives.



**PARRAMATTA LIGHT RAIL**

**Mr RYAN PARK:** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. Has he sought Federal Government funding to fast-track the delivery of light rail for Western Sydney?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. Before the Minister has even begun to answer the question, members are interjecting.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** It is somewhat interesting, is it not, that we have just had an election. At the Leader of the Opposition's campaign launch, three Labor members spoke—the member for Canterbury, the member for "Newcastle", and the member for Auburn.

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

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Not one of them mentioned infrastructure or public transport during that campaign.

**Mr Troy Grant:** Shame!

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** But it got better.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Strathfield will come to order. I call the member for Wollongong to order for the second time.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** During the campaign the Leader of the Opposition announced an infrastructure plan that did not include Parramatta light rail.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** Shame! What did he have against Parramatta?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind Government members that the Minister does not need their assistance.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I do not know what is going on. He had an obsession with koalas throughout the election campaign.

**Mr David Harris:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Minister is straying so far from the question that I will offer him a street directory to find his way back to it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister remains relevant to the question and he has only begun to answer the question. The member for Wyong will resume his seat. The Minister has the call.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I do not know what the member for Wyong has been teaching school children for the past four years, but it is a bit of a worry. We had a great election campaign with Government members being all about public transport, light rail, WestConnex and NorthConnex and lots of projects whereas we had the Leader of the Opposition who was obsessed with koalas. Good old Blinky Bill! His best headline for the campaign was this one—"Luke Foliage".

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will resume his seat.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** While the Leader of the Opposition was talking about koalas, the Government is getting on with the job of building the necessary projects to transform this city.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Madam Speaker, I am not sure which of the three standing orders I should base my point of order upon.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Does the member for Canterbury wish to take a point of order? The member for Canterbury should choose one—any one—of the standing orders.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Let me try Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

**Ms Linda Burney:** If the Minister does not know the answer, he should sit down.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. The Minister's answer remains relevant to the question.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Or perhaps he can just find his way home.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am able only to direct the Minister to ensure his answer is relevant.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** My point is that here we have the Government delivering Parramatta light rail by putting aside \$1 billion, yet what do we see from the Opposition?

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

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** There has been a failure to include light rail in Labor's infrastructure plans and no mention of it during Labor's campaign launch.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Strathfield to order for the third time.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Who is the member for Keira? The member for Keira was—wait for it—the Deputy Director-General of the Department of Transport and he now is bowling up questions to the Government about Parramatta light rail.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

**Mr Ryan Park:** You were the shortest-term Treasurer of this State.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** That is what I have to say about the flake opposite.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Keira, who already has been called to order for the third time, to remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Keira left the Chamber at 2.36 p.m.]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Does the member for Wyong wish to take a point of order about my removal of the member for Keira? If so, he will be next.

**Mr David Harris:** Not at all, Madam Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Wyong not to bring his street directory to the centre table. The member for Wyong will state his point of order.

**Mr David Harris:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The Minister's answer remained relevant to the question.

**Mr David Harris:** The question was about light rail. He has not mentioned light rail.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have no power under the standing orders to direct the Minister to answer the question specifically. I have no power to do anything other than direct the Minister to ensure his answer remains relevant. The member for Wyong should read the standing orders.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** We missed the member for Wyong for the past four years!

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Point of order: The Minister has failed to resume his seat.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wollongong will state her point of order.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Pursuant to the standing orders of this House, during that entire exchange, the Minister did not resume his seat.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I had not noticed. I thank the member for Wollongong. The Minister will resume his seat when a member takes a point of order. I uphold the point of order.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** The worst thing about the Leader of the Opposition making the member for Wollongong the Opposition Whip is that she does not get to leave at 3.00 p.m. every day. That means happy hour starts half an hour later, does it not, Noreen?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the Minister to return to the leave of the question.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have asked the Minister to return to the leave of the question. Does that satisfy the point of order of the member for Canterbury?

**Ms Linda Burney:** I do not wish to take a point of order, except that—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. She did not have a point of order. Members should not stand in front of the microphone merely to promote an argument without taking a point of order. The member for Canterbury will remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 2.38 p.m.]*

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I have not done badly. I already have got rid of two shadow Ministers and it took me only four minutes. We have an Opposition that is not interested in public transport and not interested in light rail. We have \$1 billion set aside for those projects, and we are getting on with them.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. Surely the member for Wollongong does not wish to remove herself from the Chamber. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time. The House will come to order, including Government Ministers.

## HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. Ministers will come to order. The member for Riverstone has the call.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** What is the Government doing to deliver first-class health services and infrastructure?

*[Interruption]*

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** Madam Speaker, did you hear that interjection?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! No, I did not.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** It was a word that is not usually used in this Parliament, and I draw your attention to it.

**Mr Luke Foley:** You're in trouble if you're getting a lecture on manners from Jillian.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I would send my grandchildren out of the house for using language like that.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I warn members against using unparliamentary language. Those who do so will be removed from Chamber for the remainder of the day. The member for Kogarah will come to order.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I thank the member for Riverstone for an important question and I congratulate him on the wonderful work that he has done advocating for Blacktown Hospital—unlike the member for Blacktown. The member for Riverstone brought members of the Blacktown Hospital Medical Staff Council to see me shortly after we were elected to government. Partly as a consequence of that, the Government has allocated \$322 million for the upgrade of the Blacktown-Mount Druitt Hospital. Stage one of that upgrade is almost completed—it is due for completion by the end of this year. During the election campaign, the Government promised \$400 million to commence stage two, which will include a new emergency department, intensive care, ambulatory care, operating theatres, extra inpatient beds, and a boost to maternity and paediatric services.

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** It is one of 60 major redevelopments in our second term that total more than \$5 billion. On top of the \$4.8 billion we allocated last term, it brings us to nearly \$10 billion—double what was provided by those opposite in 16 years. No wonder our hospitals have been downgraded. We need to invest in them to bring them up to standard. Our commitments this term include many country hospitals, ranging from major redevelopments at Tamworth, Dubbo, Wagga Wagga and Bega.

In the Sydney region in the coming term Westmead Hospital will receive \$900 million; the Prince of Wales Hospital, \$500 million; Gosford Hospital, \$368 million; St George Hospital, \$307 million; Hornsby hospital, \$200 million; and Wyong Hospital, \$200 million. I could go on, but that is just a taste of what is to be provided. I refer also to the latest survey of patients in emergency departments released today by the Bureau of Health Information. The survey covered the period March 2013 to March 2014. I am happy to say that 96 per cent of those patients said that they had confidence and trust in the emergency department and doctors.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Even they don't believe you.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** The member for Wollongong does not believe that? I am astonished.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wollongong will cease interjecting. I call the member for Wollongong to order for the third time.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** Patients in our emergency departments have a wonderful respect for the doctors and nurses in our hospitals. Eighty-two per cent of them rated their overall care as "good" or "very good", compared with 59 per cent in a similar survey conducted in 2010-11. It was 59 per cent then and it is 82 per cent now. Our hospital emergency departments are improving in many respects in terms of the overall positive response of patients.

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** Positive responses were received about things such as information being shared with patients and their families while in the emergency department and the teamwork displayed by clinicians. In nearly all cases the findings were up around 80 per cent, compared with around 50 per cent in the previous survey. However, there is always room for improvement. Some discrepancies were found between hospitals relating to what happens when patients are sent home. I have asked the department to give me information about that so we can learn lessons from our successes and apply them to those hospitals that have not had such a good result. Many of the difficulties relate to underfunding by the Labor Party when it was in government. Fantastic improvements have been made at Blacktown Hospital but Labor invested nothing in that facility. That is why the new emergency department that will come online will make a huge difference.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I call the member for Maitland to order for the first time.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** At our major teaching hospitals—Concord, Nepean, Prince of Wales, Royal North Shore, Royal Prince Alfred [RPA], St George, St Vincent's, Westmead—82 per cent of patients said they received good or very good care. I congratulate all the hardworking and committed doctors and nurses in our emergency departments.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will cease interjecting.

**FEDERAL BUDGET AND TRANSPORT**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. Which transport project was submitted by your Government to the Federal Government for funding consideration prior to this week's budget?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Prospect will come to order. He has asked his question.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I do not know whether the good member has noticed, but the Government has a \$20 billion infrastructure plan. If those opposite knew how to read a budget—the State budget, let alone the Federal budget—they would soon realise that the Commonwealth is investing some \$11 billion in roads in New South Wales. Vital projects such as NorthConnex, WestConnex, the Pacific Highway upgrade and the Princes Highway upgrade are being delivered by the Liberal-Nationals Government. That begs the question: What is Labor's plan? Those opposite had no plan before the election and it is fairly obvious that they will go to sleep for another four years. I am surprised to receive such a naive, stupid question about infrastructure from a new member of this House who was part of a campaign that delivered no infrastructure plan for his electorate or, for that matter, across the State. It just goes to show what is happening.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure will resume his seat.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** If you are delivering terrific outcomes, then what project did you put forward to the Federal Government?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The member for Strathfield will resume her seat. This is not an opportunity for her to argue. She will state the point of order and I will rule upon it. I direct the member for Strathfield to remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

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

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I expected more from an older member. The Minister has the call.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** That is number three, Madam Speaker. I will get rid of the whole Opposition front bench by the time I am finished. I am surprised that the member for Strathfield would take a point of order against the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure when WestConnex, which has Commonwealth dollars in it, will go through the heart of her electorate and remove 3,000 trucks from Parramatta Road. It is the type of constructive relationship that exists between this Government and Canberra that is delivering infrastructure across the State—some \$61.5 million in infrastructure across the forward estimates.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Kogarah will cease interjecting.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** A \$20 billion infrastructure plan to transform—

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: The question was succinct. It asked which transport projects were submitted by the Government to Tony Abbott.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra does not need to repeat the question. He will state the standing order that has been breached.

**Mr Michael Daley:** It is Standing Order 129. The Minister has not gone anywhere near the submissions that the Government made to the Federal Government for new funding in this budget.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The Minister is being relevant to the question asked. The member for Maroubra will cease arguing across the Chamber.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** That is another stupid point of order from those opposite. It was the member for Maroubra—the shadow Treasurer—who said that the Sydney Rapid Transit, the second tunnel across the harbour, does not make economic sense. We have a \$20 billion infrastructure plan designed to give

\$300 billion of economic uplift to this State. We have support from the Commonwealth to invest in infrastructure across New South Wales and we are getting stupid questions from those opposite about the infrastructure plan for New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Maitland to order for the second time. The member for Charlestown will come to order.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Labor members should read the State Infrastructure Strategy because they might learn something from it. What we have from those opposite is an infrastructure cancellation policy.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Do not dare do that. The Minister will resume his seat.

*[Interruption]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will resume his seat. The member for Prospect will state his point of order from the dispatch box. He must state the standing order that has been breached.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** Does the Minister want me to repeat the question? You are not answering it. Do you want me to repeat it? He is not going to answer my question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Prospect will come to order. He will not talk over the top of me.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** So he is not going to answer my question?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Prospect will remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Prospect left the Chamber at 2.49 p.m.]*

## RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. What is the Government doing to deliver first-class health services and infrastructure to patients in rural and regional New South Wales?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! All members who have been called to order are deemed to be on three calls to order.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I thank the member for Myall Lakes for his question. He has done an outstanding job representing his community. He is on The Nationals team, whose members from the Fifty-fifth Parliament were returned to this place to continue their outstanding advocacy not only in health—many hospitals are targeted for upgrades in this term—but also across their electorates. On behalf of the Parliament, I offer an apology to the students in the gallery for the behaviour of members opposite. It is akin to going to the principal's office or the naughty corner; it is not the way one should behave in this place.

When patients are sick, the last thing they want is to travel long distances by road or air to receive medical treatment, but that is what patients are doing in regional New South Wales. Patients in regional New South Wales were left to suffer during Labor's long term in government. Labor abandoned the regions and rural patients were left with huge travel bills after receiving treatment far from home. We are all born equal, but how we live and die can be desperately unfair. We are working to fix Labor's mess. The efforts of the health Minister in the past four years were simply outstanding—as is her road map of work for the next four years. When Labor was in government, it left us with an enormous backlog of work. The Labor Government did build a hospital or two, but this is what the doctors said about its efforts—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Maitland to remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Maitland left the Chamber at 2.52 p.m.]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. The Deputy Premier has the call.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** The doctors said the hospitals that Labor built were so dysfunctional they were dangerous. Labor built the hospitals but they put patients' lives at risk. I am sorry to mention Bathurst again—

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

**Mr TROY GRANT:** When the Bathurst hospital was built, trolleys could not manoeuvre around corners, ambulances could not fit into parking spaces, and a pipe leaked raw sewage into the maternity ward. Labor might have built a hospital or two, but it did not build them well. Labor applied a three-pronged approach to rural and regional health: waste, mismanagement and neglect. Our approach is vastly different. It is transparent and involves the community.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Kogarah is on his final warning. The member for Port Stephens will come to order.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** We are building world-class, high-class health facilities in rural and regional New South Wales. That will attract doctors and nurses with highly valued medical skills to the regions, where they are needed most.

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

**Mr TROY GRANT:** People in the regions are used to doing it tough from time to time but we can help to alleviate their suffering. Under this Government the Minister for Health has increased the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme, which removes the financial burden from those who must travel long distances to receive vital health care. During the election campaign, the member for Myall Lakes secured \$20 million to redevelop the Manning Base Hospital.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Port Stephens will come to order.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** This redevelopment will help patients in intensive care and those who are receiving renal dialysis and chemotherapy. The member for Oxley secured \$65 million for the upgrade of Macksville District Hospital, stages one and two, and \$3.5 million for the Wauchope ambulance station. In the last term of government, rural and regional health services and hospitals were either upgraded or newly built. I invite members who received new hospitals or upgrades in the last term of government to put up their hands.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Port Stephens will come to order.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** Blacktown Hospital is being upgraded; the member for Blacktown should up put his hand. This Government has a proud record of investing in rural and regional hospitals.

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

**Mr TROY GRANT:** We have had a proud record over the past four years; wait and see what a great record we will have at the end of the next four years.

## FEDERAL BUDGET AND HEALTH

**Ms PRUE CAR:** My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Given that the Public Health Association has described the Federal budget as "a bloodbath for health organisations delivering vital services to the Australian community", does the Minister stand by her comments made in this House yesterday that there will be no cuts to New South Wales health services as a result of the Federal budget?

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I am glad to set the record straight for the member for Londonderry. I assure her that what I said in Parliament yesterday was absolutely correct. Clearly the member opposite has not read the Health budget. Have you read the Federal budget? Have you looked at the figures yourself?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order. I place the member for Hornsby on three calls to order.

**Mr David Harris:** Point of order: The Minister should address members by their correct titles.

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** Member for Londonderry, clearly you did not read—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The point of order was upheld. I ask the Minister to direct her comments through the Chair. The Minister has the call.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** This is ludicrous. When members read the Federal budget they will see that what I said yesterday is absolutely accurate. The funding provided by the Federal Government for hospitals in New South Wales has increased in this year's budget by 7.5 per cent.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Kogarah that he is on his final warning.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** The Premier and the Treasurer have indicated that the problem is the forward estimates, not this year's budget. If the Federal Government sticks with its projected change to the way that hospitals are funded from 2017-18, we will have a problem. We have absolutely acknowledged that. That is why I am pleased our competent Premier is attending the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] meeting in July.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: The question was about the cuts in this year's budget to the health flexible funds; it was not about the estimates.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I heard the question. There is no point of order. The member for Maroubra will not argue with the Minister.

**Mr Michael Daley:** It's not about the estimates; it's this year's budget. You haven't read it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra will remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Maroubra left the Chamber at 2.58 p.m.]*

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** The member for Maroubra was clearly not listening. The money has been increased in this year's budget.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will not argue with Ministers.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I reiterate that I am pleased that we have a competent Premier—it might have been otherwise had we had a change of government—who is going to Canberra to negotiate constructively at the COAG meeting about what to do from 2017-18 onwards. That is when the problems may arise if we cannot negotiate in a constructive manner to ensure that the funding formula is effective. In this year's budget there are no cuts to funding for our hospitals.

## TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES:** I address my question to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. How is the Government delivering new transport infrastructure and improved services for the people of New South Wales?

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** This is a very sensible question from the member for Mulgoa. I congratulate the member on her re-election and commend her for her continuing interest in public transport. What we saw from the Opposition on public transport during the election campaign was absolutely dismal—no plan, and no emphasis on tackling congestion that is crippling and costing this State in the order of \$5 billion per annum. This Government is getting on with the job. We are boosting services. Since we were elected, we have provided and delivered 12,800 new weekly services across our public transport network.

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



**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** That includes some 5,500 new services in Western Sydney, 600 extra weekly services in the Illawarra, and 300 extra services in the Hunter. In 2013 we introduced the biggest timetable change, and that has now delivered 1,000 weekly train services and 600 more express services than were on the previous timetable. We have also delivered the Opal card. We now have 2.8 million people who carry an Opal card and enjoy the access that it provides across our public transport network. Last November the Government launched the gold Opal card for seniors and pensioners; and 320,000 seniors have now taken up the gold Opal card.

We want to see that take-up continue. That is why we have just launched a new initiative targeting major shopping centres across Sydney, the Hunter and the Illawarra, providing kiosk access to seniors to apply for what is a tremendous opportunity provided through the gold Opal card. Across the network we are also investing at record levels in new infrastructure. The South West Rail Link has now been delivered. I do not need to remind the House that this was delivered \$300 million under budget and 12 months ahead of schedule. I can also confirm this afternoon that we have seen more than 16,000 trips taken from Edmondson Park and more than 23,500 trips from Leppington on the South West Rail Link.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the second time.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** The North West Rail Link is currently under construction. Four tunnel boring machines are at work—another project that being is delivered by the Liberal-Nationals Government ahead of schedule. I do not need to remind the House of what those opposite did in relation to the North West Rail Link. Also, very pleasingly, we are spending \$770 million on the Transport Access Program, which is about upgrading stations, wharves, car parks and interchanges. In this year's budget we are delivering \$193 million worth of projects. Now, 300 projects have been completed or are underway; and, as part of this, I can confirm that we have now delivered almost 5,000 new car parking spaces since election to government, and another 7,500 are on their way. We have also been handing back to commuters in the order of 1,200 staff car parks. Those opposite have a dismal record. They spent 16 years cancelling projects and then four years in opposition devising an infrastructure cancellation policy.

What we have seen from those opposite on infrastructure and public transport is a record that deserves criticism, and will continue to receive criticism, given their lack of clarity around what their plans are. Throughout the election campaign we saw editorials spelling out Labor's dismal record when they were in office and spelling out their dismal record when they were in opposition. What we now have from those opposite is continual carping from the sidelines about the fantastic \$20 billion infrastructure plan for this State—a plan that will deliver great projects right across the network. Another point I make is that this Government has a clear strategy to deal with congestion in and around Sydney's central business district [CBD], with the advancement and delivery of some very serious and major construction projects that will deliver terrific outcomes—everything from CBD light rail, Sydney rapid transit and upgrades to stations such as Wynyard, to improve this city. Those opposite are not interested. This Government is getting on with the job of delivering better services and better infrastructure in transport.

### DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES CURRICULUM

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Given that Australian tech companies and start-ups are reporting a chronic lack of local skilled graduates, and other States are progressing with a new digital technologies curriculum, when will New South Wales schools move beyond the general Information and Communications Technology [ICT] general capabilities focus and implement this new curriculum?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I thank the member for his question. I think everybody in New South Wales, particularly new members of this place who have been school principals and school teachers, appreciate the importance of technology—not just using technology in schools but indeed the teaching of technology. But when it comes to the national curriculum and its implementation, New South Wales has always had, as it should have, a bipartisan approach. When I was shadow Minister for Education, I always supported the previous Government when it stood firm on the national stage about the importance of maintaining the integrity of the New South Wales Higher School Certificate as well as the New South Wales curriculum. I have, in the four years that I have been Minister, supported by the Government, never taken a backward step in protecting the integrity of the New South Wales curriculum, and our syllabus documents that support that curriculum.

The Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW has already developed and prepared new syllabuses for kindergarten to year 10, incorporating the Australian curriculum content for English, maths,

science and history. The kindergarten to year 12 curriculum is highly regarded across Australia for its quality and rigour, and for the learning opportunities it provides for all students. This includes preparing students to work and live in increasingly technologically focused careers and societies. In New South Wales schools, the term "digital technology" is used to cover the full range of ICT use from using digital tools to prepare English essays, through to the agile coding methods used in the development of programs in year 12 Software Design and Development.

New South Wales has a very strong tradition of providing opportunities for students to learn about and use digital technology in the curriculum. Digital technology is embedded in the New South Wales K to 12 curriculum, providing opportunities for students to learn in relevant contexts about the specific use and application of digital technologies, including the application of coding. A study of digital technology is mandatory in the New South Wales K to 12 curriculum, and the specific use and application of digital technology is a part of each New South Wales syllabus. For example, the new K to 10 English syllabus has more than four times the number of references to digital tools than the syllabus it has replaced.

In addition to the inclusion of digital technology in every New South Wales syllabus, there is a number of specialised New South Wales syllabuses where coding is taught. These are: Industrial Technology in both stage 5 and Higher School Certificate, Information and Software Technology in stage 5, and Software Design and Development in stage 6. Last year, more than 18,000 students were enrolled in at least one of these courses. The New South Wales Software Design and Development syllabus is a world-leading course in coding at the secondary school level. There are a number of New South Wales Higher School Certificate syllabuses that provide opportunities to study coding. Those are: Information Processes and Technology, Computing Applications, and Information and Digital Technologies.

During 2014 several countries, including England, Finland, France and Singapore, as well as some jurisdictions in the United States, have made coding mandatory for students from year 3. Such opportunities are already available to students in the New South Wales curriculum. The current inclusion of digital technology across all New South Wales syllabuses and the specialist courses that offer coding provide all New South Wales school students with the opportunity to learn the skills needed to engage effectively in the global digital economy. I look forward to the final version of the Australian curriculum in technologies being released soon.

### **SERVICE NSW**

**Mr GREG APLIN:** I address my question to Minister for Finance, Services and Property. How is the Government investing in improved service delivery in New South Wales?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I thank the member for a great question. Earlier this year I joined the member for Albury at the official opening of the Albury Service NSW centre. The Government has completely transformed service delivery in this State. When we came to office we inherited what I call the Linda Burney model of service delivery: It is all too complex. In fact, I hope someone has gone to find her because she has probably lost her way. When we came to office we inherited more than 100 call centres, 380 different shopfronts, 1,000 websites and 8,000 different customer service phone numbers. We now have 800 services rolled into a one-stop shop that has served more than 1.9 million customers. Those opposite do not understand Service NSW—they never have. Eddie Obeid was their understanding of a one-stop shop—handing out mining licences left, right and centre.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Those on this side of the House are different. We now have one website, one app, one phone number and a 24-hour hotline.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Port Stephens will come to order.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** For the benefit of those sitting in the gallery the number is 137788. People can call that number any time, any day, because the Government is here to help you. Our customer service is so good that people are now calling us for help on a range of random matters. The member for Maroubra, who unfortunately has left the Chamber, could have called and said, "I have more numbers than Luke. Can I win?" and Service NSW would have said, "Yes." The member for Strathfield has also left the Chamber—they are all gone today. Luke has promised—

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Point of order: My point of order is standing order No. 74. The member is clearly being quarrelsome and I ask you to intervene.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! You would never do that, would you?

**Mr Clayton Barr:** No, and that is why I am asking you to uphold the standard.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! For the most part the Minister has been talking about Service NSW. Whilst the Minister has been doing that a number of Opposition members have been quarrelling and interjecting. I have refrained from having those members removed from the Chamber. I remind the member for Cessnock that he is on three calls to order. If continues to argue he will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The member for Strathfield could have called Service NSW and said, "Luke has promised me Planning. Can I trust him?" and Service NSW would have said, "No."

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Point of order: More than once today you have ruled that members must be addressed by their proper title. He has referred—

**The SPEAKER:** You called the Minister "he", which is not his proper title. The member for Wollongong will resume her seat.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Further to the point of order: Before you made your ruling the Minister was standing at the podium instead of remaining seated.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The Government is also offering services to people who do not speak English as their first language. For example, information is provided in Mandarin.

**Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.**

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The Leader of the Opposition may not appreciate the Mandarin service, but the member for Kogarah certainly will. However, we do have something for the Leader of the Opposition. We are providing him with a dog whistle.

**Mr David Harris:** Point of order: I learnt my lesson when you told me not to use my street directory. The Minister should not use props either.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I uphold the point of order. The Minister will refrain from using props.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The Government is rolling out even more Service NSW centres across this State, and people are leaving the centres with a smile on their face. We have a 98 per cent satisfaction rating. This month my favourite store, the Service NSW centre at Liverpool, will celebrate its one-year anniversary. It is the largest service centre in the State and our favourite customer is the member for Liverpool. He loves it. He is the pin-up boy.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order: My point of order relates to standing orders 129, 130 and 73 and gross bad taste.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I uphold the points of order.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The member for Liverpool loves it because he inspired Service NSW. His idea of a one-stop shop was an application to join the Labor Party and an application for social housing. Two services into one: Service NSW Labor style.

**Question time concluded at 3.16 p.m.**

**VARIATIONS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2014-15**

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian** tabled, pursuant to section 24 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, the variations of the payments estimates and appropriates for 2014-15 flowing from the transfer of functions from the Department of Education and Communities to the Department of Premier and Cabinet, dated 5 March 2015.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SENTENCING OF CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT OFFENCES****Government Response to Report**

**Ms Gabrielle Upton** tabled the Government's response to report No. 1/55, entitled "Every Sentence Tells a Story", dated October 2014.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON COMPANION ANIMAL BREEDING PRACTICES IN NEW SOUTH WALES****Deputy Chair**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House that, pursuant to standing Order 282 (2), on 14 May 2015 the Hon. Mick Veitch, MLC, was elected Deputy Chair of the Joint Select Committee on Companion Animal Breeding Practices in New South Wales.

**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**.

**Harris Street Walkway**

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

**Companion Animals on Public Transport**

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

**Inner-city Social Housing**

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

**Low-cost Housing and Homelessness**

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

**Prison Population**

Petition requesting action to reduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment rates, received from **Ms Jo Haylen**.

**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**.

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Divisions and Quorums**

#### **Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to provide that from the commencement of the Address-in-Reply until the rising of the House no divisions be conducted or quorums be called.

## **GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

### **Third Day's Debate**

#### **Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.25 p.m.]: I respond to the address of the Governor, His Excellency General David Hurley, on behalf of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in which he outlined the objectives of the Government in this Fifty-sixth Parliament of New South Wales.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George)**: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members who wish to have private conversations should do so outside the Chamber.

**Mr GARETH WARD**: It is an honour to have been re-elected by the people of the Kiama electorate and to once again serve my community in the oldest Parliament in the country. There can be no greater privilege than to serve the community in which I grew up in this birthplace of Australian democracy—a Parliament that has seen the likes of Wentworth, Parkes, Reid and Fuller serve our State and change the nation. It was from this Chamber, as the then Legislative Council, that William Charles Wentworth, the son of a surgeon who occupied this building in its earlier configuration as the senior surgeon's quarters, fought and won a battle to allow the people of this State to run and manage their own affairs without deference to the motherland.

It was from this Chamber that a former member for Kiama and five-time Premier Sir Henry Parkes sought and failed to introduce universal suffrage. He succeeded in securing public education for the colony and knitting together the competing demands of rugged and clashing colonial interests blinded by power foregone for a greater and grander cause far outweighing the sum of its parts. George Reid, a man who many believe should have been Australia's first Prime Minister, passionately believed in social justice. It was Reid, a free trader, who sought to change the then colony's main source of revenue from customs duties, which placed an enormous burden on working families. And of course, George Fuller, a former member for Kiama and Premier in this place, enacted legislation that saw the construction of our Harbour Bridge, which is not only a vital link over Sydney Harbour but also an icon of our State—born out of necessity but a monument to strong leadership and vision. This Parliament was their platform; today it is ours.

History will record our failures and successes, but whatever will be written let this be a brave Parliament that seeks to grab the basket badged as "too hard" and unlock the problems facing our generation so that we are remembered as the founders, the stewards, the builders and the people who left this State a stronger, more robust and more successful place—a different place—than when we first assumed the mantle. New South Wales is the greatest State of our Federation, with a rich history but an even brighter future. I say to all new

members of the House, regardless of their politics, that if they are not already aware then they must apprise themselves of not only the importance of the role they play in their electorate but also, and importantly, the trust and confidence that has been invested in them to honestly, ably and dutifully represent all parts, all aspects and all people of their community.

In coming to this place, we are all standard-bearers of some form. Whilst I appreciate what many regard as the combative nature of this Chamber, I stress that this ancient behaviour is what so many regard as failing people in a modern democracy. Democracy may well be a numbers game, but it should not be a case of awarding prizes to those who shout the loudest—nor should people be dissuaded from making their considered points with strength and conviction. I say to members that the theatre of this place must give way to results, and reforming the way this place operates and functions is the responsibility of every one of us who acts as a vanguard not of tradition but of values, beliefs and principle.

Reform is never easy—from the very foundations of self-government, the right for women to vote, the federation of our nation and the recognition of Aboriginal people. The tough decisions do not require politicians; they require leaders. My remarks do not assume that every decision will be without acrimony, conflict and debate. Good government is about decisions; politics is about values; and democracy is the system that attempts to work out how politics informs the decisions and policies of government. Indeed, I was pleased to see this place work when this House unanimously adopted the Premier's approach to strengthen the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC].

I have always been a passionate believer in having a strong watchdog that has the power to investigate those with significant power in this State and ensure that a bright light can be shone into the dark areas of public administration. Indeed, it was from this very lectern last year that I called for the Government to ensure that offences that are currently contained in common law are made statutory, such as misconduct in public office. There was no greater scandal to strike this State than the matters involving Eddie Obeid and Ian Macdonald. These incidents seriously eroded the confidence and the trust that people have in this Parliament.

The charges that have now been laid in relation to Mr Obeid were very difficult for the Department of Public Prosecutions [DPP] to bring given the nature of the offences that have been sought. They are common law offences not offences contained in the statute. Whilst the Crimes Act contains a number of offences in relation to corruption, there is a view from the judiciary that many of these cases apply only to the Executive branch of government not necessarily the legislature. There is no doubt that people in this place can and do influence government decisions.

It is important that the law contains tough provisions dealing with things like pecuniary interest offences and misconduct in public office so that when the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] brings down its findings those findings can be forwarded to the DPP and they can take the appropriate action. In so many cases the Independent Commission Against Corruption has recommended action, but, sadly, that action has not been taken. I will forever be a fighter for stronger anticorruption measures. I am absolutely delighted to stand with a Premier who has been resolute in ensuring we have tough anticorruption measures. Indeed the recent matter involving Margaret Cunneen meant that the Parliament had to turn its mind to how the ICAC operates and functions. I am sure the reform process born out of the actions of the Premier will result in exactly the type of measures that I believe this House must consider urgently.

On a much lighter note, I would like to use the occasion of His Excellency's speech and my return to this House to thank members of my campaign team, who worked tirelessly for my re-election as the member for Kiama. Before I embark on what will be a long list of those to thank, I take this opportunity to thank all the candidates who contested the last election in the electorate of Kiama. Glenn Kolomeitz and Terry Barratt represented their parties with distinction and worked hard during the campaign. Whilst we may have differences of opinion, our respective campaigns were always about ideas and values and never about personalities. My thanks go to my friend Steve Ryan. I genuinely value his opinions and beliefs. He is a man of remarkable principle and faith. He will forever have my abiding respect.

I turn now to the alpha and the omega: my electorate. My deepest thanks go to those who have put their faith and trust in me to represent our community in this Parliament. I thank the outstanding team at Liberal headquarters so ably lead by Tony Nutt. They ran a professional, clean and community-based campaign. They should be very proud of their efforts. I make special mention of my friend Zach Bentley at headquarters. I am sure there were occasions when Zach would wonder if he was a campaign advisor or a lifeline counsellor—either way I am so proud of the work Zach did during the campaign. He is a young man with a very bright future and I look forward to watching his star continue to rise.

I also mention my fellow Illawarra and South Coast Liberal candidates. My sincere thanks go to the candidate for Keira, Philip Clifford, for his years of service to the Liberal Party at both State and Federal elections. His enthusiasm and commitment are to be commended. I thank the candidate for Wollongong, Cameron Walters. I am so proud of his efforts and I know he has a very bright future ahead. He took on a political veteran and emerged a statesman. I thank the candidate for Shellharbour, Mark Jones. I will never forget the day I met him—it is not often you sign people up to membership of the Liberal Party literally at their citizenship ceremony. It was at that point I knew he and I were going to become great friends. I sincerely hope that one day he has the chance to serve in Parliament, and I look forward to supporting him every step of the way.

The member for Heathcote is an absolute legend. I knew him before he came into this place. He is clear testament to the fact that there is such a thing as friendship in politics. I look forward to working closely with him in my new role on improving public transport services in the northern Illawarra and continuing to stand up for our environment against such things as coal seam gas mining and exploration in environmentally sensitive areas. Whilst her electorate is not technically part of the Illawarra region, I wish to acknowledge my friend Pru Goward. Her electorate now takes in areas of the Southern Highlands I had the pleasure of representing for four years. I thank the people of Burrawang, Kangaloon, East Kangaloon, Robertson and Wildes Meadow for always being so welcoming and warm, particularly on those cold Southern Highlands days. They can rest assured that they have a powerful advocate in the member for Goulburn. I know she will serve them well in this place.

I thank the member for Bega for his support, in particular, to upgrade the Princes Highway. I know how critical he was to that long campaign. It is high time he received my public thanks for his support for the Albion Park Rail Bypass project. It simply would not have happened without him. I served on the Young Liberals executive team under his presidency. I am proud to call him a friend and to serve with him in this Parliament. I also thank the Speaker, and member for South Coast. She has made history not only by becoming the thirty-ninth Speaker and first female Speaker but also by being one of the most incredible people of substance I have ever met. No matter how long I stay in this place I will never forget the enormous honour of escorting her, with the member for Willoughby, to the Speaker's chair. Suffice to say it was with little resistance but it was an honour, to say the very least, to share that special moment with someone I deeply admire, love and respect.

I thank my office staff Melissa Jobson and Bryan Fishpool, who kept the Kiama electorate office running in such a smooth and seamless way. I thank them for their dedication, loyalty and friendship. I make special mention of my EO-1 Ben Blackburn, who worked on my 2011 campaign and has served me in all my incarnations over the past four years. He is truly a remarkable and wonderful friend. I am very lucky to have a dedicated band of volunteers to assist at my electorate office. I thank Bethamie Woodstone, Tim Fielding, Meryn Joske and Jessica Szulowski. I was very pleased to join with Tim last year as he graduated from TAFE. He has a bright future ahead. I thank my local Kiama Liberal Party team made up of Conference President Andrew Guile, Conference Treasurer Wes Hindmarsh, Michelle and Tom Bishop, Dave Heffernan, Kay McNiven and Councillor Gavin McClure for their support and friendship.

I thank my Young Liberals friends James Parish, Ashley Lake-Johns, Jack Johnson, Will Ashford, Jackson Caverley, Joel Schubert, Joel Clark, Zachary Fitzpatrick, Sarah Welch, Kim Robertson, Thomas Headland, Tom Green, James Chadban, Leith Salem, Oliver Sieur, Sam Ison, Josh Rees, Clayton McInness, James Wallace, Chris Pettett, Olga Stoutchilina, Ory Purhonen, Matt Ozolins, Robert Leigo, Zac Miles, Richard Karaba, Jordan Lane, Marc Stanghieri, Alex Cankulovski, Warren Hudson, Vanessa Rolf and James Malin. They are all bright young people with even brighter futures.

My thanks also go to my great friends, Matthew Cross, Bohdan Brumerskyj, Sean O'Connor, Paul Condran, Felicity Wilson, President of the Liberal Women's Council, Nathan Cattell, Jason Duarte, Councillor John Dorahy, Councillor Kellie Marsh and the now Hon. Shayne Mallard, MLC. I commend the Hon. Shayne Mallard for his outstanding inaugural speech made in the other place last night. A special mention must go to all those wonderful party members and supporters who braved pre-poll—probably one of the most arduous parts of any campaign. I thank Ken Levy, Paula Turnbull, John Crasnich and Gail Chittick for their herculean efforts in that regard.

I also thank my key booth captains David Gray, Ross Thompson, Wes Hindmarsh, Lorraine Marininger, John Le Bas, Serena Copley, Harry Mitchel, Nikkie Macey, Daryl Clingan and Kay McNiven. They did an outstanding job. I thank Margo Johnston for her many hours of volunteering and ensuring that the community had its say in a number of important local community petitions. I have no doubt that those petitions helped us secure a number of key commitments from the Government, including the Berry ambulance station and Shellharbour Hospital upgrades.

Phil Motby is simply a dynamo. My posters were dropped and scattered like playing cards all over the electorate. He did a first-class job. I am so lucky to have friends like Sam Tedeschi and Kate Cooper. I thank them for their wonderful efforts doorknocking and street stalling. Their support is greatly appreciated. I am so proud of the work of Councillor Bede Crasnick on Wollongong council and so grateful for his hard work and dedication to my campaign. He is a young person with ideas and values. Those things are too often lacking, but he brings both in bucket loads. I will never know how Jason Horton did it but he did it in style. I thank him for giving so much of his time to make sure that the booths were not just manned; they were inundated with supporters and friends. He is simply first class.

I will never forget meeting Paul Ell as a school student and then joining him up to the Young Liberals. His faith in me keeps me going and his dedication to the cause is what drives so many others to help. He came into his own on this campaign. His hard work and dedication even helped me look past his obsession with Mitt Romney. I suppose we all have political figures we look up to but, seriously, Paul should find someone who actually won. This campaign was his finest hour. He is like a brother to me and I thank him for his abiding sense of loyalty and dedication.

Thirteen years ago as President of Shoalhaven Young Liberals I received a referral from a young person who wanted to get more involved in politics. He had just voted in his first election at the ripe old age of 18. It was the election at which Shelley Hancock entered Parliament. Luke Sikora has either been involved in or has run every successful election campaign I have ever contested in public life. He is a master strategist, a tireless campaigner and a person the Liberal Party is lucky to have amongst its number. I rely on not only his advice but also his friendship, which is without peer and of the highest calibre. I am constantly reminded of how lucky I am to have him on my side.

Our closest friends and family are so often the people who preserve us in this important profession. My story is no different. I pay tribute to all my friends both named and unnamed, but I have saved the last contribution in this address for my family. I thank my dad, who flew down from Cairns and is always just a phone call away, and my wonderful aunt, Brenda, who flew from Edinburgh to campaign for the second time. She returned just before the House of Commons election to cast her vote for the Scottish National Party—a party strongly supported by just about all my Scottish relatives. My complexion makes it hard for me to be the black sheep of my family, but when it comes to Scottish politics it seems I have managed to pull it off.

Many thanks go to my brother, Scott, who travelled from Canberra to help on election day and managed literally to conduct a jazz session with one of the Labor polling booth workers. Of course, I thank my mum, Margaret, who is an unstoppable force when it comes to elections. Having grown up with a disability, my mum taught me that there is nothing I cannot achieve and there is no substitute for hard work. Both mum and dad have always been community-minded people—dad with a long history in Apex and Lions and mum helping young people explore their musical talents. They are both wonderful and devoted parents from whom a son could not have asked for more. Their love has always been unconditional and I appreciate all that they have done and continue to do for me.

A week after the election the Premier called me and asked me to serve as Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast. It is an extraordinary honour to which I am deeply committed. The region I serve extends from Helensburgh in the north to the Victorian boarder, covering seven electorates in total. Whilst these seven electorates cover both sides of politics, I make it clear that I have a strong working relationship—and even a friendship—with all the seven members. I value their views and their contributions. In me, they will have an advocate for our region.

I was particularly grateful for the discussions I had with my old friend the member for Keira, who I knew before coming into this place. I was also grateful for the press release from my sometimes sparring partner and erstwhile friend the member for Shellharbour. Last night, I held a function for the Illawarra Business Chamber in this place to celebrate my elevation to Parliamentary Secretary. I appreciated the Opposition Whip and member for Wollongong joining those celebrations. It goes to show that outside this place graciousness is extended to both sides. That is as it should be. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I thank members for their indulgence and acknowledge in the Chamber my friend the member for Rockdale, who made an outstanding inaugural speech today. I am sure his community is very proud of him. I also congratulate the member for Lakemba on his outstanding inaugural address. I am proud of our achievements in our region and will note some of them. First is the \$329 million upgrade of the Princes Highway at Gerringong, which is estimated to be completed towards the end of this year. One reason I stood for election to this Parliament was that I have attended too many funerals of people who lost their lives on the Princes Highway. It is considered by many to be the highway from hell and that is why I fought so hard in 2011 to commence the upgrade that is now almost completed at Gerringong.



Another of our achievements is the \$580 million Foxground to Berry Bypass, which is expected to be completed in 2018—some 55 years after it was first mooted. I am also proud of the Restart Illawarra Infrastructure Fund, which was established with \$100 million to drive economic growth in the region. I pay particular tribute to the University of Wollongong iAccelerate Project. It is based on a model from the University of Waterloo that has to date generated some 26,000 jobs. I sincerely hope that this business incubator for our IT graduates will be as successful.

The 12 projects to successfully receive money from the Restart Illawarra Infrastructure Fund include aged and healthcare facilities, a technology hub, facilities for people with disabilities, pedestrian and cycle links, road links and tourism infrastructure. The projects are expected to create an estimated 969 direct jobs and many more indirect jobs. I am also proud of the introduction of the new train timetable in October 2013 that provides the South Coast line with improved journey times from major stations including Kiama, Wollongong and North Wollongong and with 125 new express services each week. I know that is having a significant impact in my electorate.

This Government is also making customer service easier with a new digital transaction service, a single 24/7 phone number and new Service NSW one-stop shops at Kiama and Wollongong. I pay tribute to Premier Barry O'Farrell who opened the first Service NSW in my electorate. Service NSW was very much the baby of the former member for Ku-ring-gai, and he made sure it was delivered. I was pleased to see him at the opening of the first centre operating at Kiama, which has been incredibly successful. The \$39 million Shellharbour Junction train station opened in November 2014. This Government has delivered the \$62 million Princes Highway upgrade at South Nowra, which was officially opened on 29 March 2014. I commend Madam Speaker for her advocacy in relation to that project. Without her advocacy, this project, which alleviates a renowned bottleneck, would not have occurred.

Upgrades to train stations at Gerringong, Kiama, Oak Flats, Albion Park, Dapto, Wollongong and Austinmer have been delivered and include easy access facilities and car parking space. Under Resources for Regions, \$4.5 million was awarded to the Wollongong City Council to upgrade the Cordeaux Road and bridge. The Government has also provided \$14 million for expansion of the Illawarra Cancer Care Centre, which was opened in 2013. Another reason that I sought election to this House is that my mother had breast cancer when I was much younger. I remember the trip between home and Wollongong and the effect that had on her. On the Sunday after the election, mum told me she had again been diagnosed with breast cancer. If there is one good thing that has resulted from the advocacy of the member for South Coast and me, it is that the treatment my mother needs now can be obtained closer to home.

All members of this House have been united in support—for which I thank them—for the \$32.2 million Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre. The Government has also provided \$11.6 million for the Sub-acute Adult Mental Health Unit at the Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital, for which Madam Speaker advocated. A project worth \$106 million for expansion of the ambulatory care and emergency department at the Illawarra Elective Surgical Services Centre is estimated for completion later this year. I must say how proud I am of that upgrade and how proud I am of all our nurses and doctors, who are so excited by progress that is occurring on that site. Many members of the community called for the \$30.5 million car park development at the Wollongong Hospital. The Government has also allocated \$187 million for the South East Regional Hospital at Bega, with support from the Australian Government. The new hospital will deliver core services to the Bega Valley shire and the surrounding region.

The New South Wales Government has great plans for the future of the Illawarra and South Coast region. I commend to the House \$550 million for the construction of the Albion Park Rail bypass, which nobody thought would ever occur. I fought tooth and nail for four years for this project. Once delivered, this project will eliminate 16 intersections and five sets of traffic lights, which will mean that people will be able to spend more time with their families and less time in traffic congestion. The New South Wales Government has committed funding to allow construction to commence by early 2019. I am delighted that the project will be underway in accordance with the time line. During the previous term of this Government, I argued for funds to conduct the necessary planning work. It is proposed that Shellharbour Hospital be upgraded to become a major metropolitan hospital and the hub for the southern Illawarra community. The \$251 million redevelopment is expected to expand the range and depth of services provided at the hospital. My electorate office collected signatures on petitions to secure the funding, and I am very pleased that the project will be delivered. I know it will make a huge difference in the lives of the growing south Illawarra community.

The Government has also allocated funding for a 150-space commuter car park for the Thirroul train station. The Kings Highway, for which funding for upgrades worth \$25 million have been allocated, is the main

east-west road between Batemans Bay on the New South Wales South Coast and the Australian Capital Territory. It is the only transport infrastructure servicing the Queanbeyan to Batemans Bay corridor. In 2013 the Illawarra region contributed \$16.2 billion to gross regional product [GRP], representing 12 per cent of the total regional New South Wales GRP of \$137.7 billion. Key industries in the Illawarra include manufacturing, health, education and training, retail, public administration and safety, and construction. The region is further diversifying through Defence, advanced manufacturing, logistics, information and communication technology [ICT], tourism, health and education industries. Manufacturing is the leading contributor to the region's output and in 2013 contributed \$1.9 billion to the Illawarra economy. In 2011, it accounted for approximately 10 per cent of local jobs.

The education and training sector is one of the region's top contributors to both employment and output. It is driven by 14 TAFE campuses and the University of Wollongong. It is also an important export sector for the region, with international students comprising around 40 per cent of the student population of the University of Wollongong. Port Kembla is the region's international trade gateway and one of the largest New South Wales ports. In 2012-13, the port's major exports included coal, which was estimated to be 72 per cent, and wheat, which was estimated to be 11 per cent, while imports were dominated by motor vehicles, which were estimated to be 44 per cent, and iron, which was estimated to be 34 per cent. The Shoalhaven local government area has a strong Defence sector with opportunities in allied industries, such as electronics, information technology, logistics and aviation. The Illawarra region attracts over six million visitors each year. The region's local tourism industry is worth \$1.2 billion. The Shoalhaven receives approximately half of the region's total visitor expenditure. The visitor economy is a key driver for the Kiama electorate.

It is been an absolute delight to listen to some of the inaugural speeches of newly elected members. I sincerely hope that we will have a productive Chamber and one that focuses on the needs of all of New South Wales. I know that the Premier's leadership—a man who inspires me because he is somebody of substance and capacity—will drive this State and the Government's agenda. I understand and accept that there will be debates in this House, but I hope the outcomes will be what we all seek through our service in this Parliament. I commend members of Parliament who have been elected or re-elected. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I thank you for your friendship and camaraderie. I commend the Address-in-Reply to the House.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY** (Riverstone) [3.45 p.m.]: It is my privilege and pleasure to speak in reply to the Speech made by His Excellency the Governor, the Hon. David Hurley, AC, DSC, at the commencement of the Fifty-sixth Parliament. His Excellency is a person who has contributed a lifetime of service to his country and community. His exemplary record places into perspective the contribution of so many of our men and women in uniform, who selflessly devote themselves to the safety and security of our country. Therefore, it is a privilege to be able to respond to His Excellency's Speech. I note the Governor's words stated on 5 May:

But I also know there is one thing that unites you all and it is that which has called you here today: the desire to make a difference in people's lives in a real and meaningful way.

You, the men and women gathered in these Chambers, have the authority and the opportunity to implement lasting and meaningful change.

I take His Excellency's words to heart. I accept the significant responsibility implicit in those words. Only 93 members of this Chamber and 42 of the other place have the responsibility, "the authority and the opportunity" to implement lasting and meaningful change on behalf of millions of people who live in New South Wales. As members of Parliament we must faithfully and diligently represent those people to the best of our abilities and ensure that, when we leave this place, we do so having made a positive contribution to a better future and a better life for each person in New South Wales, if at all possible.

I trust that each member of this Chamber and the other place will take to heart the words spoken by the Governor and set themselves the goal during their term as members of Parliament to working on behalf of the community that has placed trust in them. We should be prepared to lobby and advocate on behalf of people who are not necessarily eloquent, able to speak for themselves, or able to articulate their needs to achieve outcomes. People rely on members of this House and the other place to speak for them. They trust that we will work together to produce beneficial change by using our abilities, the experience we gained in other careers and the opportunities we have as members of Parliament.

I am immensely grateful to my community in Riverstone for again placing their trust in me and for selecting me to represent an area that is undergoing enormous change and huge development. I thank them for trusting me to work with them to manage the process of change in their collective interest to achieve the best

possible outcomes for current residents and for those who will move into and live in new suburbs in the future. I am particularly grateful to a whole range of people who worked on my campaign to make that possible. Each member of this House knows just how many people are involved in achieving election success.

I will specifically name a few of the members of my campaign team, who were the brains trust: Janine Daher, Les Daniel, Stephanie Fannin, Mohit Kumar, Dee Zegarac, Michael Magyar, and my son, Patrick Conolly. I also thank my staff, Elizabeth Banks and Robyn Preston, who were absolutely tireless in their support for my campaign, well above and beyond the call of their duty as staff members. Obviously there were hundreds of others who worked with me on railway stations, street stalls, polling booths and doing all the other things one has to do to win an election. I thank each of them for their contribution in working selflessly and generously, no doubt in the hope that we can achieve that positive and meaningful change for which the Liberal-Nationals Government in New South Wales campaigned.

I welcome the new members of the Liberal team in this House—my good friends Damien Tudehope, Eleni Petinos, Alister Henskens, Adam Crouch and Mark Taylor. I note that the member for Miranda is present in the Chamber. Those members represent an infusion of energy, talent and passion into the Liberal Party team and will continue the task of the class of 2011 to make this State number one again. I wish to say a few words about our leader, Premier Mike Baird. The recent election was a huge challenge. The Premier showed great courage in adopting a policy—and campaigning publicly for it—which was challenging and controversial. We had seen, not so long before, a devastatingly different result for a Coalition Government in Queensland that had promoted similar arguments. It took enormous courage, conviction and commitment and, dare I say, a great deal of talent, for the Premier to put that to the people of New South Wales and to resoundingly win that argument.

I commend the Premier for being in this business to make positive and constructive change—not to occupy the chair, not for the glory, but for the opportunity of doing something good for the community of New South Wales. I take a lead from the Premier, as I believe every member of our team does. The reason we are here is to make a positive difference and to take the steps we know we need to take in the interests of the people we serve, regardless of the political risk. During the campaign the Premier said he was willing to put his job on the line. He knew that would be the price of failure but he was so convinced it was in the public interest that that is the course we took. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I note that you faced a significant challenge in your election campaign but you stood up for what you believed. I am pleased and grateful that the people of Lismore recognised that and that you remain a member of this House to work for the benefit of the people of Lismore.

As I alluded to earlier, a number of changes are taking place in Riverstone. It is part of the north-west growth centre of Sydney and it is the epicentre of growth and change in the north-western region of Sydney. Many members have no doubt heard of the suburb The Ponds but they would not have known of it two or three years ago. It is booming with a rapid pace of development, the building of new houses and the creation of new communities. It is physically possible to plan and roll out new housing but my focus is on the huge challenge for all involved to create new communities. The people who move into those new homes should have the opportunity to belong to a community that is networked and connected so they feel really at home. While people no doubt will achieve that in due course, governments should undertake to assist them in the process of settling in, feeling valued and having a sense of belonging. I commit to working with residents new and old, with community organisations and with different government agencies to create new communities in which people feel that they belong, have a home and are valued.

I am committed to undertaking all the tasks and meeting all the challenges that exist in Riverstone to achieve that end. Some of the challenges will involve supporting the development of new infrastructure. Transport infrastructure obviously is a huge part of what is required in north-west Sydney. Residents of Riverstone will be the beneficiaries of this Government's commitment to build the long-awaited North West Rail Link which will cost of the order of \$8 billion—the largest commitment to public transport that this State has seen. People talk about public transport as though parties other than the Liberal-Nationals are more interested in it.

However, it is on the public record that this Liberal-Nationals Government has put its money where its mouth is in the area of public transport. The Government has committed \$8 million for the construction of the North West Rail Link. Labor governments have talked about public transport but this Liberal-Nationals Government is delivering public transport for the people of Sydney. In addition to the North West Rail Link this Government is providing additional bus services in the new suburbs of my electorate, and there is more to come. We want people to be able to get to work in a reasonable time and to be connected to services such as hospitals, schools, shopping centres and other community services. This Government has provided and will continue to provide the public transport that is needed by those living in our new communities.

That challenge also involves new schools. In February this year I was delighted to be able to oversee the opening of three new schools in my electorate—a new high school for The Ponds, the new Riverbank Primary School and a new special school for children with disabilities at The Ponds. It is a rare privilege for a local member to open one new school, but I was privileged to score a trifecta and I opened three schools in one go. That is representative of the commitment by this Government to provide the physical infrastructure that is required to roll out the services that people need. This is possible only because of the fiscal discipline exercised by this Government early in its term of office.

We took the tough decisions, some of which were unpopular and some of which will be remembered. Only a government that is committed to getting its house in order and to controlling spending is able to deliver the infrastructure and services that our community needs. The Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to ensuring that the people of New South Wales enjoy the best possible lifestyle and are provided with the best possible opportunities. I welcome new members from all parties to this place. I mentioned those Liberal members who have joined us but it has been a pleasure to listen to some members on the other side of the House whose inaugural speeches demonstrated their passion, commitment and idealism—members who want to make a difference. I admire them even though I might not agree with their perspectives or the policies for which they stand. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I welcome their passion, commitment and idealism as they all want to make a difference on behalf of their communities. It is great to have members who have passion and fire in their belly, but it would be wise for them to listen and to be open to new ideas and possibilities. Some Labor Party members championed the cause of fairness, as though other parties were not interested in fairness. They championed the cause of social justice, as though other people were not interested in social justice. They championed the provision of services to the needy in the community, as though other people were not interested in those things. Those interests, passions and qualities are not the preserve of one political party; each of us has come here with the same fire in our belly and the same determination to see that the needy in our communities receive the support, assistance and opportunities that they deserve. It is only through self-discipline that we are able to provide the wherewithal to achieve those things.

We have been criticised for making tough decisions and we have suffered the unpopularity that goes with that. However, such criticism is misplaced because those same tough decisions enable us to provide services to the needy and to roll out the infrastructure that is needed in our communities. Only a government that is willing to organise its priorities will achieve the things that really matter. I welcome the passion, enthusiasm, willingness and good spirit on all sides. I hope it means that all members in this Chamber will protect the public interest when we recognise that somebody else has the same goal to make life better for a community. Previous speakers have referred to the standing of politicians and the confidence that the community has in the public process. It is imperative that we do what we can to maintain public confidence in the democratic process through our own conduct and standards, through the language we use and through the actions we take. People must have confidence that their interests are being protected and promoted in this place.

People are aware of the concept of a mandate and, at times, a successful party in an election will claim a mandate. Fundamentally, this means respecting the will of the people in a democratic process. No single candidate or member can claim a mandate. It is that which the majority of people in the electorate have chosen to do. Clearly it can relate only to things that were central to an election campaign and were put before the people. We cannot claim a mandate for something that was in a footnote on page 32 of a policy document. I refer to matters central to an election campaign that were debated before the public in their full glory—warts and all. It is then legitimate to claim that when a party is elected it has a mandate to implement that policy.

Conversely, the Opposition has no right in this place to second-guess the will of the people. The community's confidence and faith in the democratic process is undermined if the upper House blocks the platform upon which a party was elected, fairly and squarely. I would say the same thing regardless of which party won—Liberal or Labor. The matter that is central to an election campaign should be allowed to proceed. I know members of the upper House have their own views, but it is critical that people have confidence in the democratic process and that will happen only through respecting their will. Politicians will be deemed credible if we are honest and the community can trust us; only then will people have confidence in the democratic process.

Sadly, members sometimes make statements that are not true. I heard some members make untrue statements in their inaugural speeches. No doubt they believed them to be true because they have heard them so often. For instance, there has not been a \$3 billion cut to health funding—and under this Government there never will be. In 2010-11 when the Labor Party was in government, the Health budget was \$15.5 billion. In the

first year of our Government, the budget was \$16.4 billion. Each year it has increased at a higher rate than inflation. In 2014-15 it is \$18.7 billion. The Health budget has increased each year. If someone can find cuts in a budget that has increased each year, they are using different mathematics from the rest of the community. If people tell lies and repeat them it only undermines faith in the political process. Perhaps it is a forlorn hope, but I trust that in this term of government we can rise above telling lies. That will benefit the democratic process and how this House works, and will ultimately benefit the communities we serve.

Officers of the NSW Police Force protect our community through thick and thin, often in challenging circumstances that most of us could not imagine. I note my admiration and gratitude, and the genuine support that this House offers to members of the NSW Police Force, who put themselves at risk for the citizens of this State. I commend the Governor's Speech to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Stephen Bromhead and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

**By leave, private members' statements proceeded with.**

### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

---

#### **PUNCHBOWL STATION EASY ACCESS UPGRADE**

**Mr JIHAD DIB** (Lakemba) [4.06 p.m.]: It is a shame that the member for Riverstone has left the Chamber because I wished to comment on his contribution. When he spoke about justice and fairness it was almost as though he had read my notes and delivered the same speech.

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** He has gone into your computer.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** He probably has. The member for Riverstone said members of this great House are expected to tell the truth and to serve everyone, not a specific group. I wish to talk about three suburbs that each has a train station: Punchbowl, Oatley and Waterfall. Each suburb is different and access to each station is also different. The population of Oatley is a little more than 10,000. That is just under half the population of Punchbowl, which is 18,400. Waterfall's population is a mere 483. Last year 913,000-plus patrons used the Punchbowl train station. Waterfall train station had 131,000 patrons and Oatley train station had 533,000 patrons. In 2014 Punchbowl ranked number 80 in respect of patronage, Oatley ranked number 129 and Waterfall ranked 183. Punchbowl has 1.8 times more people through its barriers than Oatley, and seven times more than Waterfall.

The member for Riverstone spoke about what is fair and what is needed. I also spoke about fairness in my inaugural speech. This is a usage and density issue. Punchbowl is a highly populated area and its residents use the train, so what is fair and what is needed? The median weekly income of Oatley and Waterfall residents is \$1,336 and \$1,683 respectively. Punchbowl residents' median income is \$958. In the Lakemba electorate 5.5 per cent of people require assistance with core activities. We can safely say that Punchbowl is an area with a disproportionately high need for access to the train station but has the least means to fix the problem.

**Mr Mark Coure:** You should be grateful about Narwee; it's all happening.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** I welcome the member for Oatley to the Chamber.

**Mr Mark Coure:** Baird-Coure delivered.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** That is interesting; I thought it was a Baird-Nationals Government. Maybe there is a leadership challenge we do not know about. There is no indication that easy access will be provided to Punchbowl train station. We are talking about fairness; that is what it is about. I made that pretty clear when the then Minister for Transport announced during the last Parliament that a new Transport Access Program would coordinate an easy access upgrade. The Government even said that the upgrades would be done where they were needed most. I have made a clear case as to why an easy access upgrade is needed at Punchbowl station. Other stations need access as well, but this is where it is needed most. I invite the member for Baulkham Hills to come to Punchbowl station. He can stand with me at the bottom of the stairs and watch children and young people helping people with their prams and shopping, and helping elderly people up the stairs.

**Mr David Elliott:** At least they are getting on a train.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** They are trying to get on a train; but the issue is easy access. If we are talking about fairness and justice, as the member for Riverstone mentioned, that is what it is. It is all very well for Government members to say, "We want to be fair and just", but when someone comes to you and tells you what is needed, they get shouted down. The member should visit the station and have a look for himself.

**Mr David Elliott:** Why didn't Morris do anything about it when he was the member?

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** I am talking about what should happen now and in the future. I conclude with the following statement: Having access to a train is not a luxury.

**Mr David Elliott:** It certainly is in Baulkham Hills.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Easy access is what people need. Tell the person in a wheelchair who is trying to get to work and who does not have a station they can access that they are not as important as everybody else. This is a social justice issue. The then Minister for Transport told my constituents that "Punchbowl is being considered". How much longer does this matter need to be considered?

**Mr David Elliott:** I would like a train station.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** I put on record that I am inviting the Minister to the train station. Come down on Monday. I will even shout him a coffee at the local coffee shop.

**Mr David Elliott:** I'd love to be there.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** I will be there at 7 o'clock. Will I meet you there?

**Mr David Elliott:** I'll sort it out.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Okay. [*Time expired.*]

### ST BENEDICT'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON** (Camden) [4.11 p.m.]: Today I speak about one of the wonderful schools in my electorate, St Benedict's Catholic College. Earlier this month I attended its celebration day mass, which was conducted by Father Joe Nguyen. St Benedict's Catholic College serves the parishes of Camden, Picton and The Oaks. The school, set on eight hectares at Oran Park, opened its doors in 2011 with just 75 students. The college has expanded each year and now has approximately 545 students from years 7 to 11. The college takes its name from St Benedict, the patron saint of students, who was born in circa 480. Frustrated by his fellow students in Rome, he left and led his life as a hermit. After being encouraged to lead by an abbey, he founded a monastery where he wrote his rule of order. He eventually founded 12 monasteries, with a further 40,000 monasteries using the Benedictine Rule, "Pray and work", and the formation of an education as a whole person instead of on intellect alone as a guide.

Instilled in the students at St Benedict's is the love of God, the love of thy neighbour and the love of learning. St Benedict's enables students to live a life where "Christ Be My Light" is the college motto. Principal Michael Hanratty has overseen the school from its inception, and continues to manage its progress and growth. He does an outstanding job in guiding both students and staff. Minister Piccoli recently visited the school and was very impressed with what he saw. The Minister has been to the school a number of times, as has former Premier Barry O'Farrell, and they cannot speak highly enough of St Benedict's college. St Benedict's Catholic College took the opportunity at the opening mass to present awards to some of their students.

I congratulate the following students on their efforts. The 100 merits award for service, effort, classwork, participation and behaviour was awarded to Justin Waights, Briannan Warden, Jordan Flood, Montana O'Neill, Zac Winters, Brock Battistuzzi, Gabrielle Hooton, Anthony Conlon, Harrison Mae, Zachery Siutz, Isaac Smith, Bailly Busuttil, Caitlin Burke, Isaac Hobman, Claire Murdoch, Chloe Cooper, Cooper Davidson, Georgia Matchet, Isabella Menon, Jack Cleary, Mitchell Orridge, Natasha Molloy, Thomas Haidle, Aaron Orchard, Jake Newell, Ebony Billett and Brianna Lane. Fifty personal best awards were presented to Gabrielle Hooton, Chloe Cooper and Patrick Stafford, and 90 personal best awards were presented to Briannan

Warden and Ebony Billett. Four students also received outstanding gold badge awards and medallion awards: Briannan Warden, Gabrielle Hooton, Chloe Cooper and Ebony Billett. Erin Coppin was the recipient of the purple leadership diploma. Congratulations to all recipients; they are a credit to their school. I also make mention of the wonderful performance by the school choir. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

The college offers an holistic approach to education, giving the students the confidence to reach for their goals. The school has acquired an outstanding reputation. St Benedict's Catholic College is a wonderful example of Catholic education. Its feeder school is St Justin's Catholic Primary School, which is located on the adjoining block. Principal John Milgate has seen the school grow since its opening in 2012 to accommodate 845 students. Mr Milgate and his staff also do an outstanding job. Parish priest Father Michael Williams of St Paul's Camden—who is a great friend of mine and, I am proud to say, a mentor and someone I speak to regularly—offers pastoral care to the students at St Justin's. Father Michael was ordained a deacon in 1988 and a priest in 1989. Father Michael, who has been at St Paul's since New Year's Day 2003, does an outstanding job within his parish and our community.

Both St Benedict's High School and St Justin's Primary School are wonderful assets to our community. That is evident from the way they are respected. As I have said, St Justin's, which has been operating for only a few years, is basically at capacity now and, from 2007 to 2011, St Benedict's school population has grown from 75 students to nearly 600 students. Obviously next year will be its first Higher School Certificate year. So to the wonderful principals and the outstanding staff, as well as the entire school communities, I wish them well and thank them for everything they contribute to our community.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! You must have missed out two names in that list of 602.

**Mr Chris Patterson:** Hansard will rectify that, Mr Deputy-Speaker.

#### **COWRA RAIL BRANCH LINES**

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON** (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.17 p.m.]: The Cowra rail branch lines extend from Blayney to Demondrille and from Koorawatha to Greenethorpe. The Cowra lines comprise almost 200 kilometres of track and are part of the country regional network owned by Transport for NSW. Mr Deputy-Speaker, you well remember that much of New South Wales endured a devastating millennium drought, which really carried through until 2010, when the first big rains came. Towards the first decade of this millennium there was a decline in the amount of freight being carried on those lines, and the lines were suspended progressively from operation between 2007 and 2009. That has resulted in a negative impact on the local region, and the councils of Blayney, Cowra, Weddin, Harden and Young, as I have said in this place on many occasions, strongly support the reopening of the Cowra lines.

Since the Coalition was elected to office some processes have been underway. A call for tenders for the reopening of the branch lines was undertaken and a couple of tenders were submitted. Unfortunately, last week we were advised that neither of those tenders was successful, for various reasons. The reopening of the Cowra lines could reduce pressure on the heavily trafficked Blue Mountains section of the main western line. Diversion of trains to and from Port Kembla via the Blayney-Demondrille line has the potential to reduce rail congestion within the Sydney metropolitan area, where freight movements are impacted by the suburban passenger rail network and residential development.

Lachlan Valley Railway, based in Cowra, is suffering heavily from the closure of the Cowra lines. Prior to the closure of these lines, Lachlan Valley Railway operated a thriving tourism business running trips out of Cowra at least once a month, with heritage trains available for charter. Lachlan Valley Railway based all its heritage operations in Cowra, which included two steam locomotives, up to four heritage diesel electric locomotives, which hauled up to six or seven carriages, and three self-propelled rail motors. This brought into the region vital tourism dollars and contributed significantly to the local economy. Over an Easter long weekend, for example, it was considered a poor result if fewer than 1,000 tickets were sold for heritage train trips along these lines.

Unfortunately, the steam locomotives are now based in Sydney, and the diesel-electric locomotives and rail motors are housed in Cootamundra, which means a direct loss of tourism spending in the electorate. The locomotive depot at Cowra has a wonderful roundhouse where a couple of dozen engines and carriages are being restored, but now they cannot be moved from Cowra. Private short lines operate successfully in the United

States of America and in Canada. The reopening of the Cowra lines would be a great result for all of New South Wales, not just the electorates of Cootamundra and Bathurst and the shires of Harden, Young, Cowra, Blayney and Weddin. Operating the Blayney to Demondrille and the Koorawatha to Greenethorpe branch lines would encourage economic development in the Central West, open up regional areas, get freight off the roads and generate economic development for local communities.

It has proven a logistical difficulty to freight grain to port by road, and the cartage of the annual grain harvest from the Central West has impacted terribly on the wear and tear of our roads. In 2008 during the drought a mere 98,000 tonnes of grain were delivered to GrainCorp from the Cowra, Koorawatha, Greenethorpe and Young areas. To shift this quantity of grain would have required about 3,600 heavy truck movements or, by rail, 28 trains. More recent figures show that almost 230,000 tonnes of grain are being produced annually in the areas around Cowra, Noonbinna, Greenethorpe and Young. While not all of this grain goes directly to port, the majority of it is trucked off farm.

An average bulk grain train holds about 2,200 tonnes of grain, while an average truckload of grain is about 45 tonnes. Each train is equivalent to almost 50 truckloads. That is a lot of wear and tear on regional and main roads that could be diverted to rail should the Cowra lines be reopened. I strongly support the reopening of both the Blayney to Demondrille and the Koorawatha to Greenethorpe rail lines. Serious consideration should be given to joint private and government partnership for the operation of the Cowra lines by Transport for NSW. I call on the Government to show its support by investing part of the \$4.1 billion allocated for regional transport from Rebuilding NSW, raised from the long-term leasing of the State's electricity network, to be directed towards the reopening of the Cowra lines.

### **GRANVILLE ELECTORATE TRAIN TIMETABLE**

**Ms JULIA FINN** (Granville) [4.22 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the impact of the cuts in train services to stations in the Granville electorate under the timetable introduced by the Liberal Government in 2013. Granville station was the worst affected, with a reduction of about 100 services a week. As I mentioned in my inaugural speech, Granville station was established as Parramatta Junction and was a major rail interchange for more than 150 years—until the introduction of this timetable. The morning peak services have been cut by 43 per cent and the evening peak by 31 per cent. None of the faster trains from Penrith to the city now stops at Granville during the morning peak, so it takes commuters longer to get to work—once a train finally does stop. It used to take well under half an hour for the train trip to the city, and with frequent services. Now it can take up to 36 minutes.

Guildford was also affected, with a large number of the south line services no longer stopping between Merrylands and Fairfield. Instead, commuters are encouraged to change trains at Parramatta to travel to the city, adding at least 10 minutes to the journey. Many of the fastest western line services no longer stop at Westmead, a major employment zone with Australia's largest medical precinct and a high-density residential suburb. These changes have meant enormous inconvenience for the residents of these suburbs. This was a huge issue in the recent election, but only one side of politics was listening.

While I appreciate that the Cumberland line Y-link is up and running at full capacity once again, this does not mean people from the Granville electorate no longer travel to the city for work each day or that they have more time to spare to do so. Services were not cut for the Y-link when it first opened and they should not be now. There were winners and losers from the most recent train timetable, but no stations in the Granville electorate were winners, only losers.

As someone who has travelled from Granville station to work for most of my working life—I travelled from Granville station this morning—I note with great irony that the long-promised commuter car park was finally opened only after the peak-hour train services had been slashed. Before the new timetable and new car park, the car park would be full by 5.15 a.m. Car spaces are now available after 7.00 a.m., not because a few dozen spaces have made a huge difference at a station used by thousands of people every day but because previously people came from all over Western Sydney to park at Granville and catch a quick train to the city. There are no quick trains anymore, so not as many people come from other areas.

As fewer trains now stop at Granville, many people who travel to Granville to work or to study at Granville TAFE now drive to avoid changing trains and frequent delays. This is particularly the case for people travelling from the Blue Mountains to work or study at Granville. I believe this is the major cause of the massive



downturn in business experienced by the local shops that cater mainly to train commuters: the newsagency, cafe and drycleaner at the station and the bottle shop 20 metres away. It is particularly galling that the new timetable was introduced without any consultation with these business owners so they could plan ahead.

According to the drycleaner, Mary, Granville residents do not spend a great deal of money on dry cleaning, so the loss of passing trade has had a big impact. "People from Granville don't have such fancy clothes," Mary told me, "not like people from the Blue Mountains and Baulkham Hills." This is hardly surprising given that, according to the Australian Taxation Office, the 2142 postcode area is one of the 10 poorest in Sydney. The effect of the new timetable was immediate on the bottle shop, which lost thousands of dollars in sales. The owner, Matthew, said his business is slowly recovering, but I doubt his previous lifelong Liberal-voting pattern ever will. He appreciated the time given to him by former Opposition leader John Robertson to listen about the impacts on him. That was in stark contrast to the attitude of the Government and the former member for Granville.

While the impact has been felt most keenly by peak-hour commuters, the cuts also affect services throughout the day to all three stations. The timetable is also structured in such a way that passengers at Granville wait either five minutes or 25 minutes between off-peak services to the city. It is often faster to catch a train to Parramatta and change to a train to the city that does not stop at Granville. The new timetable might make sense if the local population were declining. However, the Government's Parramatta Road Strategy has identified 25 per cent of the region's growth—that is, up to 19,000 units, or around 35,000 additional residents—at Granville, ironically due to its proximity to Granville station and the M4 motorway. That is not a strategy; it is a recipe for disaster. I call on the Minister for Transport to review the train timetable and to reinstate the rail services at Granville, Guildford and Westmead stations as a priority.

#### **ST GEORGE HOSPITAL CANCER CARE CENTRE**

**Mr MARK COURE** (Oatley) [4.26 p.m.]: Earlier this year medical staff and community leaders gathered at St George Hospital to mark the twenty-first anniversary of the St George Hospital Cancer Care Centre. It is important to note the centre has provided more than 850,000 services to cancer patients since opening in 1994. Before the centre opened cancer patients needed to travel outside the St George region to access a full spectrum of services. According to figures from the Cancer Council NSW, in 1994 the local health district had the State's highest number of lives that potentially could be saved from 13 forms of cancer, including lung, brain and liver cancer, and the second-highest number of lives that potentially could be saved from prostate, colon and pancreatic cancers as well as melanoma and leukaemia.

Over the years there has been a grassroots, community-driven fundraising movement led by people such as St George Hospital radiology oncologist Professor John Kearsley. He is a member of the fundraising committee, together with Phil Bates, Michael Bezzina, Rob Robson, Warren O'Rourke, Ferdie Dominelli, John Osborne, former member for Kogarah Brian Langton and Bill Lynch, to name but a few. The centre has brought together medical oncology, haematology, radiation oncology and full support services under the one roof. The centre is a leader in clinical and basic scientific research, and advanced teaching and training. Shortly after the centre's anniversary and following lobbying for four years, the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, and I announced funding of \$1.5 million towards the St George Hospital Cancer Care Centre.

Local members who have assisted in lobbying for this \$1.5 million in funding include Ms Melanie Gibbons, the member for Holsworthy and former member for Menai; the Hon. Mark Speakman, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning, and the member for Cronulla; and Mr Lee Evans, the member for Heathcote. They have all been strong supporters of the centre. The St George Cancer Care Centre cares not only for people in the St George area but from right across Sydney. No doubt the member for Miranda, who is seated in the Chamber, will also be a great supporter of the centre.

As I said, I was pleased to join the Minister for Health when she announced in the lead-up to the last election that a re-elected government would provide \$1.5 million towards the proposed \$3 million project to upgrade and expand the facilities at the centre. Under the rebuilding plans the unit will have 20 chemotherapy chairs and four beds. Treatment will be given in more pleasant and soothing surrounds. I acknowledge the outstanding work that the fundraising committee public officer, Phil Bates, has done over the years. Phil is known on both sides of politics as a true leader. He said that the \$1.5 million pledge will be a "big springboard" in completing this project. He said also it was the final stage of what the committee had hoped to achieve when

it was established in 1995—so it has been going on for 20 years. In that time the committee has raised almost \$8 million, including \$200,000 from the Carr Government. I look forward to the completion of the upgrade to the St. George Cancer Care Centre.

**Pursuant to sessional order discussion on petition signed by 10,000 or more persons proceeded with.**

## **HEALTH SERVICES IN RURAL AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES**

### **Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons**

**Mr JOHN BARILARO** (Monaro—Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business) [4.32 p.m.]: It is always a privilege to speak in this House on behalf of the fantastic nurses who work in this State. On 5 May we recognised the contribution of midwives through celebrations on International Day of the Midwife. On Tuesday we recognised their nursing colleagues on International Nurses Day. As the largest healthcare profession in the world, we acknowledge and recognise those nurses who are an integral component of contemporary health care and central to the provision of effective, safe and compassionate care.

Prior to 2011 the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals promised, if elected, to boost the State's nursing workforce by 2,475 in their first four-year term—the increase has been much greater than that. There are now 4,600 extra nurses and midwives, or 3,400 full-time equivalents, working in the New South Wales public health system, taking the State's nursing and midwifery workforce to more than 48,000. The Baird Government supports an employee award containing a formula based on nursing hours per patient day—as did the former Keneally Labor Government. In the New South Wales public health system, patient need determines nursing staff levels. As Carmel Tebbutt said when she was Minister for Health:

I have made it very clear that the Government has concerns with the blunt nature of a nurse-to-patient ratio in that it does not provide flexibility.

That is why we have adopted a more flexible nursing-hours-per-day approach, rather than an inflexible nurse-to-patient ratio approach, which allocates an average number of nursing hours in a ward over a week. This method gives nurse managers the flexibility to allocate nursing staff in a way that matches the busiest times and patient needs—a patient with greater needs might receive more of a nurse's time than a patient who is not as sick.

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 are the cornerstones that make our health environment one of the best in the world. I have never wavered in my commitment to fight on behalf of our hardworking nurses who perform such an important job in the community. Nurses are the backbone of our public hospital system. Like many local families I have relied upon the health system during times of need, and I am passionate about continuing to improve the quality and the delivery of services we have in the Monaro.

As I said earlier, the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government supports an employee award containing a formula based on nursing hours per patient day. This formula provides more flexibility in staffing and therefore services are more closely aligned with patient needs. The Hon. Bronnie Taylor, a newly elected member in the upper House, who was a cancer nurse for 20 years, also said that flexibility is important in delivering care for many patients—and she is supportive of this. The former Labor Government also supported this approach. It allows nurse and hospital managers the flexibility to allocate nursing hours in a way that matches the busiest times and patient needs. The nurse staffing formula is the same for regional and metropolitan hospitals. The formula varies appropriate to the size and complexity of care provided at a hospital facility. Smaller facilities have a lower classification than tertiary teaching hospitals and have a different formula, whether they are in the city or the country.

The acuity level of hospitals can be found online, with hospitals put into equivalent peer groups. One will observe that a C peer group hospital like Queanbeyan Hospital is in the same group as Ryde Hospital. Since the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals came to government in 2011 we have recruited an additional 4,600 nurses, or 3,400 full-time equivalents, taking the total workforce to more than 48,000. In the lead-up to the 2015 election Premier Baird announced that if the Coalition was re-elected an additional 3,500 frontline staff would be employed over the next four years—2,100 nurses, 700 doctors, 300 allied health professionals—and that

another 400 hospital support workers would be recruited as the Government attempts to keep pace with increasing demand and provides staff for the new health infrastructure being built in this State. That compares with the Labor commitment of an additional 840 in this next term of government.

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury) [4.37 p.m.]: I commence my contribution to discussion on this petition by acknowledging all the community members who have put their signatures on this petition, which has been signed by 10,000 or more persons and presented to the House by Minister Barilaro. It takes an enormous amount of effort to collect 10,000 signatures. The heart of this petition goes to the expectation of people living in regional and remote New South Wales that they will receive the same level of care as those in our metropolitan areas receive. The petition asserts that there is a two-tier health system in New South Wales and it also raises the issue of nurse-to-patient ratios, which the Minister failed to mention.

Nurses are the key to good health outcomes, and the Government must act to keep their workloads at reasonable levels. Australia wide there are more than 331,000 registered nurses and midwives; New South Wales is home to 48,000 of that number. They are the first point of contact for the 5,600 patients who visit hospitals every day. These are the most dedicated professionals in our health system and will be responsible for the majority of patient care we receive from the moment we are born until our old age.

The workload of nurses is vital in patient care—nurses can be the deciding factor in life-and-death situations. They need to have the appropriate amount of time to make patient assessments and to consider situations carefully. Labor will always support a well-funded and effective health system that provides the same level of care for people in both regional and urban New South Wales. We know that nurses are key to this goal. That is why we went to the 2015 election with a strong policy on this issue.

Our policy before the election was to guarantee that for every patient in every A, B and C peer group emergency department there would be one nurse for every three patients. Our policy also called for reasonable ratios in paediatric wards in a very clear undertaking. Under Labor's plan, 75 emergency departments and paediatric wards across the State would have benefited. Of course, our position will be one of evaluating this particular area but we will not walk away from the understanding that nurse-to-patient ratios are incredibly important. As this petition signed by 10,000 people indicates, this is a major issue in regional New South Wales.

In hospitals nurses provide continuous care to patients—they are the first to notice a patient's deterioration and to take action. The fewer patients a nurse has to care for, the more time they can spend caring for them. Measures to reduce the workload of nurses are vital for patient safety across the entire State, but it is in our regions that they will make the biggest difference. It is disappointing that the member for Monaro will not support them for his constituents. I agree with the petitioners that a person's postcode should not determine the quality of care they receive in hospital.

Currently, if a person is admitted to a hospital in one of our major cities they will receive six hours of nursing care per day. In a country hospital they will receive only five hours of the same treatment. On his website the member for Monaro describes nurses and midwives as "the frontline heroes in our hospitals". If he really believes this, he should call on the Minister for Health to commit to measures to improve patient care. It is disheartening, but not surprising, that the current Government is refusing to support sensible measures. This is the same Government that has cut \$2.2 billion from the hospital system in this State and is saying nothing to the Federal Government about the enormous cuts to health coming out of the Federal budget brought down the other night. I call on those opposite to support the provision of high-quality care in hospitals across the State. I conclude my remarks, despite interjections from the other side, by saying that Labor will always support nurses—in not only urban but also regional New South Wales.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [4.42 p.m.]: I am a third-generation registered nurse and have always supported nurses. This Liberal-Nationals Government has always supported nurses as the cornerstone of our health system. The previous speaker talked about the difference in nurse-to-patient ratios at metropolitan hospitals and regional hospitals. But this is the lie of what she said—there are different categories of hospital, whether they be in metropolitan or regional areas. Every category is exactly the same when it comes to nursing hours per patient.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** There is no difference between metropolitan and regional hospitals. Hospitals in the same category, whether in metropolitan or regional areas, will have the same level of

nurse-to-patient hours. The Opposition is looking at different categories of hospitals and comparing different categories of hospitals rather than hospitals of the same category. That is the lie of the previous speaker, and she knows it is a lie. She is now sitting opposite laughing. She does not care. This is a game to her. She is mocking and laughing because she does not care. The Government is standing up for nurses, and it always has.

Who negotiated the award with the nurses prior to the last Parliament? The Labor Party did. At the time Carmel Tebbutt said that there had to be flexibility built into the system. Anyone who works in a hospital knows that some wards need a nursing-staff-to-patient ratio of one to one—and that is provided in regional hospitals when it is needed—and some wards need only a nursing-staff-to-patient ratio of one nurse for every eight patients. Patients may be able to look after themselves and may not need a ratio of one nursing staff member to every four patients. That is what the flexibility of nursing hours per patient is all about. The member for Canterbury well knows that. But she came into the House to mislead people, to upset people and to agitate. I am sure the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, which is a member of the Labor Council of New South Wales, is feeding her information. The Labor Party is beholden to them.

The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring the health workforce is increased to meet demand and to supporting staff as they care for their patients, be it in hospital, the community or through hospital in the home. The Government met its commitment to employ an additional 2,475 nurses and midwives in its first term, increasing the nursing and midwifery workforce by more than 4,600. The Government has increased the Health budget by 20 per cent. For the Manning Base Hospital, a regional hospital, that meant the budget went from \$70 million to \$82 million—which is a 20 per cent increase.

**Ms JULIA FINN** (Granville) [4.45 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak in the discussion on this important petition. I share the concerns expressed about nurse-to-patient ratios at regional hospitals. I also take on board the concern of the petitioners about the level of nursing care a patient receives being related to his or her postcode. I am pleased to support the call for an increase in nurse-to-patient ratios. In fact, during the recent election campaign I pledged my support to the campaign of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association for an increase in nurses. We need one nurse for every three patients in our emergency departments.

Given its proximity to Australia's largest medical precinct at Westmead, many nurses reside in the Granville electorate. I have heard firsthand from many of them that they are under stress and need more support. Westmead's emergency department is one of the worst performing in Sydney for patient waiting times, with around half of all patients waiting for more than four hours. Clearly, this is an area where a patient's postcode does affect the level of nursing care provided—and having more nurses available would assist in the provision of care.

As a patient at Westmead Hospital or visiting friends and relatives there, I have experienced the warmth and professionalism of Westmead's nurses firsthand on many occasions. While visiting the emergency department has usually taken longer than expected, the triage nurses and the other nurses have been great. And when my father spent most of the last few months of his life in the cardiac ward, the nurses became his friends as well as his carers. But the nurses are under enormous strain and need more support. My father was transferred to Westmead from Orange Base Hospital. He received great support from nurses at both hospitals.

Nurse-to-patient ratios should be enshrined in legislation and should respond to changes in community need. It is about not just the size of the local population but also the amount of time that people spend in hospital and the patient numbers. It is very important that nursing care in regional areas is provided at a similar level to that provided in the city. I also acknowledge that there are vast differences between the hospitals in Sydney—and that is one of the reasons the emergency department at Westmead is struggling to meet the demand for its services. It could use more nurses.

**Discussion concluded.**

**Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.**

## **COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS**

### **RETIREMENT OF SPENCER DAVIES**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [4.48 p.m.]: I inform the House that Spencer Davies is retiring from his Taree-based legal practice after 38 years of service to his clients and the local community, with

the last 16 years spent working as a sole practitioner with his wife, Wendy, as his legal secretary. During his time as a solicitor Spencer has based his practice on providing a solid and caring family service on a personal and friendly level.

Spencer Davies has devoted a lot of time to Taree community organisations and at various times was elected president of the Rotary Club of Taree, the Manning River Lions Club and Toastmasters Taree. In his retirement Spencer has decided to move to Tasmania, where his wife comes from and his daughter now lives. On behalf of his clients and the Taree and Manning Valley community, I wish Spencer and Wendy a happy and well-earned retirement.

### **OBELISK HILL COASTCARE GROUP**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP** (Newcastle) [4.49 p.m.]: Today I recognise the work of the dedicated band of volunteers that make up the Obelisk Hill Coastcare Group, which was established in 2010. On the landmark site, which holds one of Newcastle's first navigational markers, built in 1850, and overlooks King Edward Park, the group is restoring the native vegetation to the area—predominantly *Themeda australis* but also littoral rainforest vegetation. Themeda grasslands, which occur naturally on the site and are also located on the North Coast and in the Sydney basin, have been identified as an endangered ecological community under the New South Wales Threatened Species Conservation Act. This is the second year that the group has been actively focusing on restoring the community.

As with many other areas along the coast, infestations of bitou bush and other exotic weeds are being replaced with native coastal plants. In other protected locations rainforest species have been planted to improve biodiversity and recognise the endangered status of littoral rainforests. The planting days are done in conjunction with the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority and Newcastle City Council. Bob Clifton and Doug Hickling showed me around the site, and everyone is most welcome to join them on site on the first Friday of the month at 8.00 a.m. The ongoing work of the group is being generously supported, with native plants of local provenance sourced from Trees in Newcastle.

### **BARBARA AND JOHN IKIN, GLOUCESTER ROTARY UNSUNG HERO AWARD RECIPIENTS**

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN** (Upper Hunter) [4.50 p.m.]: Barbara and John Ikin of Gloucester are the inaugural winners of Gloucester Rotary's Unsung Hero Award. The award recognises Barbara's and John's valuable and selfless commitment to the Gloucester community over many years. Barbara and John Ikin have contributed to various community groups and initiatives in the Gloucester district. They have been involved with the Gloucester Westpac Rescue Helicopter Support Group since its inception more than 15 years ago and were also instrumental in securing funding to build the hydrotherapy pool. Both are also involved in the Gloucester Croquet Club and have been previously active in the local swimming club and little athletics. Barbara and John Ikin are worthy winners of the Gloucester Rotary's Unsung Hero Award and I thank them for their tireless efforts over the years in their community work for Gloucester and the surrounding districts.

### **ASSYRIAN NEW YEAR**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [4.51 p.m.]: I had great pleasure in attending the Assyrian New Year on 22 March this year at Fairfield Showground. It was great to see people from all walks of life from the local community gathered to celebrate the Assyrian New Year, which has a proud and rich history dating back more than 6,000 years. The festivities included various types of cultural performances by Assyrian youth groups, displays of traditional clothing and cuisine, and a spectacular display of fireworks to end the celebrations. I acknowledge the great contribution the Assyrian community has made to my electorate of Cabramatta. I take this opportunity to recognise Mr Hermiz Shahen, the Deputy Secretary of Assyrian Universal Alliance, and Mr David David, President of the Assyrian Australian National Federation, for inviting me to celebrate their New Year.

### **TRIBUTE TO ANNE TRIMBLE**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS** (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.52 p.m.]: I offer my congratulations to Anne Trimble, who has retired as an instructor in the discipline of Goju Kai Karate after 30 years, during which time she revolutionised the way in which young people were trained, recognising the need

for young students to be trained in a gentler manner than adults. Anne has had a distinguished career representing the discipline at State, national and international levels, including competing in the first women's world cup in Taiwan in 1985. Anne will continue to study the martial arts and I wish her every success for the future.

### **LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX UNIVERSITY GUIDE**

**Ms JENNY LEONG** (Newtown) [4.52 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the fantastic work of the NSW Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby in conjunction with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex [LGBTI] news publication the *Star Observer*, the student-led professional development body Out for Australia, Transgender Victoria and Organisation Intersex International Australia, in putting together the Australian LGBTI University Guide. I also acknowledge the members of the community who worked on the project to assess every Australian university on their efforts towards LGBTI inclusion, with reference to the quality of anti-discrimination policies, support services, student-led societies and staff engagement.

I particularly acknowledge the work of Amanda Keeling and Justin Koonin from the NSW Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, Benedict Brooke of the *Star Observer*, and Jen Chen, the NSW Queer officer and Out for Australia NSW outreach coordinator, as well as the Human Rights Commission for hosting the launch of the project. I encourage all members to look at this guide and to talk to universities in their electorates about this guide when they meet with them.

### **TRIBUTE TO RON GREENWAY**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [4.53 p.m.]: I recognise Ron Greenway, who was recently given life membership of the Bingara Show Society. Over the past 12 years, Ron has given freely of his time and equipment in maintaining the showground and camp draft arena. Even though Ron lives out of town, he happily brings his tractor and implements to prepare the grounds for all the events held at the showground. Ron has donated drench for the cattle run on the grounds, and, of course, the hundreds of litres of diesel that he uses while working the grounds on his tractor. Ron's work is highly valued by the show society and its members, who, like Ron, help keep the wheels turning for the Bingara Show Society. I congratulate Ron on his life membership and applaud him for his valuable contribution to the Bingara community.

### **LIVERPOOL MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [4.54 p.m.]: Today I recognise the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre [MRC] whose annual general meeting I was able to attend on 28 April. The MRC is a community-based non-profit organisation established to actively and directly relieve the situation of immigrants and refugees whose social conditions render them disadvantaged. It has performed this important role over many years. On the evening of the annual general meeting I had the pleasure of acknowledging the contribution in particular of two volunteers who had performed significant work for the MRC.

Dr Amad Mtashar has 10 years service as a volunteer on the MRC board. He served as a representative for the Mandaean Australian Community Cultural Club on the MRC board from 2005 to 2015. He served as chairperson of the board from 2006 to 2008 and again from 2012 to 2013. He has been very active in the settlement process of the Mandaean community in Liverpool and has contributed significantly to the growth of the MRC. Dr Vincent Ogu also has 10 years service as a volunteer on the MRC board. He was on the board as a representative of Igbo Community Australia and in an individual capacity from 2005 to 2015. The important role of the MRC and individuals such as these should be widely recognised in the Liverpool region. They add to the remarkable multicultural community that is south-west Sydney.

### **SUTHERLAND SHIRE RELAY FOR LIFE**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN** (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [4.55 p.m.]: Each year on the first weekend in May, Sylvania Waters Athletics Track is a sea of purple and yellow as people gear up for the Cancer Council Relay for Life. This year there were 169 teams and 1,939 participants, and almost \$400,000 has been raised so far. Kirrawee resident Brent Collier is the current frontrunner in the "top participant" stakes, raising more than \$27,000. I commend him for his extraordinary effort and for his unwavering commitment to Relay for Life over several years—even during his own battle with cancer.

The Sutherland Shire Relay for Life has raised more than \$5 million for Cancer Council NSW since the first event in 2002. I congratulate relay committee chairman Rod Coy, OAM, all the volunteers who work so hard to make this event a success, and everyone who has participated. It is terrific to see the enthusiasm that has helped this event to grow and make such a significant impact in the fight against cancer.

**LAUREN MCSHANE, CAMPBELLTOWN ROTARY YOUTH EXCELLENCE AWARD RECIPIENT**

**Mr GREG WARREN** (Campbelltown) [4.56 p.m.]: I ask the House to acknowledge Lauren McShane of Bradbury, who won an award in the annual Campbelltown Rotary Youth Excellence Awards held at Wests Leagues Club. Lauren, a student of Campbelltown Performing Arts High School, is an exceptional academic student and a talented pianist, singer, actor and local ambassador. Lauren uses her talents to support many local causes, such as Lifeline and the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer.

Lauren recently performed for ABC 702 when it broadcast from Campbelltown. She was awarded a University of Western Sydney Talent Development Scholarship and has been chosen to play Meg Gire in the Campbelltown Theatre production of *The Phantom of the Opera*, to be staged in July. Lauren has organised fundraisers for the Leukaemia Foundation and Amnesty International, as well as for many other organisations. I sincerely congratulate and thank Lauren for her fantastic service to the Campbelltown community. I know the House will join me in commending her family, her school and the people of Campbelltown for supporting her and in commending Rotary for the award.

**NEPAL EARTHQUAKE**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [4.57 p.m.]: Today I recognise my local Nepalese community and offer them condolences. Nepal has been devastated recently by two earthquakes and subsequent aftershocks, leaving thousands dead or injured and millions homeless and displaced. The Holsworthy electorate has 122 Nepalese residents, most of whom would have been affected by the earthquakes in some way. One resident, Gosh Kattel of Wattle Grove, was relieved to hear that his elderly grandmother was alive and well but that, unfortunately, she was now without a stable home and was braving the elements outside in the aftermath of the earthquake.

Gosh is currently collecting clothing and other supplies to send to Nepal to provide emergency assistance wherever it is needed. I have spread the word about his collection drive in Parliament and I am overwhelmed by the response. I thank my colleagues and all the staff in Parliament who have also put out a call. I also thank my electorate for being so generous that I am having trouble closing the door of my office because of all the donations. I thank everyone so much—it will make a huge difference.

**GUILDFORD WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL MULTI-SENSORY ROOM**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [4.58 p.m.]: On 12 March 2015, Guildford West Public School unveiled its brand-new multi-sensory room, which was especially designed for students with special needs. The room is designed to stimulate learning, with an occupational therapist joining students each week. The occupational therapist provides hands-on assistance to ensure each student receives professional support, which allows them to overcome obstacles and stimulates personal growth.

I acknowledge Mrs Poppy Cassimatis, the Principal of Guildford West Public School, and the teachers and parents for all their hard work and dedication, which ultimately allowed this wonderful concept to come into existence. This project would not have been possible without the generous support and donations from local businesses and private sponsors. Congratulations to Guildford West Public School on implementing a truly outstanding program.

**NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY WINTER SLEEPOUT**

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT** (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) [4.59 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the sterling work of the Notre Dame University Social Justice Society and the Notre Dame Nursing Society who held a Winter Sleepout in collaboration with the Father Chris Riley Youth Off the Streets program. I greatly appreciated being asked to join the students and speak to them in the heart of Sydney at the university's Broadway campus on the night of 7 May.

Jesus shared the life of the poor from the cradle to the cross, experiencing the same hunger, thirst and privation. In a smaller way, and in keeping with the character of Notre Dame, sleepouts such as this offer members of our community a brief glimpse into the harsh reality of homelessness. I was incredibly impressed by the more than 45 Notre Dame students led by Daniella Maia, Melissa Dever, Daniel Carney, Andrew De Mayo and Matthew Garado who raised money and participated. I am pleased to hear that all donations will contribute towards supporting the lives of young people who are facing the challenge of homelessness, neglect and abuse, and drug and alcohol dependency.

### PARRAMATTA LEAGUES CLUB ELECTIONS

**Ms JULIA FINN** (Granville) [5.00 p.m.]: I congratulate Steve Sharp on his re-election as chairman of the Parramatta Leagues Club. I also congratulate the entire ParraFirst team on its election to the board, including former State member for Parramatta and former Deputy Speaker Tanya Gadiel and my council colleague Paul Garrard. The former member for Parramatta commented that she had been involved with or contested union, student, council, State and Federal elections but had never experienced anything like a leagues club election.

In recent years the leagues club has been divided and at times dysfunctional. While good people have been involved, they have been unable to work together effectively. It has been investigated by the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing and found wanting. But things have changed for the better. Steve Sharp and his team have brought the community together and worked effectively to deliver the high performance centre, which is currently being constructed. They are working with both sides of politics and getting on with the job.

### TRIBUTE TO VANESSA TAMER

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES** (Mulgoa—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.01 p.m.]: I proudly commend the outstanding achievement of 18-year-old Vanessa Tamer of Glenmore Park. On Saturday 9 May Vanessa Tamer, of Lebanese origin, competed in the Miss Australasian 2015 competition and was awarded first runner-up. Miss Australasian is the first multicultural beauty pageant to be established and hosted in Australia and carries the slogan of "Distinct Beauties United As One".

The concept sprang from a deep recognition of the diverse cultures in Australia, Oceania and Asia. It empowers physical beauty with committed awareness and values based on four pillars: compassionate service; social responsibility; culture promotion and education; and respect and fellowship. The organisation is committed to raising money for humanitarian causes and aims to encourage younger generations to recognise and uphold beauty with substance, virtue and character. Vanessa is a naturally beautiful, statuesque and eloquent young woman who is no stranger to beauty pageants. Last year she was first runner-up in the Miss Lebanon Australia 2014 pageant. I congratulate Vanessa on her achievements.

### INNER CITY SUPER GROUP

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [5.02 p.m.]: I commend the efforts of the Inner City SUPER Group to support therapeutic response to trauma for people with mental illness, particularly those who are homeless or have complex needs. This work builds community and consumer capacity to support recovery and helps people with complex needs to rebuild their lives. I attended and spoke at the SUPER Group's May "So You Want to Change the World" forum. Other speakers included those from the Kansas Consumer Advisory Council for Adult Mental Health, Working to Recovery, NSW Mental Health Coordinating Council, Being NSW, ARAFMI NSW, Mindgarden, the University of Tasmania and St Vincent's Hospital consumer participation officer Douglas Holmes. More than 75 participants attended the forum and I learned a lot about the experience of mental health service consumers from them and the speakers. I put on record my appreciation of the consumers' innovative work to make the mental health system more responsive.

### WELLINGTON STREET, BONDI, TENNIS COURTS

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON** (Vaucluse—Attorney General) [5.03 p.m.]: I recognise the important community value of the site of the former tennis courts facility located on Wellington Street, Bondi. A proposal to rezone the site from RE2 Private Recreation to R3 Medium Density Residential has been ongoing since November 2010 when Waverley council considered and rejected a zoning application. Any loss of recreational space in the Bondi area would leave a gap in community facilities due to the high density of the area and the lack of open space.

On 19 November 2013 council formally rejected the proposal again—a decision that was appealed to the Joint Regional Planning Panel [JRPP]. On 14 March 2014 the JRPP recommended that the proposal go to gateway determination. Council then held another round of community consultation and the proposal was rejected again on 2 December 2014. It is clear that council and local residents strongly oppose this planning proposal, as evidenced by the 500 letters I presented to the Minister for Planning in 2014. Open space is a tremendously valuable asset to my local community and I will continue to support my constituents in strongly resisting this proposed rezoning.



### BAHAYRA YOUTH ASSOCIATION

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [5.04 p.m.]: On 8 March I was delighted to attend the opening of the Bahayra Youth Association's Community Centre in Punchbowl. The event was well attended by local and international dignitaries including Reverend Father Tony Moussa, who represented His Excellency Bishop Antoine Charbel Tarabay, and Mr Michel Beik Mouawad, a member of the Lebanese Parliament and President of the Lebanese Independence Movement.

The Bahayra Youth Association plays an important role in providing charitable, cultural, social and spiritual services to many members of the Lebanese Maronite community in Bankstown and south-western Sydney. The new community centre will undoubtedly provide the opportunity for members of the Bahayra Youth Association, particularly the children, to hold on to their valuable traditions, customs, culture and faith. I was delighted to be named its patron on the day. I thank Bahayra Youth Association President Mr Nassim Jelwan for his kind invitation to be part of the opening of the new centre, which I am sure will enable the association to go from strength to strength in the future.

### PARKES MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC SOCIETY

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.05 p.m.]: The Parkes Musical and Dramatic Society recently performed the smash-hit musical *Hairspray*. Such was its success that after 10 performances they had to stage a special encore performance. I congratulate the cast and crew of *Hairspray*, the members of the musical and dramatic society and the community of Parkes on supporting that wonderful show. The Parkes Musical and Dramatic Society is an iconic cultural institution in the Central West. Long may it continue staging wonderful performances.

### HOLY FAMILY FAIR, EMERTON

**Ms PRUE CAR** (Londonderry) [5.06 p.m.]: On Saturday 2 May I attended the Holy Family Fair at Emerton with my good friend Blacktown City Councillor Charlie Lowles. I am very proud to represent the suburb of Emerton in this place. I acknowledge the hard work of the many community organisations in the region, particularly the fabulous work done by the Holy Family Parish at Emerton. Holy Family Parish at Emerton runs the fair each year and it does a fantastic job in organising food stalls, games, rides and entertainment for local families. I offer my congratulations to Father Greg Jacobs, Ray and all the volunteers on making the day run smoothly and ensuring the fair was a huge success. I look forward to continuing to work with the parish over the next four years and attending next year's fair.

### WOLLONGONG ELECTORATE LABOR PARTY PRESELECTION CAMPAIGN

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [5.07 p.m.], by leave: I thank all Australian Labor Party branch members who overwhelmingly supported me in the December 2014 preselection. I am happy to state that my opponent was beaten three to one and for that I am extremely grateful. I have a marvellous team of supporters to whom I owe a debt of gratitude that I will never be able to repay. My supporters were unwavering in spite of a smear campaign against them and me. Look where it got them: We won a fourth term without resulting in dirty politics or tactics. I congratulate all of them and offer them my thanks.

### HORNSBY ELECTORATE VOLUNTEERS

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.08 p.m.], by leave: Volunteers are the lifeblood of our community and it is through their hard work and generosity that our State has prospered. I recognise four extraordinary individuals from my electorate who have made not only Hornsby but also New South Wales a better place. Scott Jones, Barry Lees, Naomi Manning and Chris Yates have all given their time, knowledge and passion to improve New South Wales one generous act at a time.

Scott Jones has worked tirelessly as a Rural Fire Service volunteer for more than 35 years and has been serving as a brigade captain since 1992. Barry Lees has been volunteering at TAD Disability Services for more than 35 years producing equipment to empower people with a disability to care for themselves. Naomi Manning is a dedicated Girl Guides leader, mentoring generations of New South Wales young women. Last but not least, Chris Yates has been one of the longest serving Duke of Edinburgh International leaders, volunteering with the program for more than 25 years. It is the people I have just mentioned that make up the heart and soul of a community. I am honoured to recognise them in this House.

**Community recognition statements concluded.**

**Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.**

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### CLARENCE ELECTORATE

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS** (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.09 p.m.]: I congratulate Mike Baird and Troy Grant on their wonderful election win in March. They demonstrated strong leadership and integrity and provided enormous support to me throughout the campaign. This election win means the world of difference to the seat of Clarence because of the once-in-a-generation investment in infrastructure that will be undertaken over this term of government in my electorate. The Liberals and Nationals have never taken the seat of Clarence for granted. That is why in their first term they have invested heavily in building the backlog of infrastructure that was the legacy of the Labor Government. And now, in this second term, Clarence will see the infrastructure projects come to fruition and be completed—projects such as the Pacific Highway upgrade.

Collaboration between the State and Federal governments has resulted in an allocation of \$4.34 billion to the Woolgoolga to Ballina missing link. Most of this work will be in the electorate of Clarence. It is estimated that by 2017 more than 4,000 people will be directly employed on this project and some 12,000 indirectly employed. The delivery partner, Pacific Complete, was announced jointly by the Deputy Prime Minister, Warren Truss, and the New South Wales Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, Duncan Gay, late last month. Pacific Complete will set up its main office in Grafton and will employ approximately 200 people. This is great news for our local economy. The \$177 million Restart money is locked into the second Grafton Bridge and expressions of interest have been called for this design-and-construct project.

This project has a completion date of 2019 and will stimulate the Clarence Valley economy over that period. Thirteen million dollars has been allocated to the Sportmans Creek Bridge at Lawrence from the Bridges for the Bush budget. It is anticipated that work will commence next year. Seven million dollars has been allocated to building a modern ambulatory care unit at the Grafton Base Hospital. That project is anticipated to be completed within this term of government. Four million dollars has been allocated to the Coraki HealthOne facility from the funds set aside for regional health infrastructure.

Communities across the breadth of the Clarence electorate will benefit from those massive infrastructure projects. They will open up enormous opportunities for a range of businesses, small and large. There will be demand for accommodation, meals and entertainment, earthmoving contractors, trucking businesses, quarries, fencing contractors, subcontractors of all kinds and retail businesses in our towns. Jobs and prosperity will be brought to my electorate as a result of these significant public infrastructure projects. The measure of a society is how well it protects its most vulnerable and, for me, it is most important that the most vulnerable people in Clarence benefit from the massive infrastructure investment that we will see in Clarence.

Yes, jobs and prosperity will come with the infrastructure projects, but we also must not forget the impact that a huge influx in the workforce population will have on those who are struggling to find accommodation—homeless people and disabled people—and their right to services and meaningful employment. We also must not forget those who suffer with mental health issues and their right to access appropriate treatment that will result in them contributing in a meaningful way in our community.

As the billions of dollars of infrastructure investment flow into Clarence, it must also reach the most vulnerable. They too deserve to share in the prosperity flowing into the region. When our region is bursting at the seams with an outside workforce, it is incumbent on government agencies to work collaboratively with non-government organisations [NGOs] and community organisations to ensure that appropriate services are provided to our most vulnerable people. We must ensure that there is provision for low-cost housing; that there are job opportunities for our long-term unemployed, including disabled people; and that we develop strategic mental health programs to enable those who suffer with mental health illness to have the chance to rejoin the mainstream.

I will be taking up my concerns with the respective local agencies, the NGOs and the relevant Ministers. Every person in New South Wales deserves to share in the riches of the State. In this case, every constituent of Clarence deserves to share in the massive infrastructure investment coming our way over the next five years. I will do everything I can to ensure that this happens in Clarence. The New South Wales Nationals are delivering significant infrastructure projects to regional New South Wales because, together with the Liberals, we have sensibly managed the budget and have been able to deliver much-needed infrastructure to

regional New South Wales. The projects are creating jobs for country people and will bring prosperity to our regions. This marks a huge turnaround in our fortunes. I thank the Coalition Government for delivering for my electorate of Clarence.

### NATIONAL MEDAL

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [5.14 p.m.]: Madam Acting-Speaker, I congratulate you on your elevation. I draw to the attention of the House a matter raised with me by a constituent of mine, Mr Danny Perry. Mr Perry and his family have been well known to me over a significant period. Mr Perry is also a former president of the transit officer subdivision of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union NSW Branch. He was, obviously, a transit officer in New South Wales railways. It is a job I know he treated with the utmost diligence and seriousness. He raised with me the desirability of having periods of service with the security division of New South Wales RailCorp recognised for eligibility for the award of the National Medal, which recognises long and diligent service by members of recognised government and voluntary organisations—those members who risk their lives or safety to protect and assist the community in enforcement of the law or in times of emergency and natural disaster. Generally, those organisations include government organisations such as ambulance services, correctional, emergency, fire and police services, and voluntary organisations such as lifesaving clubs and search and rescue groups. The National Medal is Australia's most awarded civilian medal.

As I understand it, at the moment service in the security division of RailCorp is not recognised for eligibility for awarding the National Medal. As I read the Commonwealth National Medal (Approved Government Organisation) Determination 2011, service in approved government organisations that contribute to eligibility for the National Medal includes service in the NSW Public Transport Commission Security Services in the period 1972-80; the investigation branch of the State Rail Authority [SRA] in the period 1980-88 and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. It even extends to the employees of privately operated correctional facilities at Junee and Parklea and at other privately operated facilities in other States. Mr Perry sent me an email setting out the case for what seems to be a sensible extension of eligibility for the medal. He wrote in part:

I have on behalf of a small number of members of what was formerly known as the transit officer-security division of RailCorp NSW commenced a campaign to have eligible member's service records recognised by both the state and federal government for the award of the national medal.

Mr Perry notes that there is a comparatively small number of people who were transit officers and who have previously served or are currently serving in government agencies or volunteer organisations where that service contributes to eligibility for awarding of the National Medal. He notes:

However a select few due to their circumstances will never be availed the opportunity to again join another agency or organisation which recognises their service for award of the national medal. However if their service with the security division was approved under the approved government agencies their combined service history would make them eligible for receipt of the national medal which is why such an injustice should not be ignored but rightfully recognised and endorsed by both the state and federal government.

The justification for including this type of service is set out by Mr Perry in this way:

The daily duties of a transit officer in the security division of RailCorp NSW during the 12 years of its operation are clearly in line with the spirit and conditions required to be recognised for award of the national medal especially since the recognition of private correctional institution employees being eligible for award of the national medal if their service has been approved.

Many officers are former military, police, fire, ambulance, correctional and volunteer organisation members who have given a great deal of themselves to serve the community and the nation during their service, employment and volunteering careers and as transit officers doing a job that many others would not do, which provided safety and security for the New South Wales travelling public dealing with all types of emergency situations virtually on a daily basis.

Mr Perry notes that the work done by transit officers is in the same category as the work done by New South Wales police, fire, correctional and ambulance officers. Indeed, I note that under the current Government their role has been taken over by the NSW Police Force. The organisations that previously performed similar work and duties in the New South Wales transport system have been included in eligibility for the National Medal. Mr Perry completes his argument as follows:

The cost of a medal is a small price for a state and a nation to recognise and thank these people for the risks in doing their job daily and the excellent service they provided the public of New South Wales for doing in many cases a job that was actually appreciated by the majority of the travelling public.

I ask that this submission be tabled in both parliaments for approval for these people to rightfully be able to make application and receive an award they truly deserve in recognition of the wonderful and selfless service they gave in keeping the New South Wales travelling community safe and secure in responding to all types of emergency situations on the New South Wales rail network that occurred during their employment from 2002 until 2012.

I am pleased to add my support to Mr Perry's campaign. In my view, he advances a very strong argument.

### ORANGE ELECTORATE NUFFIELD AUSTRALIA FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.18 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House and members to two primary producers from Orange who have been selected as recipients of the prestigious Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship, Fiona Hall and Robert Pepper. The first Nuffield farming scholarships were awarded in 1947. Each year Nuffield Australia awards scholarships to farmers in Australia. A scholarship covers a 16-week program which consists of both group and individual travel. The objective is to increase practical farming knowledge, management skills and techniques. The scholarships give Australian citizens the opportunity to study farming practices in New Zealand, Europe, Asia and the Americas. They also promote a closer understanding between scholarship recipients and farmers in the countries they visit. Upon returning to Australia, it is expected that the scholars will actively spread the knowledge and understanding they have gained among their fellow farmers.

Fiona Hall is the managing director of the Caernarvon Cherry Company, which is a holistic cherry growing, packing and marketing operation with a team of 22 growers located in Orange. The business supports growers from agronomy to harvesting and from marketing to reporting back to growers. In the 2013-14 season the Caernarvon Cherry Company handled 1,000 tonnes of fruit, which represents 10 per cent of the Australian crop. The company exports 60 per cent of the crop to Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Dubai and Russia, with the balance being distributed to domestic supermarkets. Fiona and her husband, Bernard, also own Bonny Glen Fruits which grows apples over four properties located around Orange and two cold storage properties where they pack market apples for themselves and other growers under their BiteRiot! brand. Fiona will use her Nuffield scholarship to investigate how to close the gap between the farm gate and retail returns in the apple and cherry industries.

Robert Pepper is principal manager of egg sales and distribution for Pepper Pastoral Company producing, packing, marketing and distributing barn and cage eggs throughout central western New South Wales under the famous Canobolas eggs brand. They rear their own pullets from one day old to production and have capacity for approximately 100,000 hens, 20 per cent of which are in barns. The family operations also include more than 3,000 ewes, 150 cows and 100 acres sown mostly to wheat and canola. Robert hopes to use his studies to bring back the latest management techniques from around the world in non-cage egg production systems. We congratulate both Robert and Fiona. Robert plans to tour the United Kingdom, Europe, New Zealand, the United States of America and Canada during his study. It is especially important as the industry expands into non-cage production.

With respect to cherries, the Caernarvon Cherry Company is valiantly trying to export cherries from the Central West into markets in Asia but we need better cherry export protocols. At the moment a number of markets are forced into a cold storage protocol, which means the cherries need to be isolated in cold storage for a number of weeks before they can be exported. Of course, by then the cherries are not at their prime and we are not getting maximum returns for our products. This is a Federal issue. I have met with the consuls in Sydney from the Philippines and Taiwan to progress this issue but, after all, we are only the New South Wales Government. I want to see a stronger and more concerted push from our Federal colleagues to expand these markets and we cannot do that without better cherry export protocols. I ask the Federal Government to help us achieve that.

I take this opportunity to briefly mention other producers from the Orange electorate who are performing well and who are helping our local economy. Tim and Peter West are fifth generation apple growers. Tim is married to Jane West and they are both great community workers. Guy Gaeta runs the Gaeta and Sons orchard in Orange and grows the largest cherries that one will ever see. Last year I was there at harvest time and they were a sight to behold. Bruce Reynolds has been fighting tirelessly for fruit bat netting subsidies which have been achieved. The New South Wales Government has led the way nationally with a netting program to cover fruit trees thus ensuring that the bats do not have to be shot, so everyone is a winner. Annette and Graham Brown are two tireless workers from NSW Farmers who advocate for and do much for local farmers.

I thank all our primary producers—farmers and orchardists—for their valuable contribution to our local economy. These are difficult times for the Central West which has some imminent manufacturing closures, most notably Electrolux. However, with the help of our primary producers we will get through these difficult times. We salute our primary producers for their efforts.

### SOUTH COAST ELECTORATE ANZAC DAY SERVICES

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK** (South Coast—The Speaker) [5.23 p.m.]: I congratulate the Acting-Speaker and member for Shellharbour on her elevation to the temporary Speaker's panel and I thank her

for her assistance. As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing during World War I, the Centenary of Anzac, I want to reflect on the Anzac spirit and talk about some of the events that took place in my electorate on Anzac Day. I cannot imagine a life without family, freedom, and the right to self-determination that we enjoy. I know that the values and principles that I hold so dear have come from the sacrifice and decisions that have been made by others before me, including my father.

We hear much about the Anzac spirit and I have shared the fear that many of us have—with so many of our war veterans passing away the Anzac spirit might also disappear. On Anzac Day this year in the South Coast electorate—and I am sure in the electorates of most members of Parliament—I saw firsthand the will of our community to keep this spirit strong. The number of people who were present at dawn services across the nation is an indication that the Anzac spirit is still strong. Anzac Day services in the South Coast electorate ranged from dawn services, memorial services and marches at Callala Beach, Culburra Beach, Greenwell Point, Erowal Bay, Huskisson, Milton, Nowra, St Georges Basin, Sussex Inlet, and Ulladulla.

I congratulate the presidents, secretaries, treasurers, and all the office bearers of the RSL sub-branches on the South Coast on the effort they put into organising the magnificent events that we all witnessed. I pay special tribute to Nowra RSL Secretary Rick Meehan and the organisers of the Greenwell Point dawn service in Anzac Park where a record crowd of approximately 10,000 people attended which resulted in traffic gridlock. People could not get in or out of Greenwell Point but it was a wonderful service. I wish I could have attended all the other services and events but members would be well aware that they cannot attend all the dawn services. However, this year I commemorated this important day and attended the dawn service at the Milton Ulladulla Ex Servos Club. I then watched the march and attended the ceremony in Huskisson with many local veterans and service men and women.

These outstanding local services and events occur not only on Anzac Day but also on special days throughout the year such as Remembrance Day, Boer War Day and Korean War Veterans Day. I am sure members try to attend as many of these events as they can and that there is a bipartisan approach to Anzac Day. One of the greatest examples of the contribution that our local community has made is the planning that has been undertaken by Milton Ulladulla RSL Sub-branch President Paul Warren and Darryl Bozicevic, chief executive officer of the Milton Ulladulla Ex Servos Club. This year work has been completed on a new and beautiful memorial in front of the club just in time to commemorate the Centenary of Anzac. I was pleased to attend the dawn service at the memorial and I officially opened the memorial. Over the past two years I had the pleasure of assisting the club in cutting bureaucratic red tape and purchasing land for the memorial, which is spectacular.

This new memorial which had the strong support of the veteran community was decided upon four years ago when it was established that the venue at Kendall Cottage in Ulladulla was too small. The new memorial provides better viewing by the thousands of local people who attend the dawn service in Ulladulla. This will ensure that as our community grows people will be able to attend these services and hear what is going on firsthand. We all have a part to play in keeping the Anzac spirit alive, which is why I was encouraged to see so many young adults and families from all walks of life attending the dawn services on Anzac Day.

We have had to make some tough decisions in this House. Decisions have been made by some in this place and in our nation's capital that have led to separating families and sending husbands, sons, wives and daughters off to war. Sometimes we should pause and remember those who are fighting for our country. Lest we forget. On Anzac Day I am sure that all members think of someone special. I always think of my father and of his contribution as a flight lieutenant in the Royal Australian Air Force. He became a lawyer after studying at night, was supporting his mother and sisters and then volunteered for service in World War II. When he was on leave he met my mother who was from Carlisle, England and it was a wonderful wartime romance. They were married after six weeks.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** A fast mover.

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK:** He was very quick. They were together until my father passed away about 30 years ago from issues that he had faced during the war. When I talk about Anzac Day I always think about my father.

### BETTER BUSES CAMPAIGN

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [5.28 p.m.]: Today I met a delegation from the Transport Workers Union who attended Parliament House to launch their statewide Better Buses Campaign. The Better Buses

Campaign will ensure that bus drivers do their job safely, free from assault and harassment and be fairly paid for their work. I am proud to be a member of the Transport Workers Union but I am deeply concerned that driver and passenger safety, working conditions and remuneration are being undermined and eroded as a result of the flawed and competitive tendering process.

The Transport Workers Union and its membership, the bus drivers, are being abused, racially vilified, spat on and even physically assaulted in the course of their duties. This is done by passengers who are frustrated by late or unreliable services caused largely by unrealistic timetables and poor management. We saw examples of this on the free shuttle bus in Wollongong in relation to which, towards the end of last year, I made representations. The Better Buses Campaign calls for a minimum set of industry standards that will provide drivers with safe and realistic timetables; the training they need to do their work safely; a democratic voice on the job so that their experience is used to make jobs in the industry safer; no more than three hours behind the wheel without a paid break; fair pay for a hard day's work; a fair and timely way to resolve disputes along the supply chain; portable entitlements and employment security to assist drivers in building secure employment in a dangerous and unpredictable industry; and superannuation increases so that drivers can afford to retire with dignity.

Competitive tendering of contracts has forced drivers to rush, skip breaks and drive unsafely, which put drivers and our community at risk. Drivers are more vulnerable than ever to physical and verbal attacks by frustrated commuters. We have seen examples of this recently in the media and on the news. Bus drivers are alone in the cab and when trouble breaks out they are in a restricted area and find it difficult to defend or protect themselves. The people who came to see me today from the Transport Workers Union are well-known to me and I would like to acknowledge them: Mick Pieri; Nick McIntosh, the Regional Secretary for the Transport Workers Union in Wollongong; Bruce Dunlop; Geoffrey Auld; Darren Wells; George Douros; and Lee Lawler, the Wollongong official who is also my husband.

This is not the first time that this paramount issue of bus safety has been brought to the fore. It is important that drivers have protection when carrying out a public service helping the aged, frail and disabled or people with young children to get from one place to another. If physical protection cannot be provided they must have the defence and protection of their employer, of the law and, of course, of public representatives such as those who sit in this place. We should have the safety of these workers at the forefront of our minds.

It is appalling that in 2015 we should have to have a demonstration, a delegation, a group out the front of the Parliament, in an effort to have realistic timetables provided to ensure the safety of bus drivers. Drivers are asking to have no more than three hours behind the wheel without a paid break. There are advertisements all over the shop stating "fatigue kills, "stop and revive" and stating that a break is advisable after two hours of driving. But here we are with the union having to come in to fight for no more than three hours of driving buses before a break. I would have thought that agreement to that would have been automatic. It should be dealt with that way. I thank the Transport Workers Union and Michael Aird, the State Secretary, for their constant representation of their membership. I know that their representation is constant as I have often had representations from them. I place on record my gratitude to and appreciation of the Transport Workers Union of Australia.

### CENTRAL COAST STORM DAMAGE

**Mr ADAM CROUCH** (Terrigal) [5.33 p.m.]: In the early hours of Tuesday 24 April, at approximately 3.00 a.m., the Central Coast and Hunter region were hit by a category 2 cyclone with such force that the community awoke to a sea of destruction. It seems that no suburb was left untouched by the fury of this major storm event. The Hunter experienced incredible flooding to many of its communities, sadly resulting in the loss of life and damage to homes and properties. The member for the Upper Hunter had experience of that.

The Central Coast experienced severe impacts from the major storm event. Trees were uprooted, homes were badly damaged or destroyed, boats ran aground and thousands of homes were left without power—some for days on end. Train services were shut down by fallen trees across the rail lines and landslips. Local roads were blocked and badly damaged, making it extremely difficult for families to get their children to school, or for people to travel to work or do their business. At Saratoga the Leeton family awoke at 3.30 a.m. to find a tree had crashed through their roof. They were grateful that all four members of their family were safe. In Gosford we were saddened to hear of the loss of a local resident. An 87-year-old was hit by a vehicle when endeavouring to cross the road late at night when traffic lights were out due to storm damage.

We saw our heroes from the State Emergency Service [SES], the NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS], Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Ambulance, local councils, the NSW Police Force, Central Coast Rescue Squad and Ausgrid. All these organisations performed to an exceptional standard and showed the unfailing spirit of the Central Coast during this major emergency period. It is a credit to the Brisbane Water Local Area Command of Superintendent Daniel Sullivan and his team, who coordinated the emergency effort to such a high standard that emergency services were on site at first light. Emergency crews worked tirelessly to tarp roofs, clear fallen trees, remove storm debris, rescue people and pets from rising flood waters, and evacuate people from flood-prone areas. Local residents lent a helping hand to their neighbours and communities cared for their own. These were our champions. None of us would want to see a repeat of those incredible storm conditions again, but it was amazing to see the spirit of kindness and mateship for which Australians are so well known.

We heard many stories across the coast of neighbours who went out in the deluge and wild weather to use chainsaws to cut up their neighbours' fallen trees, families who took in neighbours who had nowhere else to go, and neighbours who took in strangers for a hot meal or a shower and simply to comfort and offer support. Everyone lent a helping hand. When Wamberal Primary School was damaged by fallen trees, the principal, Paul Miller, accepted a generous invitation from the Breakers Country Club to take in years 5 and 6 school students so that they could continue their studies in safety.

On the Woy Woy peninsula five local clubs offered local residents hot showers, refreshments and access to power to charge up mobiles and laptops. These offers of support enabled families to keep in touch and give comfort to those who needed it most. In the north end at Gosford one of our largest clubs, the Central Coast Leagues Club, offered its gymnasium for showers and the cafeteria for refreshments. Every club on the Central Coast offered support of some kind to our community, fulfilling an invaluable role.

The Gosford SES controller, Rolf Garda, said that the SES had received more than 4,000 call-outs and some 2,500 jobs. The organisation is finally getting back to some sense of normality. An Ausgrid spokesman reported that the damage to its network was the worst on record, with more than 80,000 homes and businesses across the region losing power. And yet, in all the deluge, catastrophe and damage to homes and property, incredibly the Anzac poppies at Gosford Memorial Park stood tall with not one being damaged. It is a reminder of the spirit of the Australian people, the kindness of one neighbour to another, and the commitment and affection that we have for one another on the Central Coast.

Through his leadership Premier Mike Baird has formed the Hunter Central Coast Recovery Team under the direction of Brigadier Darren Norman and the Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast, Scot MacDonald, MLC. This is an important step towards recovery and support for our local communities. It is also important that improvements can be identified so that emergency services can be even better prepared should such an event happen again. As the member for Terrigal, I offer my sincere thanks to the wonderful volunteers across New South Wales and especially the Central Coast. I congratulate them on making us proud to have seen them in action and to witness their efforts. It was truly inspiring and, whilst we pray that we never have to call on them in such circumstances again, they stand proud and will always have our gratitude.

### GIPPS STREET RECREATIONAL PRECINCT

**Ms PRUE CAR** (Londonderry) [5.38 p.m.]: I speak today on the Gipps Street recreational precinct, a much-needed sport and recreation park in the suburb of Claremont Meadows. For too long, successive governments have promised and failed to deliver this much-needed facility which would greatly benefit Claremont Meadows, Caddens and the surrounding suburbs. Indeed, it would be a one-of-a-kind recreational precinct in greater Western Sydney. Many sporting associations across all codes in Western Sydney have been asking for a park to call home for quite some time. The land is there; the will is there; the council master plan is there—we just need the Government to come to the table.

In 2011 we saw a former member, the then shadow Minister, posing for photo opportunities with bulldozers, promising to fight for the Gipps Street recreational precinct. However, four years on, we have seen no action in that regard. It is disappointing that the residents of Claremont Meadows and the surrounding suburbs have bought their homes based on the promise that this recreational precinct would be delivered. During the State election campaign this issue became obvious to me every day when I doorknocked in Claremont Meadows and local residents expressed their frustration. Residents are upset by the Liberal Government's lack of action. They are sick of having promises thrown at them during election campaigns and not seeing their delivery.

When new housing estates are built we must ensure that governments make provision not only for schools, roads and infrastructure, but also for recreation and sporting facilities so that families can be encouraged to recreate in their local area. We know that today metropolitan housing lots are much smaller than they were 20 years ago. A large backyard is not always a given. We must have a balance between new releases and green space. Local parks are vital for the health and welfare of our community. It is up to State government to work with local councils to ensure this is planned appropriately. Instead of providing taxpayer-funded assistance to elite sporting stadiums State government should be ensuring that the future suburbs of Sydney include recreational precincts close to homes.

The Gipps Street recreational precinct would be one of the best of its kind in greater Western Sydney; a place for kids of all ages to kick a footy, ride a bike or play a game of netball. New development is soaring ahead along Caddens Road and the community cannot wait any longer for these fields. I urge the State Government to commit to funding the Gipps Street recreational precinct in the upcoming budget and deliver for the people of my community.

### **BLUE MOUNTAINS SEPTIC PUMP-OUT SCHEME**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE** (Blue Mountains) [5.41 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of Blue Mountains residents who have been mistreated by the former O'Farrell Government and who are still left in a state of uncertainty by the Baird Government. In 2012 the O'Farrell Government cut the sewage pump out subsidy to the remaining 72 residents in the Blue Mountains whose homes were not connected to the sewer. That decision was made high-handedly without consultation and communication with the people affected and it went against a written commitment by another Liberal Government.

In the early 1990s the Liberal Greiner Government made a long-term commitment to connect those homes to the sewer and promised that until that occurred those homes would continue to receive a pump out subsidy. I have spent the past three years fighting on behalf of the residents whose pump out subsidies were cut by this Government. I have fought for residents because access to reliable, safe and affordable water and sanitation infrastructure is a human right, and because of the extraordinary risk that will occur to our unique World Heritage-listed natural environment if pump outs of domestic septic systems are not carried out on time or in a proper manner.

Despite the Baird Government agreeing to match Labor's election promise to restore the pump out subsidy residents still have concerns about this Government's ability to deliver an effective solution. The residents need the security of an affordable, long-term and permanent solution. At a residents' action meeting last Sunday, the following action points were agreed to:

1. That the residents maintain the position that the NSW Government and Sydney Water should honour their original written commitment and connect the remaining 72 households to mains sewerage infrastructure in the same manner in which this service has been afforded to other Blue Mountains residents. This is the only reasonable long-term and permanent solution in the provision of this essential service and which adequately protects the environment.
2. That the septic pump subsidy and service remain in place and linked to the title of the relevant and respective properties, at least until:
  - (a) Residents have been connected to main sewerage infrastructure; or
  - (b) Residents have installed an affordable and approved onsite wastewater management system.
3. That the septic pump out subsidy be administered by the same arrangements that were in place up to 30 June 2014, that is:
  - (a) That the subsidy is paid directly to the service contractor;
  - (b) That residents are billed on a quarterly basis by Sydney Water for what they owe for the service;
  - (c) That the quarterly charge residents pay is a sewerage fee equivalent to the average sewerage charge for the greater Sydney Water customer base;
  - (d) That annual increases are consistent with increases in the sewerage service charge of other Sydney Water customers; and
  - (e) That the provision of the pump out service be scheduled to occur automatically as a matter of routine and on a fortnightly basis.

I will work with Government and lobby and negotiate with the Minister for the Environment on behalf of these residents to ensure that the remaining 72 impacted families are connected to the sewer or have an onsite system



that is environmentally sound. I will not give up until that is done. I pay tribute to the work of Craig Sinclair from the Blue Mountains and the residents' action group, which has worked solidly with me over the past few years on this not very pretty issue.

### **BOHOLANO AND FRIENDS AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED**

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY** (Riverstone) [5.45 p.m.]: On Saturday 2 May 2015 I had the pleasure of attending the twenty-fifth annual gathering of Boholano and Friends Australia Incorporated at Quakers Hill, which is comprised of Filipinos from the island of Bohol who migrated to Australia. They formed an association to continue the ties from their original homeland in the Philippines. I was invited to the gathering by Jon Cadelina, one of its founding members. I am told the first gathering took place in a pub in 1991 when the association was formed and it has continued to meet on an annual basis. The association has grown since its humble beginning.

Bohol is an island province in the Central Visayas region of the Philippines. It is the tenth largest island of the Philippines, which comprises more than 7,000 islands. Since the 1980s many Filipinos from all regions have come to Australia. Many settled in the Blacktown Local Government Area and now they are residents of my electorate. Filipinos from Bohol and other regions have taken up many roles in Australia across a range of occupations, but I note the contribution being made by Filipino Australians in health care and aged care, where their presence is vital to the delivery of these services to all Australians.

Bohol province has a population of more than 1.25 million. It is a place of spectacular beauty and boasts the marvellously named Chocolate Hills, comprising approximately 1,500 cone-shaped hills stretching as far as the eye can see. During the wet season the Chocolate Hills are covered with green grass, which turns brown in the dry season and looks for all the world like an array of chocolate confectionary.

As many people know, the Philippines were a colony of Spain and then the United States. During the centuries of Spanish dominion, the Catholic faith was spread throughout the Philippines and many churches were built. For centuries in Bohol those churches stood at the centre of local communities as testament to the faith of the local people through good and bad seasons, times of peace and war and throughout a great deal of change. Unfortunately, a devastating earthquake struck in October 2013, which took the lives of dozens of people. The earthquake measured 7.2 on the Richter scale and destroyed many of the treasured churches, as well as schools, shops and homes of many Boholanos.

As with the recent earthquakes in Nepal, the loss of life was compounded by the loss of cultural heritage. Sadly for Bohol, three weeks after the earthquake, Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines, wreaking havoc in Tacloban City and the Central Visayas region generally, adding to the destruction and suffering in Bohol. While Filipino Australians have made extraordinary efforts to support their homeland in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, and many other Australians have generously supported that cause, Boholano Australians have also been working to support their home province in restoring precious buildings damaged by the earthquake. They include the historic churches in Baclayon, originally built in 1727, and the church in the town of Loboc, which was built in 1638.

To aid in that cause, the renowned Loboc Children's Choir is touring New Zealand and Australia in June and July this year for a series of fundraising concerts. In early July the choir will perform at Plumpton, just outside my electorate, and Liverpool. I am sure that Boholano and Friends Australia Incorporated welcomes anyone interested to attend the concerts or to support their cause. The Philippines is a beautiful part of the world which seems to attract more than its fair share of natural disasters. It is the birthplace of many wonderful Australian citizens and residents whose presence enriches this country. I am happy to commend the work of Boholano and Friends Australia Incorporated in keeping alive the community spirit of people of Boholano origin, in building bridges with the wider Australian community, in raising funds to help those affected by calamities, and in recognising the achievements of Boholano Australians in studies and in many walks of life.

### **HOLSWORTHY ELECTORATE SCHOOLS**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [5.50 p.m.]: I thank Mr Deniz Erdogan, the principal of Amity College, for inviting me to the official opening of the school's new facilities. It was my first visit to the school and I appreciated the honour of opening block 4.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** You have been the local member for six weeks and you are already opening stuff.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** Yes, it is very cool. I joined my Federal colleague the member for Werriwa in cutting the ribbon and opening the new facilities. The member for Liverpool and the Mayor of Liverpool, Ned Mannoun, also attended the ceremony. It was a wonderful day. I am probably an unfamiliar face to the locals, but they offered me a warm welcome and it was a great chance to meet people. Over the coming months and years I hope to become a more familiar face at Amity College and in the school community. It is obviously a close-knit community that is built on pride. "Amity" means friendship, peaceful, harmony and mutual understanding. What a perfect name for a school. It is important for a school to have a great foundation and the appropriate tools to forge the right path ahead.

In its 20 years of operation—which is not long—the school has built an incredible community and earned a good reputation for offering quality education. The opening of the new buildings heralds a new chapter for the school as it heads into the future. The building work undertaken at the school is physical evidence of what government grants can achieve. The school received Federal Government support and a New South Wales Government grant of more than \$700,000. That money was augmented by incredible fundraising efforts. In fact, the school more than matched the grant, which is a fantastic achievement for a school community. The building work includes six new general learning areas, a new learning space, a new library and a new wood tech workshop. I was given a wonderful tour of the new facilities, which are much better than those available when I went to school—which was not very long ago.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** Just the other day.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** Yes. The school now has fantastic equipment and facilities that we did not have the privilege of enjoying when we were at school. There is plenty of scope for the school to expand even further, and I understand that it has plans to do so. I thank the wonderful school leaders, the teachers and the school board, who hosted a lunch at which we spoke about the school and its plans for the future. I thank them for making me feel so welcome.

I also had the opportunity to visit William Carey Christian School, which is also in Prestons. I am trying to visit all the schools in my new electorate. I met with Principal Ian Wake, who has been at the school for more than 20 years. He would have seen some dramatic changes in Prestons as new homes were built and the community grew. One would expect a Christian school to offer education only to Christians, but the school enrolls children from all faiths who live in the area. The school has classes from preschool to year 12 and it has great relationships with all the kindergartens and preschools in the area. The facilities at the school are impressive. As I said, I intend to visit all the schools in my new electorate, and Amity College and William Carey Christian School were a wonderful start. I am looking forward to getting to know all the local school communities.

#### **MAITLAND ELECTORATE HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) [5.55 p.m.]:** Since I arrived in this place I have been appalled at the Baird Government's attitude to health issues in my electorate. The Labor Party has a proud tradition of delivering for Maitland. In the Fifty-fourth Parliament—Labor's last term in office—more than \$300 million was delivered to provide for the third river crossing and work on the Hunter Expressway. Both of those pieces of infrastructure were crucial in the recent floods. I draw the attention of the House in particular to the Labor Government's record on health, and specifically the \$10 million upgrade to the Maitland Hospital emergency department that was undertaken in 2011. That funding delivered 13 new treatment spaces, 12 new beds, and 300 jobs during the construction phase.

Members should compare that with the Baird Government's offerings in the Fifty-fifth Parliament. As I said in my inaugural speech, the only full acquittal of the \$80 million in promises made by the Coalition in its first term in office was the \$5 million allocated Maitland City Council for the levy bank project. It should be noted that that was a low-interest loan, so the Government will get its money back. Given that, nothing has been delivered. The Government not only has cut funding for the health sector and community counselling but also is playing games with our hospitals. This situation goes to the heart of the reason that I was removed from the Chamber during question time today.

The Government has been secretive about the hospital model that it is proposing. It tells us that all will be well because Calvary Mater Newcastle is a public-private partnership. However, it forgets to mention that that is a legacy model and that nuns are no longer building hospitals. It is more than likely that the hospital will be built by private, for-profit operators such as Ramsay or Healthscope. That is what happened in Frenchs

Forest. The public-private partnership model involves decisions about care and service levels being made by for-profit groups. There are no mandated staffing ratios, adequate standards are acceptable and there is no reporting. This is an extreme concern, given that the Maitland Hospital emergency department experienced a code red situation at Christmas 2014.

In addition, the Government wants to close the existing Maitland Hospital. When the new Lower Hunter hospital was first promised it was to be an additional resource. The former member for Maitland and the Department of Health promised that it would be a "John Hunter sized" tertiary hospital. Now, four years on, there is no time frame for the commencement of building works, it will be about half the size that was promised, and the existing Maitland Hospital will be closed. Instead of a tertiary public hospital in addition to the existing public hospital, we will have a second-tier rural referral public-private partnership hospital with a helipad.

The helipad will enable complex cases to be transferred quickly because the new hospital will not be able to deal with them. Patients who travel to Calvary Mater Newcastle for cancer treatment will still have to make that journey because those services will not be delivered at the new hospital in the short to medium term. The Baird Government has done nothing for the Maitland health sector for the past four years. Members opposite have sat on their hands and all we have is a \$6 million sign on Metford Road.

I was ejected from the House during question time today because I interjected during the responses by the Minister for Health and the Deputy Premier to questions about rural and regional health initiatives and other health initiatives. Neither of them said anything about the new Maitland hospital that the Government has been promising for more than four years. It is time for them to put up or shut up. Earlier this week I asked in good faith a question of the Minister for Health about the anticipated time frame for the opening of the new Lower Hunter-Maitland hospital.

This question is vital to my electorate and, as such, it was appropriate for the Minister to answer it with civility and clarity. Instead, I got an arrogant response. The former member for Maitland was constrained in her ability to raise these issues with the Government because she was a member of the Liberal Party. I will hold the Government to account on its health promises. On behalf of my constituents, I demand to know when the new Lower Hunter-Maitland hospital will be completed and I want a commitment from the Minister for Health not to close the existing Maitland Hospital.

### **BARANGAROO DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [5.58 p.m.]: Barangaroo is publicly owned land on our harbour and its redevelopment should create a world-class place to visit, live and work. It presents a unique opportunity to improve public access to the harbour and to provide new parks and open space, much-needed education and childcare services, transport, and commercial and residential space, including affordable housing. However, the planning process has become nothing more than an exercise in squeezing as much private gain on this public site as possible. The 2006 winning design had broad community support. It set towers back from the waterfront to ensure public access, enjoyment and activation of the foreshore. Buildings were positioned to promote integration with the central business district and activation of public space throughout the site. The 2007 initial concept plan was loosely based on this winning design, but successive modifications have massively increased bulk and scale, and diminished the waterfront potential through shadowing and wind. Further erosions are expected.

Changes to the initial approved built floor area of 388,300 square metres have now reached 563,965 square metres, with the latest modification under assessment at the Department of Planning potentially increasing this to 605,911 square metres. A future expected modification would increase it further to 661,686 square metres—almost double what was approved initially. One modification involved building a hotel tower on the water. It led to community outrage over privatisation of the harbour that led Lend Lease to relocate the hotel. But the relocation would place the hotel on what was to be Barangaroo's only waterfront public recreation space. The public park would be moved behind the tower, relegating it to a mere inner-city pocket park, and a significant part of the waterfront—Barangaroo's most valuable asset—would be privatised. The height of the hotel tower would increase from 170 metres to 250 metres, creating massive shadowing and wind impacts on the public foreshore promenade. The claim is that a taller tower is needed to give it world-class status, but design excellence is more important in hotels, with the trend for smaller boutique buildings.

It is vital that Barangaroo provides a world-class public experience of the harbour for all workers, residents and visitors; it is public space that makes a destination special. The hotel tower would dominate most

views of the site and create a barrier reducing Barangaroo South's integration with the rest of Barangaroo and the central business district. The latest proposal increases buildings to such heights that wind effects across the site will make parts of Barangaroo South safe to walk through only by able-bodied people. The waterfront promenade will be windy and overshadowed from morning to early afternoon, including the lunch period, between autumn and spring.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson):** Order! Members who wish to have private conversations will do so outside the Chamber.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** While Barangaroo is difficult to drive through and its integrated transport plan estimates that 96 per cent of visitors will travel by public transport, by bike or on foot, planning is taking a different direction with the progressive addition of new private parking spaces. The latest proposal would give the casino in the hotel 500 new spaces despite Government promises that the casino will be available only to high rollers, who chiefly come from outside New South Wales. A future application will massively add private parking spaces to this site. As a result, the expected traffic congestion has led to a proposal to remove most kerbside parking in Barangaroo South so there are extra traffic lanes. This will make Barangaroo streets more dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists and diminish amenity. It is a further privatisation of public land. Why is light rail not being extended to the site?

Instead of integrating with adjacent areas and promoting complementary benefits, Barangaroo will terminate views from historically significant panoramic views of adjacent parks and reserves, severely impacting on their character and amenity. View corridors across the site to the water have been broken and there has been little attempt to minimise view interruptions of neighbours. Shockingly, Lend Lease attempts to justify blocking views of four key Sydney Observatory target objectives at certain times of the year because it claims the observatory is in what it calls an "inappropriate" location. Sydney Observatory has provided Sydney residents and visitors with opportunities to learn about astronomy and see the stars since the nineteenth century. It is more important that we see stars rather than seeing a big Crown logo over Barangaroo.

Community cynicism over the Barangaroo planning process is widespread. The progressive increase in bulk and scale may increase private gain but it will erode the future public experience of the site. We do not want Barangaroo to become nothing more than a massive building that towers over the harbour, with second-rate pocket parks, cold and windswept public space and escalating traffic congestion. I call on the Government to end the private land grab, and refocus planning on public amenity and public outcomes.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.03 p.m. until  
Tuesday 26 May 2015 at 12 noon.**

---